Guardianship Scotland

Wellbeing Project

Allies: People and Resources on Your Side

Piloting a short-term psychosocial group intervention for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and victims of child trafficking to build individual and community resilience.

Delivered in partnership by:

scottish refugee council

aberlour
scotland's children's charity

2019-2022
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Thank you to our partners!

Allies Project Partners:

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Shared Experiences

Thank you to the young people from Guardianship Scotland who participated in the Allies programme, shared their stories, and contributed so much to our service evaluation and this report.

All artwork in this report was created by unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people or from our group activities and shared with permission.

Contents

Contents

Introduction

Guardianship
Scotland
Wellbeing Project

1. Introduction

Partnership working

The Allies Programme is a psychosocial group for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people run jointly by **Guardianship Scotland** (a partnership project of Aberlour and the Scottish Refugee Council, which works with young unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and trafficked children across Scotland) and the **Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service - Anchor** (a specialist NHS trauma service that has a remit to work with unaccompanied young people in Glasgow, who have experienced mental health difficulties linked to trauma experiences).

The Allies Programme is a pilot project funded by Comic Relief in 2018. The programme has run since 2019 and was evaluated for 3 years between 2019 and 2022.

This partnership was key to developing and delivering Allies as it recognised the expertise that each service brought. As a specialist mental health service, The Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service have worked with the unaccompanied asylum-seeker population for many years. They have expertise in responding to the mental health needs of this population. Guardianship Scotland has expertise in supporting this population in seeking asylum and integrating into life in Scotland.

The partnership allowed staff from Guardianship Scotland to upskill and deliver low-level psychosocial interventions under appropriate governance. Initial sessions were co-delivered, with staff from Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service taking the lead on delivering the content. This enabled the delivery of the group content to be done in a way that supported the Allies Guardianship staff. Resources on providing psychoeducation on trauma and introducing coping skills were shared with Allies Guardianship staff. This included support and discussions around delivering these materials within sessions with cross-cultural sensitivity and support around issues which arose working with interpreters. Regular monthly consultation from the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service continued throughout the programme's delivery.

The partnership between Guardianship Scotland and the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service (GPTS) has enabled the sharing of skills and resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked young people and to provide more accessible referral pathways for young people.

Allies is set up to be a structured, low-level psychosocial intervention. The table below shows where it sits within the NHS and Guardianship pathways.

Table 1: Pathways of support

Tier	NHS PATHWAY	GUARDIANSHIP PATHWAY	
4	Highly specialised inpatient CAMHS units and intensive community treatment services	**Highly Specialist Intervention**	Inpatient
3	Specialist multidisciplinary outpatients Including: The Anchor CAMHS Teams	**Specialist Intervention** Onward referral	The Anchor / The Meadows CAMHS / CMHT Freedom from Torture
2	A combination of some specialist CAMH services and some community based services including primary care mental health workers	**Therapeutic Intervention** Onward referral	Tier 2 CAMHS and PCMHT External counselling agencies Allies – Boys and Girls Art therapy
1	Universal services consisting of all primary care agencies including general practise, school nursing, health visitors and schools	**Early Intervention** **Mental Health Promotion** Onward Referral	Relationships – Boys and girls Sleep workshops Art Club Girls' Group

Trauma-informed practice

A trauma-informed approach[1] is a framework that *recognises* the trauma experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, *realises* the potential effects of the trauma, minimises risks of *re-traumatisation*, builds on strengths and *resilience* to support *recovery,* and works in a way that develops quality *relationships*.

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[1] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 57. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 134801. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014

Country of origin

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have experienced very severe traumas, very high levels of violence, including sexual violence, and significant and multiple losses, including the loss of caregivers and family members[2]. Journeys to the UK are often fraught with danger and further trauma. Sometimes unaccompanied young people experience trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have a high rate of mental illness.[3] When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrive in the UK, they must navigate what can be a harsh and sometimes traumatic asylum process. They also experience a different culture and an unfamiliar language. It is hard for them to feel they belong in Scotland because their future is uncertain, and they do not know if their claim for protection will be accepted. They fear being returned to situations of further trauma and danger, and they do not know who will be there to look after them.

Young People are "unaccompanied", so without caregivers, relatives, or friends, and they must face these multiple challenges without any safety or certainty about what the future holds, or who will be there to face it with them. They experience very significant trauma without access to protective factors and social support that can buffer the effects of trauma. Their situation is thus extremely precarious, and the memories of the past, the stress of the present and the fear of the future feels overwhelming.

The Allies Group was developed to respond to the trauma experiences and effects on unaccompanied young people. It prevents re-traumatisation by building on the trauma-informed practice of Guardianship Scotland, which embeds the principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, peer support, and cultural humility in all its work. It builds resilience and supports recovery by being a strengths-based programme, acknowledging the survival skills of young people, increasing their social support and opportunities for community integration, and sharing psychosocial skills and expertise through a partnership with a specialist trauma service. It is also a relationships-based programme - building quality relationships between young people, their guardians, community organisations and the trauma service.

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[2] Hodes M, Jagdev D, Chandra N, Cunniff A. Risk and resilience for psychological distress amongst unaccompanied asylum-seeking adolescents. J Child Psych Psychiatry 2008; 49: 723−32
[3] Huemer J., Karnak N., Steiner H., Unaccompanied refugee children Lancet 2009 Feb., 21; 373(9664): 612-614

Background to the development of Allies Group programme

The group was written by one of the report authors, Rachel Morley, when she was the lead for asylum seekers and refugees at the trauma service. It draws on four models: first the ADAPT model (Adaptation and Development after Persecution and Trauma) by Derrick Silove[4], secondly Ungar's[5] body of work on cross-cultural resilience, thirdly the Tree of Life[6] and fourthly the clinical work model of Safety and Stabilisation in response to the needs of people experiencing complex trauma.

i. ADAPT although developed to support psychosocial programming in post-conflict settings, has also been used to plan work with asylum seekers and refugees after forced displacement in new host communities. It is based on an understanding of the potential effects of trauma and the "pillars considered essential to restoring communal mental health and psychosocial recovery."

These pillars are:
1) safety/security
2) bonds/networks/relationships
3) justice
4) roles and identities
5) existential meaning

ii. Michael Ungar, co-director of the Resilience Research Centre, describes resilience as a two-way process, a concept embedded within the New Scots strategy. While he speaks to the "capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being," he also highlights that "resources need to be provided in culturally meaningful ways." The group was designed to increase young people's personal and group resilience as well as their access to community resources, while helping community agencies increase their relationships with unaccompanied young people so that they could provide resources in culturally meaningful ways.

iii. The Tree of Life was co-developed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough as a hopeful and inspiring approach, drawing on narrative therapy and community work principles to initially work with children affected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa. It provides an accessible way for young people to share their skills for survival, the relationships and resources that are significant to

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4 Silove, D. (2013). The ADAPT model: A conceptual framework for mental health and psychosocial programming in post conflict settings. *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work & Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict, 11*(3), 237–248. https://doi.org/10.1097/WTF.0000000000000005

5 Ungar, M. 2015. Working with Children and Youth with complex needs. 20 skills to build resilience

6 Ncube, N (2006) "The tree of life project: using narrative ideas to work with vulnerable children in Southern Africa" from International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community work

them, and their hopes and dreams for the future. It was successfully piloted at the trauma service with unaccompanied asylum-seeking girls. (Storying skills of survival: a narrative group for young women who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum Morley R., Barrie L., Frost R., Clinical Psychology Forum 244)

iv. The psychological and psychosocial components of the group also draw from the body of clinical practice and research supporting survivors of complex trauma who have mental health difficulties linked to their experiences of trauma and the need for a phase-based response. The first phase is a "safety and stabilisation" that builds psychological safety and trust.[7] [8]

Each time the group runs, young people are engaged in sessions and provide feedback as to what they found helpful and relevant. The consultations between Guardianship Scotland and Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service enable a space to consider the young people's comments and facilitators observations, which can then be incorporated into subsequent groups.

The table below illustrates the learning outcomes we aim to achieve to help young people rebuild the five areas of their lives represented by the pillars.

Memories

Table 2: Pillars and Learning Outcomes

Safety
- Understand how my past experiences can impact my well-being now and in the future.   - Understand symptoms of trauma.   - Understand the purpose of grounding exercises and how they can help me.   - Learn and practice various coping strategies and understand when I should use them.   - Learn about sleep hygiene to develop healthy bedtime routines and help manage sleep difficulties.

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[7] Robertson M., Blumberg J., Gratton J., Walsh E., Kayla H. (2013) Group-based approach to stabilisation and symptom management in a phased treatment model for refugees and asylum seekers; European Journal of Psychotraumatilogy 4:10

[8] Transforming Psychological Trauma: A Knowledge & Skills Framework (2017) https://transformingpsychologicaltrauma.scot/media/x54hw43l/nationaltraumatrainingframework.pdf

Justice
• Understand that the denial of my human rights is wrong and that not having my rights upheld can influence my well-being. • Discuss what a child needs to be safe, active, and healthy. • Learn about my rights as set out in the UNCRC. • Understand that experiencing injustice and the denial of my rights can make me feel a range of emotions, including anger. • Identify the physical reactions my body has when I feel angry. • Understand how the emotion of anger can trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response. • Learn exercises that will help release tension in my body and think about other activities that may also do this.

Relationships
• Discuss and reflect on how past relationships can influence how I relate to others and build relationships. • Identify characteristics and behaviours I believe are important to me when building relationships with others. • Reflect on the loss of relationships in my life. Understand the different ways in which relationships can be lost and how this may make me feel. • Name or learn about feelings and emotions related to grief and loss. • Understand the need for self-compassion when grieving the loss of relationships and how I can show myself self-compassion.

Identity
• Understand that leaving my country and community may influence my identity due to the loss of my roles and relationships. • Understand that a low mood can influence my desire to engage with people and in activities. • Identify how I might benefit from having different activities in my day. • Understand the benefits of planning activities and having a routine in my day.

Meaning - Tree of Life
• Draw a 'tree of life', which involves; Reflecting on my past and identifying key influences which have made me who I am today; Reflecting on my present and identifying my strengths and qualities; Identifying my hopes and aspirations for the future. • Reflecting on the barriers and challenges that I have as a UASC/trafficked child and how I can manage and overcome these challenges

During the 10-week group programme, young people can increase their sense of **safety** by learning breathing and grounding exercises and strategies to respond to nightmares and sleep better, but also by sharing and documenting community resources that make them feel safe, for example nature or yoga. They look at what they need to build trust with others and acknowledge that their ability to trust others may be influenced by their past experiences. They have opportunities to mark their

grief for loved ones they have lost and to participate in community or faith-based rituals if they want, as well as forge connections and make significant new **relationships**. They get the best advice on how to increase their access to **justice** and their awareness of all their rights, as well as acknowledgment of the importance of anger, protest, and assertiveness as a response to their human rights having been denied. They have opportunities to name their skills and talents and what is important to them in their **identity,** as well as opportunities to make community connections that help to build on these and nourish them. The Tree of Life helps them to develop their sense of what is important and **meaningful** to them in their past, present, and future and to have that witnessed and acknowledged by a community.

Past and Future

The group is psychosocial, building and resourcing both individual and community resilience in the face of the multiple traumas and losses these young people have faced. The Allies Group programme teaches young people coping strategies to help them manage symptoms of trauma, anxiety, stress, and tension. It helps them understand how their experiences as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child and trafficked child impacts their feelings of safety, relationships, identity, and access to justice. We help them reflect on their past, while identifying their strengths and aspirations for the future.

Methodology

Guardianship
Scotland
Wellbeing Project

2. Methodology

Some guiding inclusion and exclusion principles were developed to assist with determining where Allies might be most appropriate.

Inclusion criteria included:

- If newly arrived in Glasgow, approximately 3-9 months.
- Are presenting with some mental health concerns that could initially be supported by Allies.
- Would benefit from learning about impact of their experiences and some psychosocial ways of coping.
- Would benefit from being more connected socially – both by attending the group and meeting other young people and going on social activities.

Exclusion criteria included:

- If not new to Glasgow, approximately over 9-12 months and have continued to present with mental health concerns that are interfering with their functioning.
- If there is greater complexity in their mental health presentation.
- If they do not want to attend a group.

These criteria were used flexibly. Particularly in the period of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions where people may have been living in Glasgow for over 9 months but were experiencing isolation and further difficulties with their mental health. Additionally, some young people were not initially ready to attend Allies but were more able to later. Also, where waits for NHS services increased, sometimes Allies was more appropriate or if young people did not want to attend NHS services. Allies was thought to be most beneficial in the first year of arrival in Glasgow, but referrals were considered on an individual basis and discussion in consultation with Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service was available.

The project has been robustly evaluated throughout the pilot, conducting pre- and post-evaluations for each group. Two self-report scales were used: the Children and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-R),[9] which measures social and ecological resilience; and the New Scots Questionnaire,[10] which was developed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data about the experiences of young people as New Scots. Evaluations have indicated that the Allies Programme has had a positive impact on those who engage with it.

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[9] Resilience Research Centre. (2018) *CYRM and ARM user manual*. Halifax, NS: Resilience Research Centre, Dalhouse University. Retrieved from http://www.resilienceresearch.org
[10] Scottish Government New Scots Strategy (2018)

Children and Youth Resilience Measure

The Children and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-R) is a 28-item self-report measure of social-ecological resilience. The measure can be used to evaluate the efficacy of interventions to build and maintain resilience.

Resilience was measured pre- and post-group using the CYRM-R. A higher score on the CYRM-R is indicative of greater resilience.

New Scots Questionnaire

The New Scots questionnaire, developed in 2018 by Rachel Morley, assessed whether some of the vision of the New Scots strategy was being realised, particularly whether asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland felt safe, felt they belonged, could access all the support they needed, and knew their rights. At the beginning of the Allies project, this questionnaire was piloted to see what barriers young people were facing to integration in Scotland. From this, the Allies group could try and address these and assess whether being part of the group increased any of these factors for the participants.

The 'New Scots Questionnaire' was developed to help understand what is working well and what needs to improve for New Scots within the context of:

- Feel safe and supported in Scotland
- Know that you belong
- Know your rights, and
- Be able to access the help you need

A higher score on the New Scots Questionnaire is also indicative of a greater sense of areas 'working well' for New Scots.

Results

Guardianship
Scotland

Wellbeing Project

3. Results

The results section will provide information on the overall group data. Separate information on the face-to-face groups' results can be found in Appendix 1 and on the online groups' results in Appendix 2.

Since the start of the project in 2019, ten groups (four in person and six online) took place, supporting 95 young men. Due to COVID-19, the programme was adapted to take place online; as a result, this report is divided to reflect this. Finally, in 2021, additional funding allowed the project to expand the Allies programme to include girls, delivering both an online and in-person group. The girls' group was evaluated separately and is not included in this report. Overall, combining both the in-person and online young men's Allies groups, the programme was offered to ninety-five young men (n=95). Some young people provided incomplete data, and as such, occasionally the totals will not equal this number.

Demographics

Age
Eighty-six young people were between 0-18 years old prior to commencing the group (n=90). Four young people were between 19-25 years old (n=5).

Identity

Language and Region
There were 36 Vietnamese speakers (all from Vietnam). There were 28 Kurdish Sorani speakers (19 from Kurdish Iran, 9 from Kurdish Iraq), 19 Arabic speakers (13 people from Sudan, 3 people from Syria, 1 person from Chad, 1 person from Yemen, 1 person from Libya), 4 English speakers (1 person from Sierra Leone, 3 from Gambia), 2 Bajuni speakers (both from Somalia), 2 Tigrinya speakers (both from Eritrea), 2 Pashto speakers (both from Afghanistan), 1 Kurdish Kurmanji speaker (from Syria), and 1 Albanian speaker (from Albania).

Length of Stay
Sixty-seven young people attending the group had been in Scotland for between 3 months and 1 year (n=67). Twelve young people had been in Scotland for less than 3 months (n=12), and sixteen people had been in Scotland for over 1 year (n=16).

Status
For asylum status, 92 young people were 'asylum-seeking' (n=92), three young people already had refugee status (n=3). Post-group, the number of those with refugee status had increased to eight (n=8).

Children and Youth Resilience Measure

The resilience of each young person was measured pre- and post-group using the CYRM-R. A higher score is indicative of higher (self-reported) resilience.

Mean Resilience Score for young people pre-group = 64.3

Mean Resilience Score for young people post-group = 68.2

Meaning

Mean Resilience Scores increased following attendance at the group. Similarly, young people's self-reported resilience increased for 67% of young people who attended the group. It is a positive finding that the group supported resilience improving. The young people have already faced adversity and trauma in their lives and have shown strength in surviving it. The impact of their experience can affect their resilience and well-being, and it is encouraging to see that Allies improved resilience for most attendees. Young people offered qualitative explanations of the challenges they faced concurrently with the group, which may have contributed to those who reported a decrease in resilience. There had been incidents of community harassment, racism, housing issues, and ongoing difficulties related to the asylum process.

New Scots Questionnaire

Sense of Safety

An initial question asked, **"Do you feel safe in Scotland?"**

Sense of Safety was reported on a scale of 0-3 (0= not at all, 3= very safe).

Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people pre-group = 2.5

Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people post-group = 2.7

Mean Sense of Safety scores increased following attendance at the group. Additionally, young people's self-reported 'sense of safety' increased (28%) or remained the same (63%). Sense of safety is an important part of recovery within the phase-based model of working with repeated interpersonal trauma.

Further qualitative questions on safety gave information on what services helped the young people feel safe. The responses identified the Guardianship Service, social work, knowing human rights, and other supports and services as the main things that helped them feel safe. Post-group, there was an increase in the number of young people reporting the identified supports and services as contributing to helping them feel safe. This is important for young people to both feel safe and supported and to know who to approach if needed.

There are many factors, both external and internal, that contribute to young people feeling safe.

A qualitative question asked, **"What stops you feeling safe?"**

Memories and feelings from past trauma experiences remained the most reported barrier to feeling safe. Other factors included being separated from family and community, harassment, and racism. Furthermore, post-group, members continually reported that the asylum process, racism, and fear of the police stopped them feeling safe. The number of people saying that nothing made them feel unsafe also increased.

Journey

It was also asked, **"What would make you feel safer?"**

The main themes from the qualitative comments provided highlighted group members fears around impending asylum claims and the uncertainties that this may hold for the future. Some young people highlighted difficulties in the communities they lived in, feeling unsafe in their accommodations due to areas of deprivation and experiencing racism. Some young people reported 'feeling unsafe' particularly at night. Young people also reported feeling safe in Scotland.

Direct quotes from respondents are provided below:

Getting refugee status would change everything for me.	Living in a quiet place with a family.
The only thing I fear is being returned.	If I was in my family, safe and settled.
If I get my status and move to Glasgow.	I have no family here so it's not easy. I have no protection here.

To get my asylum granted.	Moving accommodation... I don't feel safe there.
Being allowed to stay and being protected.	Living with a family.
I don't know what will happen if the Home Office don't grant me status.	Being more integrated into community. Would like to move to student accommodation. Independence.
Being allowed to stay here away from my government, who are brutal, would help me feel safe.	If people were more respectful.
I am safe at the moment, but I don't know about the future.	Not being shouted at by people on the street.
Knowing people are looking out for me and care for me, I feel safe here.	Staff and guardian make me feel safe. I feel they care about me.

Sense of Belonging

A question asked, **"Do you feel you belong in Scotland?"**

Sense of Belonging was reported on a scale of 0-3, (0= I don't feel that I belong, 3= I very much feel that I belong).

Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people pre-group = 2.4

Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people post-group = 2.7

Mean Sense of Belonging Scores increased following attendance of the group. Additionally, young people's self-reported 'sense of belonging' increased (31%), or remained the same (53%). Sense of belonging is important for adjusting to living in a new country and supporting integration.

Further qualitative questions on belonging were asked. Young people were asked what areas or services contributed to their sense of belonging. Several places and organisations were reported, with the top-ranked ones being voluntary organisations, education, social work services, Guardianship and friends. Additionally, friendly people, faith organisations, opportunities to share culture, and health services were also listed. There were more organisations listed post-group, demonstrating an increase in awareness of resources available and supporting integration.

Group members were asked, **"Can you tell us about a time when you felt you belonged in Scotland?"**

Themes from young people consistently highlighted that feeling safe in Scotland helped them foster a deeper sense of belonging. It was also clear from responses that opportunities for education and building social connections with friends were important in fostering a sense of belonging. However, several young people used this section to further express how the asylum process made it difficult to feel like they belonged.

Direct quotes are provided below:

I have been made to feel important, makes me feel that I belong, treated the same… I love people from Glasgow.	During Refugee Week – It was a good celebration and everyone was happy.
First time I came to Guardianship.	Sometimes with friends.
When I make friends.	Since I arrived in Glasgow I felt safe.
I think Scotland is good.	I feel Scottish people are friendly and I have been lucky.
The people who have helped me haven't treated me like I am not from here.	When I play football with Scottish people of all ages, they make me feel welcome.
At Allies group, playing football with friends.	When I am at College and Guardianship.
On a trip with Social Work I felt like that.	I'm well looked after by my foster carer and befriender.
Because it's very peaceful, and people have been good to me here.	

Young people were also asked **"What makes you feel you don't belong?"**

Repeated comments expressed concerns around communicating in English, the asylum process, and a lack of friends, which contributed to a sense of not belonging. Some of the young people attending the in-person group no longer reported a lack of friends as an issue post-group. This may reflect the benefit of meeting in person and building friendships.
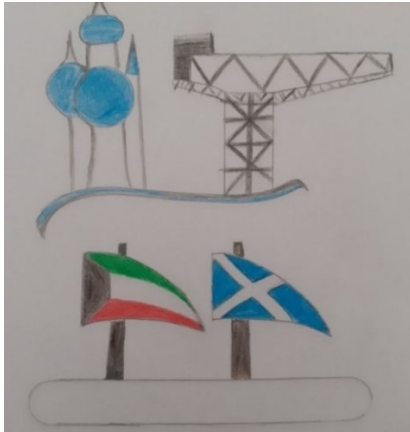
Identity

They were also asked, **"What would help you to feel like belong more?"**

The most common theme throughout was in relation to obtaining refugee status. Young people also identified that developing positive relationships and opportunities for education and employment would help them feel a greater sense of belonging.

Direct quotes are provided below:

Getting refugee status - I would be a complete person.	I don't know about that, maybe if I am allowed to stay, I'll feel like I belong.
If I was allowed to stay here to protect me.	When I get status, I will feel like a local.
How can I belong without refugee status?	Getting my status would give me more rights and feel like I belong.
Being granted status will make me feel like this is my home. How can I belong if I haven't been told I'm welcome?	Learning the language is motivating me, as I know it will help me belong more. Being able to work.
If I build relationships, go to school, make friends.	Meeting people and doing activities together.
Having friends and relationships.	Speaking English- I'd like to go to college.
I would like to have the same money as other people in Glasgow.	Scotland doesn't need any more than what is here- they respect lots of religions. I am able to pray on Friday at the church- which is really respectful. They go beyond with their respect.
I would like a family to live with.	Having my family here.

Accessing Help

Young people were asked, **"Do you have the help you need?"**

Accessing help was reported on a scale of 0-3, (0= I don't have the help I need, 3= I very much have the help I need). Only twenty-two young people gave pre- and post-scores for accessing help.

> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people pre-group = 2.5**
>
> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people post-group = 2.6**

Mean Accessing Help Scores slightly increased following attendance at the group.

Young people's self-reported ability to access help increased, or remained the same (67%), and increased (20%). It is possible that the percentage increase in young people's self-reported ability to access help pre-group was, overall, high; therefore, there is not a marked difference between ratings pre- and post-group. Young people attending Allies were already be linked up with appropriate services and have knowledge about where to access support.

Qualitative questions gathered more information on accessing help. Young people were asked, **"Do you know how to access help if you need it?"**

Young people consistently reported that they would ask social workers, guardians, and accommodation staff to support them in accessing help. Young people reported an increase in seeking support from Guardianship Scotland post-group.

They were asked, **"What help would you like to access?"**

Themes from the comments indicate support with their asylum claim, accessing ESOL and further education, changes to accommodation, and wanting to see a psychologist.

Direct quotes are provided below:

I need my lawyer to help with my claim.	Different educational classes, more ESOL.
I would like to be interviewed by the Home Office. It is taking too long and I also want to go to college.	I want the help and support to continue. I hope I get asylum to have a chance to learn about the culture.
Help with education in the future.	I would like to be a design engineer.
To move house.	Psychological support
I would like to change my accommodation.	I would like to see a psychologist.
Physical Health issues I need help with.	I would like learn language, to cook, would like independence.
I would like help and guidance for my future.	

Young people were also asked **about how Scotland could be more welcoming.**

There were positive comments about the support and help received. Suggestions for improvements were about getting their asylum claim processed and accessing education sooner.

Direct quotes are provided below:

People have helped me in every way. But I would like refugee status.	I think it would be good if they let people arrive legally without boats, so no one drowns.
People welcome me, but the Home Office don't. They need to take a long time to think about if I am welcome, so I'm not really welcome.	I'm happy just now. Would like to hear from the Home Office and have my age accepted.
Positive outcome to asylum claim.	I would have liked a college placement quicker.
Education placement when I arrived.	It is really supportive to me already.
People are friendly, happy and that's good.	Glasgow is already welcoming.

Additional Comments on Allies from Young People

Young people gave additional comments on their experience of attending Allies and what they gained from it. Themes from these comments indicated that Allies helped them understand their experiences, learn ways of coping, and build on their strengths.

They reported a decrease in distress, alongside normalising and understanding that their difficulties were trauma symptoms. This aligned with psychoeducation on the impact of trauma. They also consistently reported an increase in coping skills. They could describe the skills they learned and demonstrate their ability to use them in their lives.

The group experience also created belonging, acceptance, and safety for the young people. One boy said, "We are brothers now". There was interpersonal learning for the young people through being with others, increasing trust, and understanding themselves better. There were also improvements in the young people's sense of hope for their future.

Direct quotes are provided below:

The group gave me useful knowledge as I learnt what I didn't know before.	It was good. I learned many things. I learned about my rights. I think that this might be useful for me.
I enjoyed coming to the group and meeting other young people. I think you gave me very useful information.	The group was useful. The exercises that we learned to do when I feel sad or scared to distract my mind were good.

I found it very helpful, especially the exercises that help me relax through breathing. I do them at night.	Breathing one when I feel like I'm stressed, most of the time at night. It helps a bit to relax me.
I think the group was very helpful, particularly during these days. I can use the things I have learned to apply to my life and to make me feel better.	I liked it because I got to meet people. I learned about the breathing and I learned how to steer my thoughts in the direction away from my past and to focus on the present and my future.
It was good and I learned some useful tips from the group. Until now I am doing something exercises. I use the tools that you sent me in the post. I use the post card and the oils and they are really helping me relax.	It was good to discuss things with different people and share with each other. Met new people and talk about different topics
I benefited from the grounding exercises, the stone and the oil has really benefited me. I use them at night	"I have never done these groups before. I felt more confident in the group. I think it helped my confidence in speaking about myself."
Glad i came to the group, feels my worries have lessened.	I found the group helpful and enjoyed coming
I said I was okay when first met because I didn't know who to trust	Glad i came to the group, feels my worries have lessened.
I found the group helpful and enjoyed coming	Met new people and talk about different topics

Reflections from Facilitators

Every group was unique and special in its own way. Often for the first time, young people have their experiences listened to, acknowledged, and validated. Young people are accepted and understood by us and their peers. There is a feeling of solidarity in the Allies group, and young people are welcomed wholeheartedly.

The group is a place where young people are noticed and listened to, where their favourite food or drink is remembered, and where we take note of what they say, like, feel and we respond to that. We stay attentive to every form of communication they show us, to interact in a way that makes them feel seen and heard.

It was important for the Allies project to be embedded in services that have a good understanding of the experiences and needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked young people. This includes facilitating the group with cultural sensitivity and ensuring that it is delivered in the context of relationship-based practice. It is important that facilitators and interpreters share these values and demonstrate them in their practice.

The groups were a place of learning and growth for us as well as the young people. Each group brought stories of strength, courage, pain, and resilience. Young people's experiences, thoughts, and feedback helped shape further adaptations and growth of the project. It was a privilege to be part of a programme that helps separated young people in their journey to adapt and thrive in their new life in Scotland.

Allies Group trip

Summary of results

Overall, on all measurable outcomes, Allies has improved outcomes for young people following group attendance. Most participants in both face-to-face and online delivery reported an incremental increase in resilience following the completion of the Allies group. There were smaller improvements in sense of safety and belonging.

External factors were identified that contributed to this, including racism, harassment, and uncertainty with asylum claims. This impacted on their ability to develop an internalised sense of safety, to settle and feel that they belong in Scotland and the UK. Many young people spoke about the link between a sense of safety and belonging. They stated that the feeling of safety gave them a sense of belonging. They also described how being part of the group and experiencing respect and kindness helped them feel safe.

They also gave comments that clearly indicated Allies had met its aims of being a psychosocial group for the impact of trauma. The young people described improving their sense of safety through gaining an understanding of their experiences in relation to the impact of trauma. They also learned coping skills that they used and found beneficial. They built relational skills through experiencing trust and belonging. They had access to justice through knowing their rights and being supported to access them. They developed their identity by assimilating their life experiences and considering what is meaningful to them.
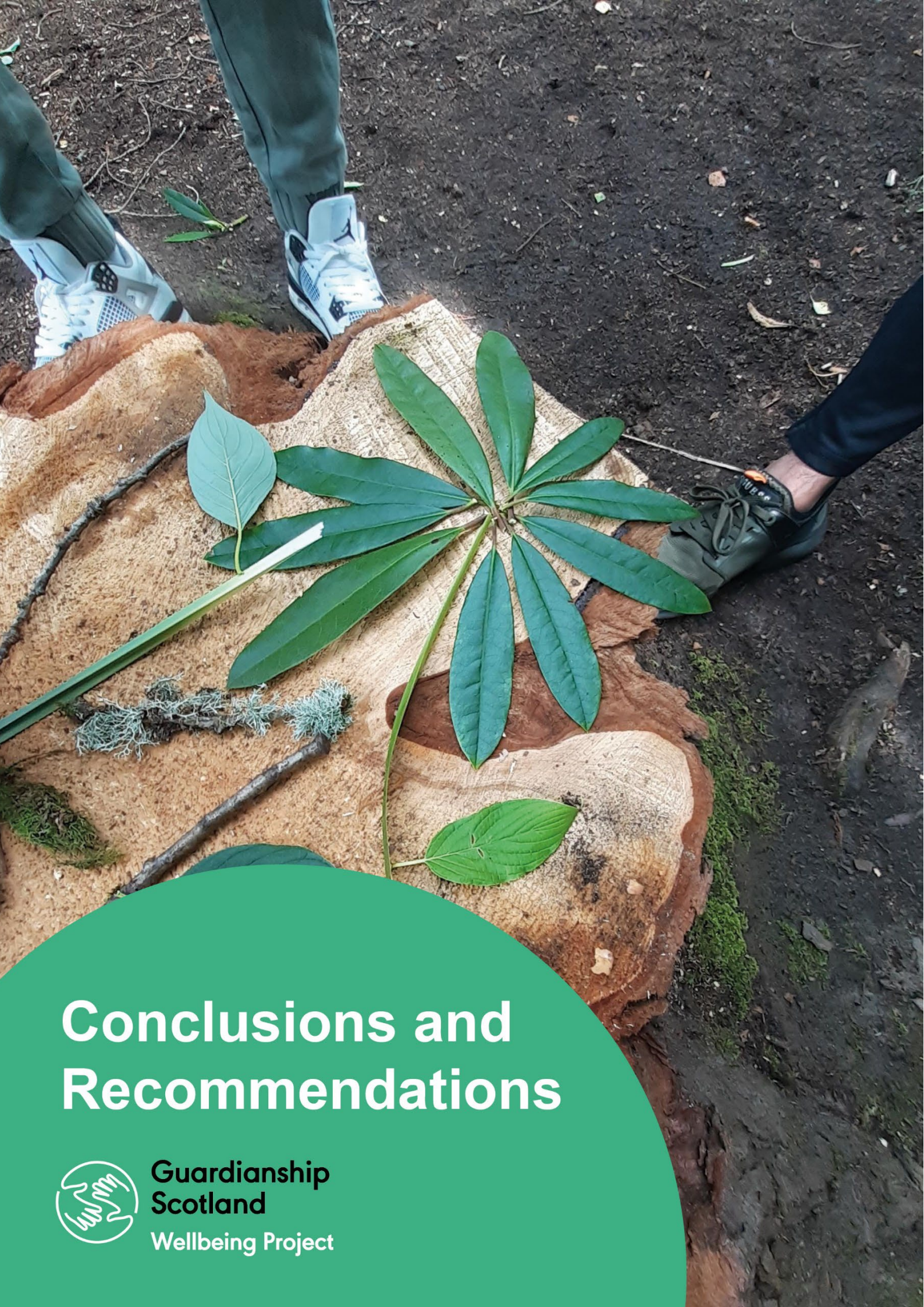
Conclusions and Recommendations

Guardianship
Scotland

Wellbeing Project

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation of the groups demonstrates that there were improved outcomes for young people following group attendance. This is positive as it evidences that the Allies programme meets its aims of improving mental health and well-being, supporting resilience, building a sense of safety and belonging, and accessing help. It demonstrates that a short-term psychosocial group intervention for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and victims of child trafficking can have a positive impact on building individual and community resilience.

The main recommendation is to continue with the delivery and evaluation of the groups. The CYRM-R measure of resilience was helpful for providing overall improvements in this area. The New Scots Questionnaire surfaced some important and interesting information and showed positive shifts for some of the items. However, as those participating in the Allies group were still largely uncertain as to their asylum outcomes, this single factor contributed significantly and impacted heavily on outcomes for safety and belonging. A future version of the questionnaire would take this into account in how the questions are phrased.

The evaluation plans are to develop the measures used to be more linked to the group content and intended outcomes. This would give more direct evaluation information on whether the group is meeting its aims as a psychosocial intervention for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and trafficked children as part of a safety and stabilisation intervention. It focuses on them understanding the impact of their experiences and learning coping skills to manage this in the areas of safety, relationships, identity, and access to justice.

Areas for improvement have been identified based on feedback from young people as well as facilitator recommendations from delivering groups and consultations with Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service. This included adding an initial introductory session for the young people to meet before starting the content delivery. This helps with engagement in the group and supports the social aspects of forming a group of peers.

It has been helpful to have the same interpreters to ensure quality interpreting and consistency in the group. It is helpful to not have a high percentage of any one nationality. This all supports building feelings of safety and trust in the group.

Promoting choice, collaboration, and empowerment was done by giving options for activities and encouraging the group to decide what they want to do. Further psychoeducation on sleep and nightmares has been added to the safety sessions in recognition of how common these difficulties are for young people.

Additional funding has enabled the development and delivery of an Allies group for girls. Psychoeducation on relationships and re-victimisation was incorporated based

on evidence on violence against women and girls. In recognition that this not solely an issue for girls, this material has also been incorporated into the boys' groups.

It has also been noted that it is important to have flexibility in delivering the content of the groups to respond to the needs of the attendees. Occasionally, it was helpful to add another session at the end if the content has not been fully delivered or would benefit from further reinforcement. It was essential throughout to allow space to recognise the external factors that the young people were facing, particularly uncertainty regarding asylum status and concern for family members and communities, and how this can impact their well-being.

The partnership between the Guardianship Scotland Allies staff and the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service worked well. Staff involved stated that the co-delivery, skills development, and consultation have supported the delivery of the groups under suitable governance. Consultations have included planning the content delivery and how this would be done, thinking about the process of delivering group work, talking about young people's needs, considering interpersonal dynamics, actively demonstrating, and reinforcing trauma-informed principles, and responding to additional vulnerabilities and uncertainties that can came into the group. The consultations provided a forum to reflect, obtain guidance, and make developments in the delivery of the groups.

Allies is a beneficial resource to support the mental health and well-being of this population. It is a low-level, structured psychosocial intervention. It fits within the safety and stabilisation phases of working with the impact of complex trauma. Psychosocial support is shown to be beneficial for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK[11], and this was a consistent finding from the development and evaluation of Allies. Systematic reviews of group-based interventions indicated that the psychological and social benefits of group interventions lead to positive effects in many areas of unaccompanied minors' lives[12] and this has also been found for attendees of Allies in both quantitative and qualitative evaluation and feedback.

For some young people, attending Allies was sufficient to support their mental health and well-being. For some people who require referral for further psychological work, attending Allies means that they have already received psychoeducation and coping skills and are better equipped for trauma-specific psychological interventions. This supports a matched care approach, which allows for increased access to low-level psychological interventions and the most effective use of specialist resources. The Allies programme has generated local and national interest, and consideration is being given to the requirements needed to deliver the groups under appropriate governance. It is planned to develop guidance on facilitator requirements and

[11] Kohli, R & Mather, R (2003) Promoting psychosocial well-being in unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in the United Kingdom. Child & Family Social Work 8:3.
[12]Hutchinson, R; King, N & Majumder, P. (2022)How effective is group intervention in the treatment for unaccompanied and accompanied refugee minors with mental health difficulties: A systematic review. International Journal of Social Psychiatry 68:3.

management. Requests for delivery of Allies should be directed to Guardianship Scotland.

Appendix 1

Guardianship
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Wellbeing Project

Appendix 1: 10 Week Face-to-Face Groups

Results

The ten-week, in person Allies Group was offered to thirty young men (n=30). Group 1 was attended by four young men (n=4). Group 2 was attended by nine young men (n=9). Group 3 was attended by twelve young men (n=12). Group 9 was attended by five young men (n=5).

Twenty-six people completed pre- and post-group measures (CYRM-R and New Scots) (n=26). The remaining four, all from Group 1, only completed the CYRM-R. These results are collated from the data provided by these young men.

Demographics

Age
Twenty-nine young people were between 0-18 years old prior to commencing the group (n=29). One young person was between 19-25 years old (n=1).

Language and Region
There were 13 Kurdish Sorani speakers (8 from Kurdish Iran, 5 from Kurdish Iraq), 9 Arabic speakers (1 person from Yemen, 1 person from Libya, 2 from Syria, 5 from Sudan) and 6 Vietnamese speakers (all from Vietnam), and 2 Pashto speakers (both from Afghanistan).

Length of Stay
Twenty-five young people attending the group had been in Scotland for between 3 months – 1 year (n=25). Three young people had been in Scotland for less than 3 months (n=3), and two young people had been in Scotland for over 1 year (n=2).

Status
Prior to commencing the group, all those who we have data for (twenty-seven young people) were 'asylum seeking' (n=27). Post group, three of these young people have been granted status to remain in the UK (n=3).

Children and Youth Resilience Measure

Resilience of each young person was measured pre and post group using the CYRM-R. A higher score is indicative of higher (self-reported) resilience.

> **Mean Resilience Score for young people pre-group = 65.8**
>
> **Mean Resilience Score for young people post-group = 68.7**

Mean Resilience Scores increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual changes in Resilience, pre and post Allies Group.
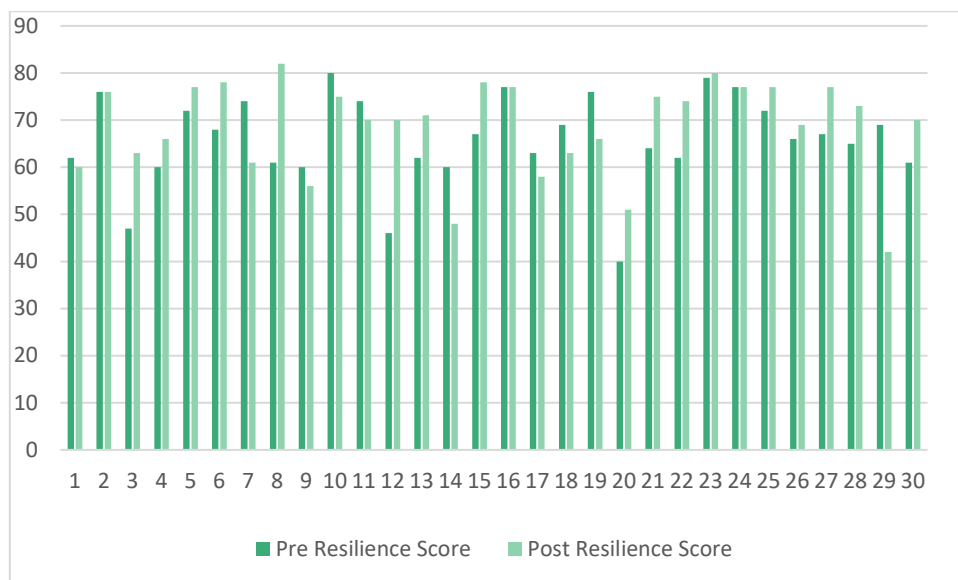
For seventeen young people, resilience was reported to have increased following attendance at the group (n=17). For ten young people, resilience was reported to have decreased (n=10) and for three young people there was no reported change in resilience (n=3).

For the ten young people whose resilience was measured to have decreased post group, young people offered qualitative explanations of the challenges they faced concurrently with the group. There had been experiences of community harassment, racism, housing issues and ongoing difficulties related to the asylum process that may account for this apparent deterioration. Equally, two participants provided incomplete answers to the CYRM-R measure which may account for their reduction in scores.

Young people's self-reported resilience increased or remained the same for 67% of young people who attended the ten-week group.

New Scots Questionnaire
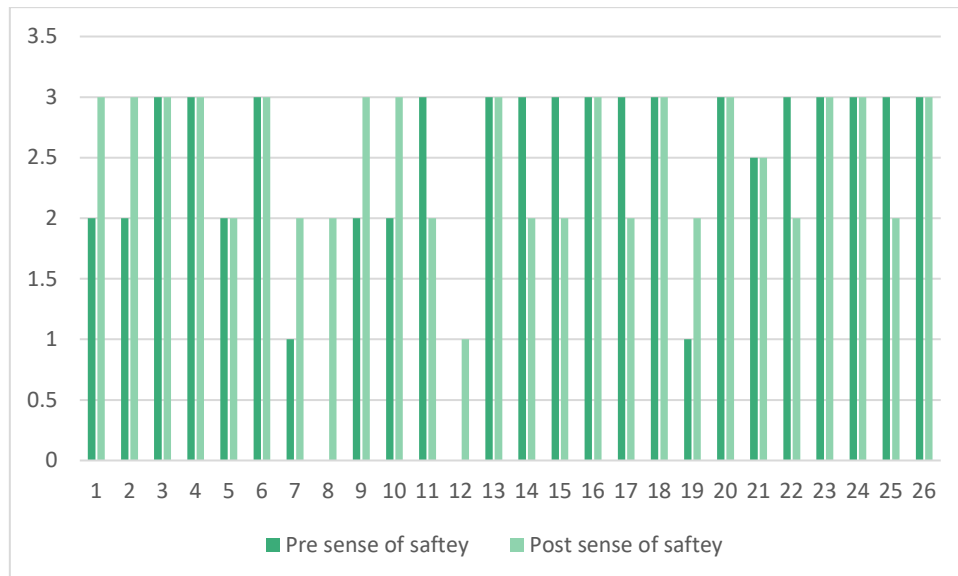**Sense of Safety**

Q. – Do you feel safe in Scotland?
Sense of Safety was reported on a scale of 0 – 3 (0 – not at all, 3 – very safe).

> **Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people pre-group = 2.4**
>
> **Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people post-group = 2.5**

Mean Sense of Safety Scores increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual reports of 'Sense of Safety' pre and post Allies Group.

For eight young people an increase in sense of safety was reported post group (n=8). Twelve young people reported no change in sense of safety (n=12) and four young people reported a deterioration in sense of safety (n=6).

From qualitative data, the young people who reported a reduction in sense of safety, there was a narrative of experiencing exclusion within the local community, citing racism, community harassment, lack of support and difficulties communicating in English, which may have accounted for this reduction.

Young people's self-reported 'sense of safety' increased or remained the same for 77% of young people who attended the ten-week group and increased for 31% of attendees.

Qualitative Information – 'Sense of Safety'
Group members were asked to select areas / services that contributed to 'sense of safety' both pre- and post-group.

Q. What Helps Group Members Feel Safe?

Group members were asked to select areas / services that contributed to 'sense of safety' both pre and post group. Selections are listed below and are ranked in order of frequency (most to least).

The table below illustrates areas identified as contributing to young people obtaining a sense of safety pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Guardianship Service (n=11)	1. Guardianship Service (n =15)
2. Social Work (n=9)	2. Human Rights (n = 14)
2. Human Rights (n =9)	3. School or College (n=11)
3. Family (n=8)	4. Social Work (n=10)
4. Police (n =7)	5. Friends (n=8)
4. Health Services (n = 7)	6. Police (n=7)
5. School or college (n =6)	7. Health Services (n=6)
6. Friends (n =4)	7. Asylum Process (n=6)
7. Asylum Process (n=1)	8. Support Staff (n=5)

Post-group, group members reported an increase in the number of services which contributed to helping them feel safer.

Q. What stops you feeling safe?

The table below illustrates areas identified as barriers to young people obtaining a sense of safety pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Memories and feelings from past trauma (n=10)	1. Memories and feelings from past trauma (n=13)
2. Being separated from family (n=8)	2. Being separated from family (n=11)
3. Community Harassment (n=5)	3. Community Harassment (n=8)
4. Racism (n=4)	4. Asylum Process (n=3)
4. Asylum Process (n=4)	5. Racism (n=2)
5. No safe places to go (n=1)	6. Fear of Police (n=1)
5. Experience of Violence in Scotland (n=1)	
5. Fear of Police (n=1)	

Memories and feelings from past trauma experiences remained the most reported barrier to feeling safe, followed by being separated from family and community

harassment and racism. Further, post-group, members continued to report that the asylum process, racism, and fear of the police stopped them feeling safe.

Qualitative Comments – What would make you feel safer?

General themes from qualitative comments provided highlighted group members fears around impending asylum claims and the uncertainties that this may hold for the future. Some young people highlighted difficulties in the communities they lived, feeling unsafe in accommodation due to areas of deprivation and experiencing racism. Some young people reported 'feeling unsafe' particularly at night.

General themes from qualitative comments provided highlighted group members' fears around impending asylum claims and the uncertainties that this may hold for the future.

Direct quotes from members have been provided below:

- "Getting refugee status would change everything for me"
- "The only thing I fear is being returned"
- "Living in a quiet place with a family"
- "If I had status"
- "I think I am safe here and happy"
- "Don't know"
- "If I get my status and move to Glasgow"
- "To get my asylum granted"
- "If people were more respectful"
- "Being allowed to stay and being protected"
- "Living with a family"
- "Moving accommodation...I don't feel safe there"
- "Not being shouted at by people on the street"

Sense of Belonging

Q. Do you feel you belong in Scotland?

Sense of Belonging was reported on a scale of 0 – 3, (0- I don't feel that I belong, 3 – I very much feel that I belong).

> **Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people pre-group = 2.3**
>
> **Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people post-group = 2.3**

Whilst Mean Sense of Belonging Scores were shown to have remained the same following attendance at the group, only eleven young people reported no change. The results will be explained further below.

The graph below illustrates young people's self-reported sense of belonging pre- and post-group.

Eleven young people reported no change in their 'sense of belonging' post-group (n=11). Nine young people reported an increase their 'sense of belonging' post group (n=9). Six young people reported a decrease in their 'sense of belonging' (n=6). Young people's self-reported 'sense of belonging' increased or remained the same for 77% of young people who attended the group and increased for 35% of attendees.

Qualitative Information – 'Sense of Belonging'

Q. What helps you to feel you belong now?

Young people were asked to select areas / services that contributed to their 'sense of belonging' both pre and post group.

The table below illustrates the areas identified as increasing 'sense of belonging' pre and post group.

Pre	Post
1. Voluntary Organisations (n=11)	**1. Education (n=10)**
2. Education (n=10)	**1. Voluntary Organisations (n=10)**
3. Social Work Services (n=8)	**2. Friends (n=7)**
4. Friendly People (n=5)	**3. Friendly People (n=5)**
5. Faith Organisations (n=4)	**4. Social Work Services (n=4)**
5. Opportunities to Share Culture (n=4)	**5. Opportunities to Share Culture (n=3)**
6. Friends (n=3)	**5. Refugee Status (n=3)**

7. Social Work (n=1)	6. Guardianship (n=2)
7. Health Services (n=1)	6. Learning about Scottish Culture (n=2)
	6. Health Services (n=2)

Q. Can you tell us about a time when you felt you belonged in Scotland?

Group members were asked to provide an example of a time where they have felt like they belonged in Scotland. Qualitative comments are provided below:

- "I have been made to feel important, makes me feel that I belong, treated the same.... I love people from Glasgow"
- "First time I came to Guardianship"
- "No I can't think of a time"
- "Sometimes with friends"
- "Since I arrived in Glasgow I felt safe"
- "During Refugee Week – It was a good celebration and everyone was happy"
- "I someone in the pub came over and even though I can't speak English wanted to chat and ask me things- I felt welcomed"
- "I feel Scottish people are friendly and I have been lucky"
- "No, I just do"
- "The people who have helped me haven't treated me like I am not from here"
- "At Allies group, playing football with friends"
- "I have felt like I belonged"
- "When I am at College and Guardianship"
- "On a trip with Social Work I felt like that"

Themes from young people highlighted consistently that feeling safe in Scotland helped them to foster a deeper sense of belonging. It was also clear from responses that opportunities for education and building social connections with friends was important in fostering a sense of belonging. However, several young people used this section to further express how the Asylum process made it difficult to feel like they belonged.

Q. What makes you feel you don't belong?

Group Members were asked what contributed to feelings of not belonging pre- and post-group. Selections are listed below and ranked in order of frequency (most to least).

The table below illustrates identified barriers to sense of belonging pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Difficulties Communicating in English (n=6)	1. Asylum process (n=4)

2. Nothing (n=4)	1. Difficulty Communicating in English (n=4)
3. No Family (n=3)	2. Don't Have Enough to Do (n=3)
3. Issues with Peers at School (n=3)	3. Did not answer (n=2)
3. Lack of Friends (n=3)	3. Nothing (n=2)
4. Not Enough to Do (n=2)	3. Experiencing Racism (n=2
4. Experiencing Racism (n =2)	3. No Family (n=2)
5. Asylum Process (n=1)	

While concerns around communicating in English were the most common barriers to a 'sense of belonging' pre-group, this was reduced following group. Post-group, individuals reported that the asylum process was the most common aspect contributing to a sense of not belonging. It was apparent that young people attending the group no longer reported a 'lack of friends' as an issue post group.

Qualitative Comments – 'Sense of Belonging'

Q. What would help you feel that you belong more?

Qualitative comments are noted below:

- "Good friends, good life"
- "I would like a family to live with"
- "If I was allowed to stay here to protect me"
- "Getting refugee status - I would be a complete person"
- "Scotland doesn't need any more than what is here- they respect lots of religions. I am able to pray on Friday at the church- which is really respectful. They go beyond with their respect"
- "Having my family here"
- "If I build relationships, go to school, make friends"
- "I don't know about that, maybe if I am allowed to stay I'll feel like I belong"
- "When I have status"
- "Speaking English- I'd like to go to college"
- "When I get status I will feel like a local"
- "Having status"
- "Being able to work"
- "I would like to have the same money as other people in Glasgow"

Individuals were asked to provide qualitative comments on what would help them feel that they belong more. The most common theme throughout was in relation to obtaining refugee status. Young people also identified that being able to develop positive relationships and have opportunities for education and employment would help them to feel a greater sense of belonging.
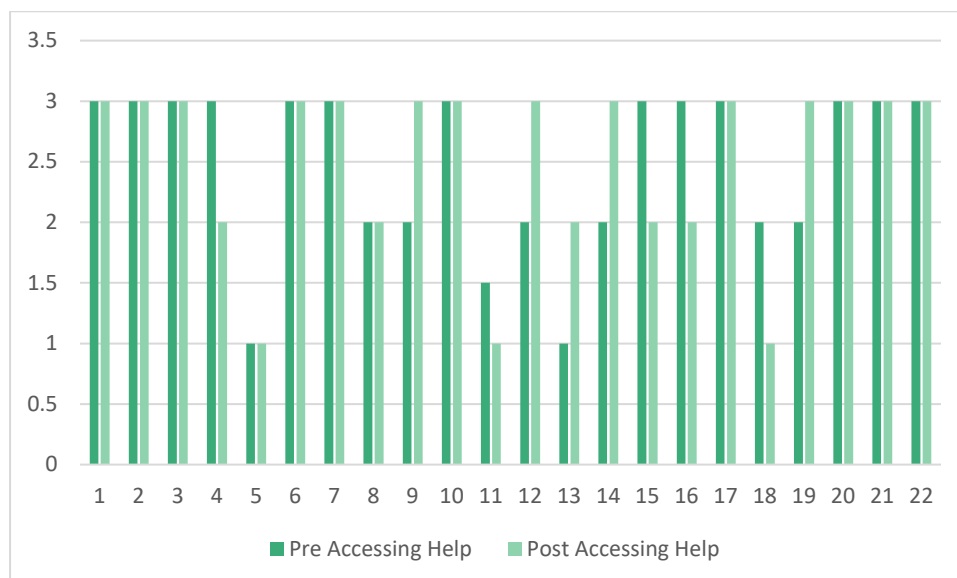
Accessing Help

Q. Do you have the help you need?

Accessing help was reported on a scale of 0-3, (0 - I don't have the help I need, 3 -I very much have the help I need). Twenty-two young people gave pre and post scores for accessing help.

> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people pre-group = 2.47**
>
> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people post-group = 2.5**

Mean Accessing Help Scores slightly increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual reports of 'Having the help you need' pre and post Allies.

For twelve young people there was no reported change in accessing support post-group (n=12), quite possibly because on the whole, young people had good access to help pre-group. Five young people reported an increase in accessing support post-group (n=5). Five young people reported a reduction in accessing required help post-group (n=5). Reduction in accessing support can be linked to wider problems encountered by the young people around ongoing issues with the asylum process, access to education and accommodation.

Young people's self-reported ability to 'access help' increased or remained the same for 77% of young people who attended the group and increased for 23% of attendees.

Qualitative Information – Accessing Help

Q. Do you know how to access help if you need it?

The table below illustrates areas that young people felt able to access for help pre-and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Would ask Social Worker (n=8)	1. Would ask Guardian (n=11)
2. Would ask Guardian (n=7)	2. Would ask Social Worker (n=8)
3. Health Service (n=3)	3. Would ask Accommodation Staff (n=5)
4. Education (n=2)	4. Police (n=4)
4. Police (n=2)	5. Money Help (n=3)
4. Would ask Accommodation staff (n=2)	5. Health (n=3)
4. Legal Help (n=2)	6. Legal Help (n=2)
4. Money Help (n=2)	6. Education (n=2)

There were no significant changes reported in relation to accessing help. However, consistently young people reported that they would ask social workers, guardians and accommodation staff to support them to access help. Young people reported an increase in seeking support from the Guardianship service post-group.

Q. What help would you like to access?

Young people were asked about the help that they felt they needed:

- "I need my lawyer to help with my claim"
- "I would like my social worker to visit me more"
- "I would like to see a Psychologist"
- "Different educational classes, more ESOL"
- "Help with education in the future"
- "I would like to be a design engineer"
- "To move house"
- "I would like to have a table in my house to study"
- "I want the help and support to continue. I hope I get asylum to have a chance to learn about the culture"
- "I would like to change my accommodation"
- "I want the same money as the people in Glasgow. I want to live in Glasgow"
- "My only fear is not getting asylum"
- "Nothing more- but I would contact you if there was"

Themes from the comments indicate support with their asylum claim, accessing ESOL and further education, changes to accommodation, wanting to see a psychologist.

Q. How could Scotland be more welcoming?

Group members were asked to contribute to suggestions on how Scotland could be more welcoming and supportive to new Scots. Comments are provided below:

- "People could be more friendly at school and on the street"
- "People have helped me in every way. But I would like refugee status"
- "Positive outcome to asylum claim"
- "I would have liked a college placement quicker"
- "Education placement when I arrived"
- "They treat us good here"
- "Refugee status"
- "It is really supportive to me already"
- "People are friendly, happy and that's good"
- "I think it would be good if they let people arrive legally without boats so no one drowns"

Summary

The majority of participants in the face-to-face groups reported an incremental increase in resilience following completion of the Allies Group. There were minimal improvements in terms of sense of safety, and sense of belonging following attendance remained the same. For this group of young people, it seemed clear at the group that several factors influenced this. The 10-week group experienced limited sense of safety and belonging in relation to their asylum status, however, the 10-week group also reported increased instances of racism, harassment and attack which exacerbated their pre-existing sense of alienation and lack of safety.

Many members of the group emphasised the importance of being shown kindness and the willingness of others to help them in increasing their sense of safety and belonging. In the qualitative comments made by young people, it was clear that there is a link between safety and belonging, with many young people indicating that the feeling of safety gave them a feeling of belonging.

Appendix 2

Guardianship Scotland
Wellbeing Project

Appendix 2: Online Groups

COVID- 19

Due to COVID-19, the programme was adapted to make it safe and accessible for young people to access from home. As a result, the deliverable material was reduced in light on ensuring the safety of participants. Where in person it is possible to see how a young person is responding to the information; online, young people sometimes had their cameras off, and similarly the creation of safety and trust between the group was more challenging. Therefore, during the consultations for adapting and delivering the group online, it was agreed that to respond in a trauma-informed manner where safety is paramount, the sessions on Loss and the Tree of Life were omitted from the online delivery.

Results

The online Allies Group was offered to sixty-five young people (n=65). Group 4 was attended by fifteen young men (n=15). Group 5 was attended by eleven young men (n=11). Group 6 was attended by nineteen young men (n=19). Group 7 was attended by eight young men (n=8). Group 8 was attended by seven young men (n=7). Group 10 was attended by five young men (n=5).

Sixty-four people completed pre- and post-group CYRM measures. Additionally, seven further people did not fully complete the post evaluation- one young person did not complete any New Scots questions, and the other six did not answer the final question around access to help in their post evaluations. Where a comparison between pre- and post-evaluation is not available, the data for this point 'access to help' has been removed from that specific set, and from the mean calculation for that specific set of results.

Demographics

Age
62 young people were between 0-18 years old prior to commencing the group (n=62). Three young people were between 19-25 years old (n=3).

Language and Region
There were 30 Vietnamese speakers (all from Vietnam). There were 15 Kurdish Sorani speakers (11 from Kurdish Iran, 4 from Kurdish Iraq), 10 Arabic speakers (8 people from Sudan, 1 person from Syria, 1 person from Chad), 4 English speakers (1 person from Sierra Leone, 3 from Gambia), 2 Bajuni speakers (both from Somalia), 2 Tigrinya speakers (both from Eritrea), 1 Kurdish Kurmanji speaker (from Syria), and 1 Albanian speaker (from Albania).

Length of Stay

42 people attending the group had been in Scotland for between 3 months – 1 year (n=42). Nine young people had been in Scotland for less than 3 months (n=9), and fourteen people had been in Scotland for over 1 year (n=14).

Status

For those who we have data, prior to commencing the group, sixty-two young people were 'asylum seeking' (n=62), three young people already had refugee status (n=3). Post group, the number of those with refugee status had increased to (n=5).

Children and Youth Resilience Measure

Resilience of each young person was measured pre- and post-group using the CYRM-R. A higher score is indicative of higher (self-reported) resilience.

> **Mean Resilience Score for young people pre-group = 63.6**
>
> **Mean Resilience Score for young people post-group = 68**

Mean Resilience Scores increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual changes in Resilience, pre and post Allies Group.

Pre Resilience Score   Post Resilience Score
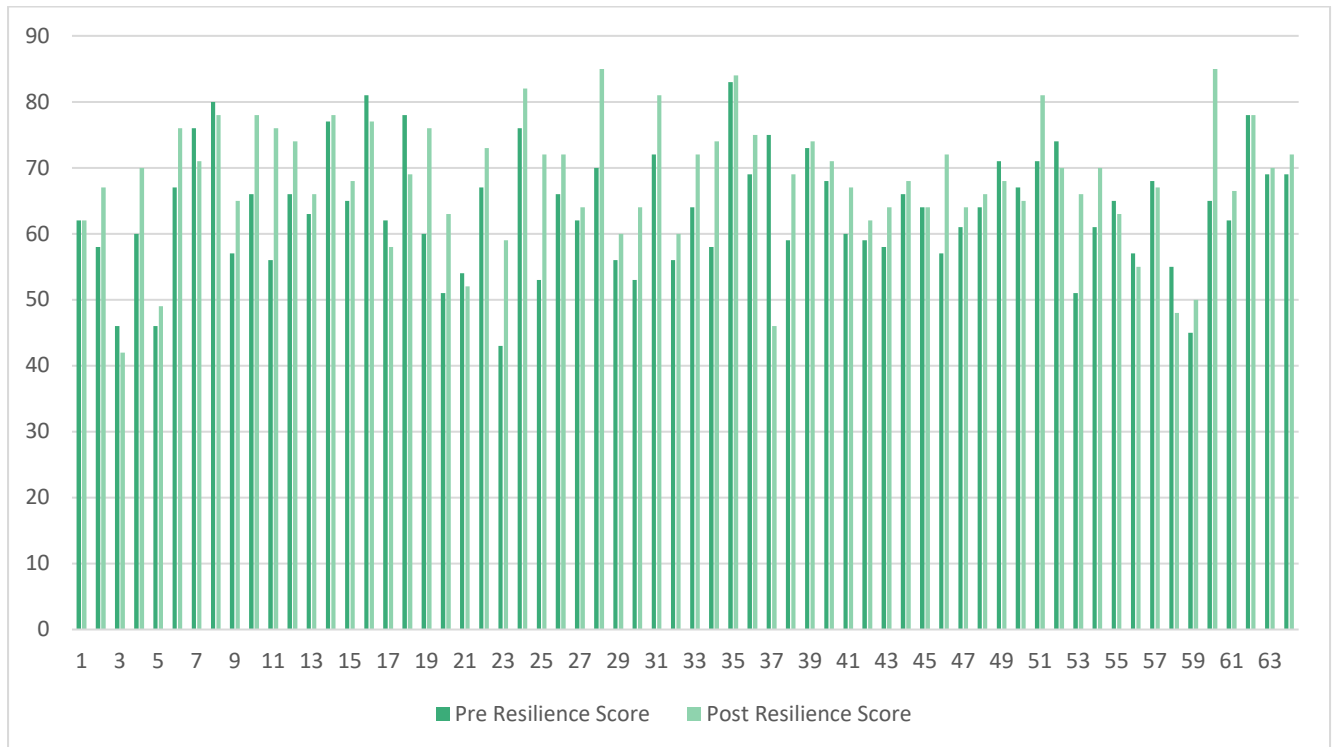
For forty-six young people, resilience increased following attendance at the group (n=46). For fifteen young people, resilience decreased (n=15) and for three young people reported change in resilience (n=3).

For the fifteen young people whose resilience decreased post-group, there had been experiences of community harassment, racism, housing issues and ongoing difficulties related to the asylum process that may account for this apparent deterioration.

Young people's self-reported resilience increased or remained the same for 77% of young people who attended the online group, and increased for 72% of young people.

New Scots Questionnaire

Sense of Safety

Q. – Do you feel safe in Scotland?
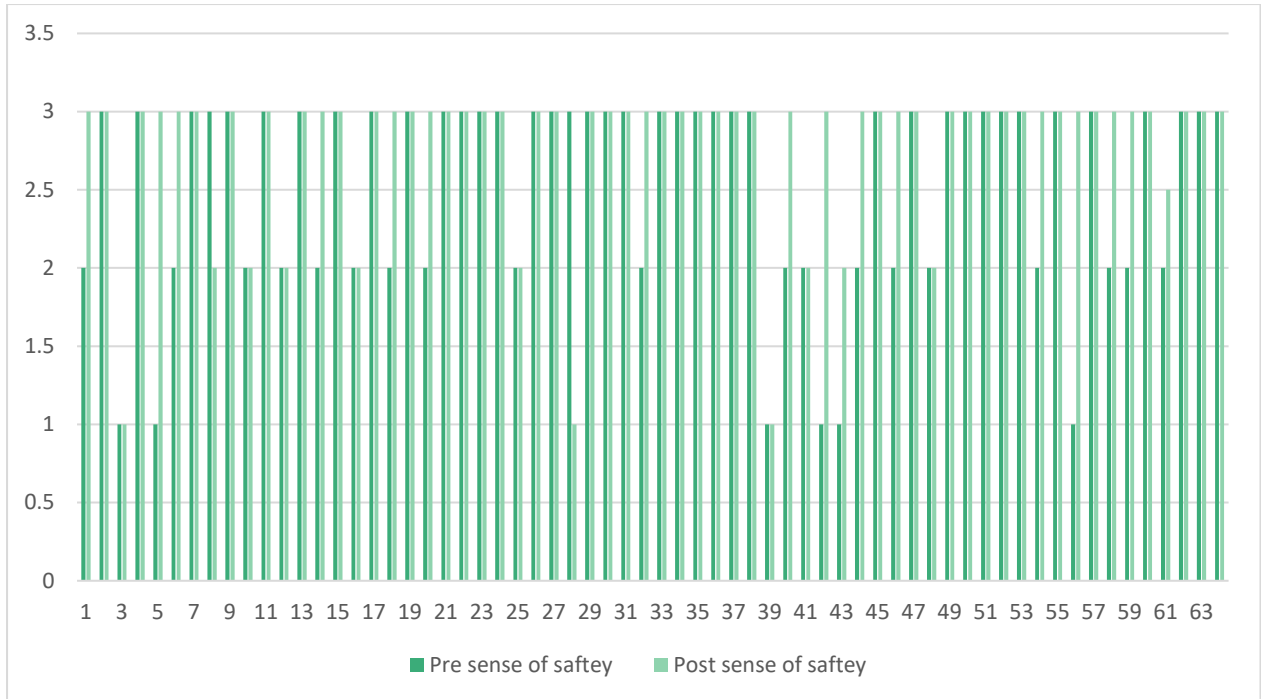
Sense of Safety was reported on a scale of 0 – 3 (0 – not at all, 3 – very safe).

Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people pre group = 2.5

Mean Sense of Safety Score for young people post-group = 2.8

Mean Sense of Safety Scores increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual reports of 'Sense of Safety' pre and post Allies Group.

For seventeen young people an increase in sense of safety was reported post-group (n=17). Forty-five young people reported no change in sense of safety (n=45) and two young people reported a deterioration in sense of safety (n=2).

Young people's self-reported 'sense of safety' increased or remained the same for 97% of young people who attended online group and increased for 27% of attendees.

Qualitative Information – 'Sense of Safety'
Group members were asked to select areas / services that contributed to 'sense of safety' both pre and post group.

Q. What Helps Group Members Feel Safe?

Group members were asked to select areas / services that contributed to 'sense of safety' both pre- and post-group. Selections are listed below and are ranked in order of frequency (most to least).

The table below illustrates areas identified as contributing to young people obtaining a sense of safety pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Guardianship Service (n=41)	1. Social Work (n=44)
2. Social Work (n=39)	2. Guardianship Service (n=47)
3.Human Rights (n=20)	3. Human Rights (n=24)
4. Police (n=15)	4. Police (n=18)
5. Friends (n=7)	5. Friends (n=8)
6. Asylum Process (n=7)	6. Health Services (n=5)

7. School or college (n=5)	6. School or College (n=5)
8. Health Services (n=2)	7. Asylum Process (n=3)
9. Foster carer (n=1)	8. Family (n=1)

Post-group, young people reported an increased number of areas which contributed to helping them feel safer. Following learning about their human rights group members reported an increased sense of safety. Although not recorded as a response on the measure, two young people reported a lack of violence in this country made them feel safe. Similarly, two young people reported just having a 'feeling' of being safe and were unsure of how to describe what it was that helped them feel this way. One young person reported that being able to walk around made him feel safe. Another young person reported the things he learned while attending the group made him feel safe. One young person recorded nothing currently made him feel safe.

Q. What Stops Group Members Feeling Safe?

The table below illustrates areas identified as barriers to young people obtaining a sense of safety pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Memories and feelings from past trauma (n=27)	1. Memories and feelings from past trauma (n=24)
2. Being separated from family (n=7)	2. Nothing (n=18)
3. Asylum Process (n=6)	3. Being separated from family (n=6)
4. Racism (n=3)	4. Asylum Process (n=4)
4. Community Harassment (n=3)	5. Racism (n=2)
5. Fear of police (n=4)	6. Community Harassment (n=1)
6. Experience of violence in Scotland (n=2)	
6. Nothing (n=2)	
7. Fear of Trafficker (n=1)	

Memories and feelings from past trauma experiences remained the most reported barrier to feeling safe (though this decreased in the post evaluations), followed by being separated from family, concerns around the asylum process and racism. Interestingly post-group, there was an increase in group members reporting that nothing was stopping them from feeling safe.

General themes from qualitative comments highlighted group members fears around impending asylum claims and the uncertainty and lack of control that they felt regarding this. Some young people highlighted difficulties in the communities they lived, feeling unsafe in accommodation due to areas of deprivation, experiencing racism and unwelcoming attitudes from some local community members. Some young people reported 'feeling unsafe' particularly at night and this may relate to trauma memories. One young person reported worries about their future and another

young person reported not being able to speak English as a barrier to them feeling safe.

Qualitative Comments – What would make you feel safer?

General themes from qualitative comments provided highlighted group members' fears around impending asylum claims and the uncertainties that this may hold for the future.

Direct quotes from members have been provided below:

- "I don't know, I would try to run away if I saw trafficker"
- "More things to do"
- "I feel safe and everything is fine"
- "Knowing people are looking out for me and care for me, I feel safe here"
- "I feel peace when walking around"
- "I am safe but also restless as I am away from my family"
- "I don't know, I feel safe here"
- "Nothing"
- "Don't know"
- "Due to the difficult life I have been through, having a home and food helps me feel safe"
- "I have no family here so it's not easy. I have no protection here"
- "I feel safe even though I worry about my claim"
- "I am taken care of by social work, guardians and police here are very good"
- "No one threatening me here. I am free here."
- "Everything here is good, people are good"
- "When I am with people, I feel safe"
- "I am safe when I am with friends or when I have people to make sure I'm ok"
- "I feel safe now I am away from my home country"
- "The police don't do bad things"
- "Being allowed to stay"
- "I don't know what will happen if the Home Office don't grant me status"
- "If I was in my family, safe and settled"
- "I feel like I have freedom to think about my future right now."
- "Getting protection has made me feel safe"
- "Education, not been able to access for a year but looking forward to starting this week"
- "I feel safe- I have the safety I need, but I wish my family were here"
- "I'm away from my country so I feel safe"
- "Staff and guardian make me feel safe. I feel they care about me"
- "Having a good decision from the home office"
- "Being more integrated into community. Would like to move to student accommodation. Independence"

- "I don't know, I would try to run away if I saw trafficker"
- "More things to do"
- "Having protection from the government. You can't do what you want without papers"
- "Not being age assessed"
- "There is law order and protection here (in Scotland) and I would feel safer if I was allowed to stay"
- "Having a house, food and showers makes me feel safe...I'm not cold and hungry like I was in Calais"
- "Being allowed to stay here away from my government who are brutal would help me feel safe"
- "At the start I was scared of social work, and scared of all white people but I have learned that not all people are the same"
- "Being with people"
- "I would like to have friends"
- "If I get protection here and citizenship"
- "I want to go to college and live a normal and safe life"
- "I have some communication with my family which makes me feel safe. When I'm treated fairly and have papers to stay here."
- "I am safe at the moment, but I don't know about the future"

Sense of Belonging

**Q. Do you feel you belong in Scotland?**

Sense of Belonging was reported on a scale of 0 – 3, (0- I don't feel that I belong, 3 – I very much feel that I belong).

Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people pre-group = 2.4

Mean Sense of Belonging Score for young people post-group = 2.6

Mean Sense of Belonging scores slightly increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates young people's self-reported sense of belonging pre- and post-group.

Pre Sense of belonging   Post Sense of belonging
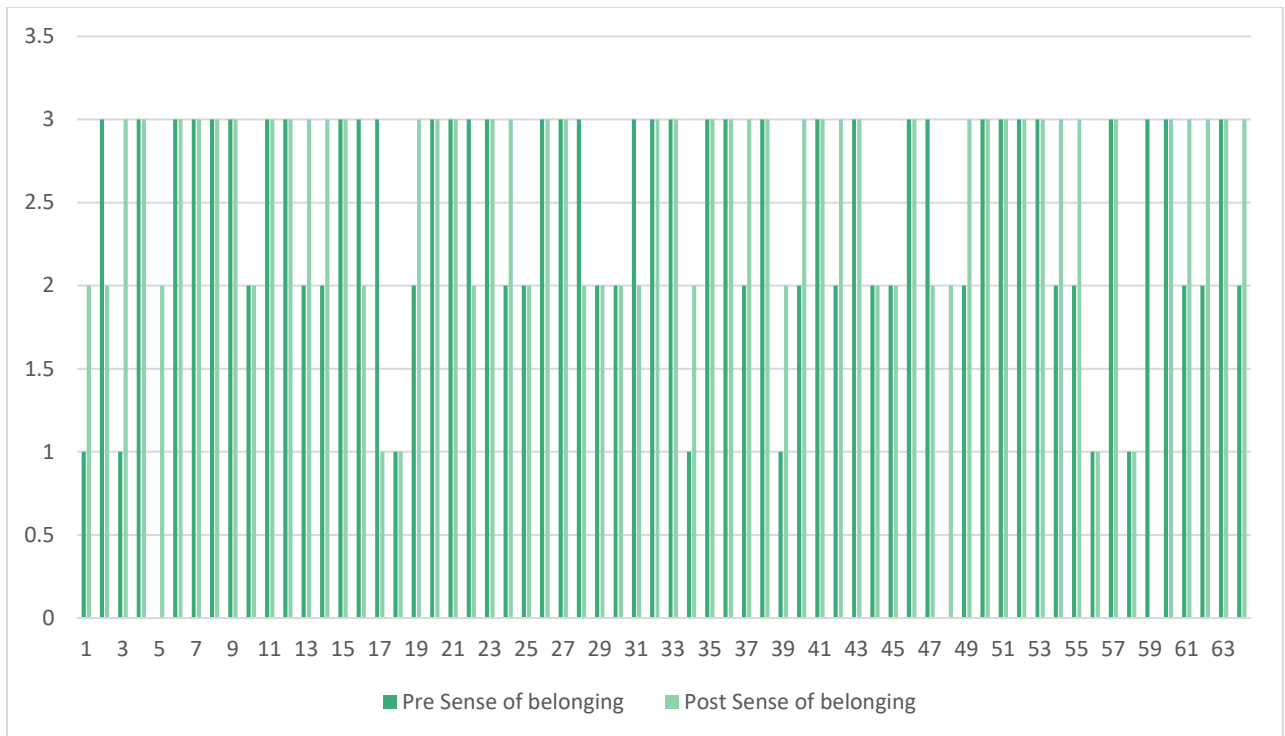
Thirty-seven young people reported no change in their 'sense of belonging' post-group (n=37). Nineteen young people reported an increase their 'sense of belonging' post-group (n=19). Eight young people reported a decrease in their 'sense of belonging' (n=8).

Young people's self-reported 'sense of belonging' increased or remained the same for 88% of young people who attended online group and increased for 30% of attendees.

Qualitative Information – 'Sense of Belonging'

Q. What helps you feel you belong now?

Young people were asked to select areas / services that contributed to their 'sense of belonging' both pre- and post-group.

The table below illustrates the areas identified as increasing 'sense of belonging' pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Social Work Services (n=19)	1. Guardianship Service (n=18)
1. Guardianship Service (n=19)	2. Social Work Services (n=15)
2. Friends (n=11)	3. Friends (n=13)
3. Learning about Scottish Culture (n=4)	4. Sport (n=3)

3. Foster Parents (n=4)	5. Learning about Scottish Culture (n=2)
3. Education (n=4)	5. Foster Parents (n=2)
3. Sports (n=4)	5. Education (n=2)
4. Voluntary Organisations (n=3)	6. Voluntary Organisations (n=1)
5. Human Rights (n=2)	6. Human Rights (n=1)
6. Art and Music Projects (n=1)	6. Art and Music Projects (n=1)
6. Faith Organisations (n=1)	

The young people in this group appeared to feel belonging from a wide and varied range of sources.

Q. Can you tell us about a time when you felt you belonged in Scotland?

Group members were asked to provide an example of a time where they have felt like they belonged in Scotland. Qualitative comments are provided below:

- "When I'm with friends"
- "I don't know if I belong it is up to other people"
- "People are helpful, there are no death threats here"
- "I think Scotland is good"
- "When I make friends"
- "Being liked by everyone"
- "When people are good to me"
- "At my Karate club"
- "People help me"
- "Just when I am looked after"
- "Not sure"
- "No"
- "I am not feeling like that all the time"
- "When people are friendly"
- "About a month ago, when I began to feel safer here"
- "I don't know but I feel safe here"
- "I feel safe, I live like a human"
- "When I go into shops and people are very interested in me, this is really nice"
- "My foster carer makes me feel at home"
- "Because it's very peaceful, and people have been good to me here"
- "When I play football with Scottish people of all ages, they make me feel welcome"
- "I'm well looked after by my foster carer and befriender"
- "I am so well looked after. I have friends, education and clothes. I have a better life here. I have pocket money and can buy what I want"

- "I was walking on the street and met a beggar. I went to give him money and he asked me where I was from, I said Syria. The beggar said we can share food together and he looked for ways to help me. The beggar wanting to help me made me realise that I belonged in Scotland and that it was a safe country."
- "My entitlements and the way I am looked after in Scotland tell me I belong"
- "The things that have been done for me and that people have provided"
- "Recently when I received my refugee status"
- "My guardian helps me feel like that [I belong] because she helps me with everything"
- "When I am educated or sent to school, or taken to different places to see the sights"
- "Not sure, I am an asylum seeker, so I can't belong"
- "Sorry, I can't belong until I'm allowed to stay"
- "When people want to ask if I'm ok"
- "When people smile at me"
- "When I get respect from people"
- "Right now talking to you, feel I belong now. I know that I can call the police if I need protection"

Q. What makes you feel you don't belong?

The table below illustrates identified barriers to sense of belonging pre- and post-group.

Pre	Post
1. Don't know (n=17)	1. Don't Know (n=17)
2. Nothing (n=7)	2. Asylum process (n=12)
3. Lack of Friends (n=6)	3. Language barrier (n=8)
3. Nothing (n=6)	4. Nothing (n=6)
4. Cultural Differences (n=5)	4. Lack of friends (n=6)
4. Asylum process (n=5)	5. Separated from family (n=3)
5. Language Barrier (n=4)	6. Unfriendly services (n=1)
6. Separated from Family (n=3)	6. Don't Have Enough To Do (n=1)
7. Needing To Spend More Time in Scotland (n=1)	
7. Unfriendly services (n=1)	

The pre and post evaluations indicated that often, young people were not sure what would make them feel like they belonged. Aside from this, post-group, individuals reported an increase in the asylum process feeling like a barrier to belonging. There was an increase in the number of young people reporting a language barrier as having an impact on their sense of belonging. Qualitative comments provided indicated that post-group, young people felt that protection from the Scottish

Government in relation to accepting their asylum claim would offer a sense of belonging.

Qualitative comments provided indicated that post-group, young people felt that protection from the Scottish Government in relation to accepting their asylum claim would offer a sense of belonging.

Q. What would help you feel that you belong?

Qualitative comments are noted below

- "Getting protection from the Government"
- "Letting me stay here"
- "Having friends and relationships"
- "Maybe having a family to live with"
- "How can I belong without refugee status?"
- "If you go to someone's house and they invite you in, you belong. The door has not been open for me."
- "If I don't have status, I don't feel like I belong"
- "If I have refugee status."
- "Maybe if I have refugee status."
- "Learning the language is motivating me, as I know it will help me belong more"
- "If I continue to be safe I am ok."
- "If I do more activities, have a family"
- "Making friends and enrolling in college and it being face to face. Learning online at the moment. Would really like to learn English so I can understand culture.."
- "Having family with me"
- "Money to live on"
- "Meeting people and doing activities together"
- "Having family with me"
- "If I had official papers, an ID to stay"
- "Time"
- "Nothing"
- "Making friends"
- "Having friends and relationships"
- "Knowing that I can stay"
- "If the government accept me"
- "Being able to communicate with people"
- "Having citizenship"
- "When I get the chance to learn more"
- "To know where I'm going and to have friends"
- "There are still different things to explore to make feel more integrated"
- "Getting my status would give me more rights and feel like I belong"
- "People respect human rights in this country and because I have these, it helps me belong"
- "Being granted status will make me feel like this is my home. How can I belong if I haven't been told I'm welcome?"
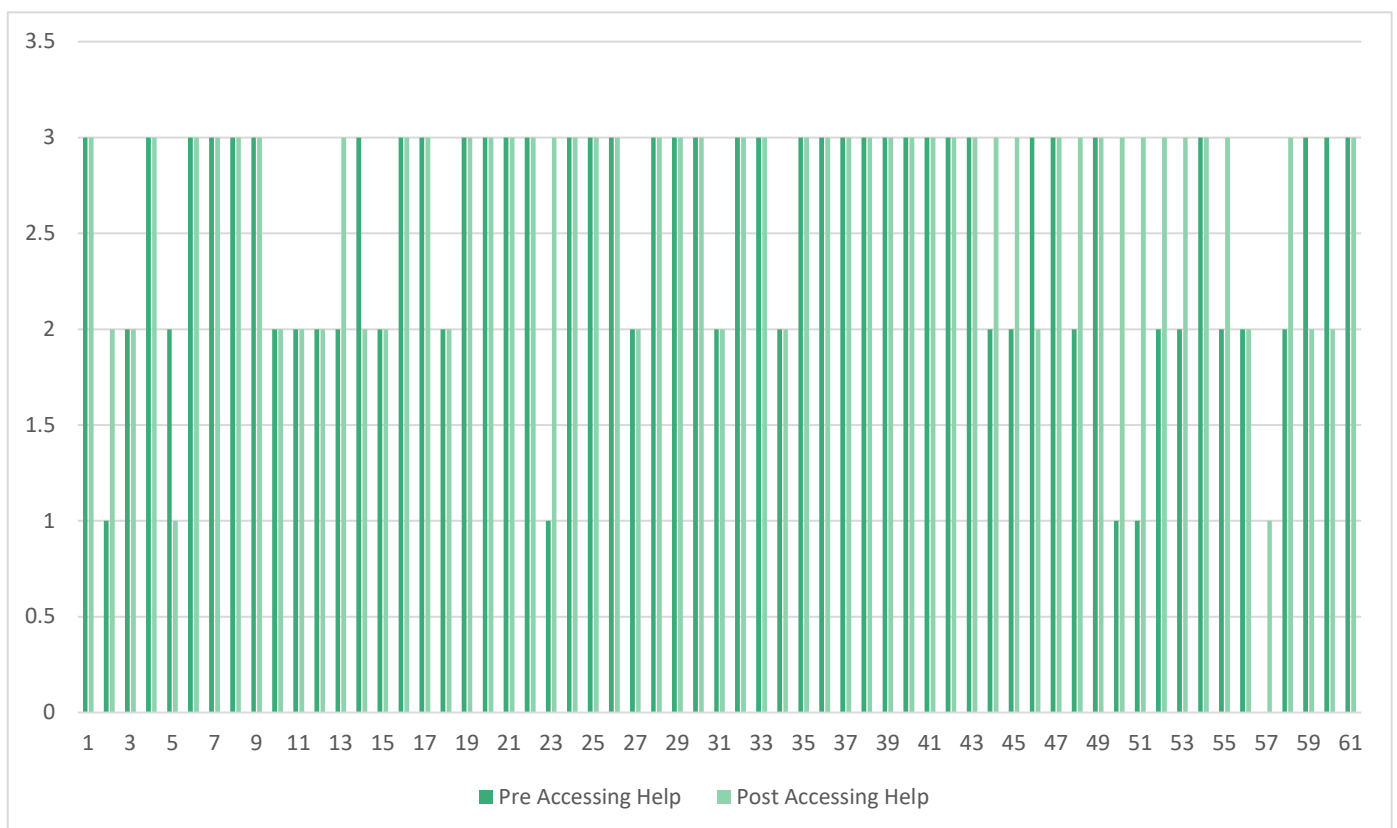
Accessing Help

Q. Do you have the help you need?

Accessing help was reported on a scale of 0-3, (0 - I don't have the help I need, 3 -I very much have the help I need). Sixty-one young people gave pre and post scores for accessing help.

> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people pre-group = 2.5**
>
> **Mean Accessing Help Score for young people post-group = 2.7**

Mean Accessing Help Scores slightly increased following attendance at the group.

The graph below illustrates individual reports of 'Having the help you need' pre and post Allies.

For forty-four young people there was no reported change in accessing support post-group (n=44). Twelve young people reported an increase in accessing support post-group (n=12). Five young people reported a reduction in accessing required help post-group (n=5).

Young people's self-reported ability to 'access help' increased or remained the same for 92% of young people who attended online group and increased for 20% of attendees.

57

Qualitative Information – Accessing Help

Q. Do you know how to access help if you need it?
The table below illustrates areas that young people felt able to access for help pre-and post-group.

Pre 91	Post
1. Would ask Guardian (n=27)	1. Would ask Guardian (n=25)
2. Would ask Accommodation staff (n=24)	2. Would ask Accommodation Staff (n=19)
3. Would ask Social Worker (n=21)	3. Would ask Social Worker (n=16)
4. Would contact Police (n =5)	3. I know how to access help (n=16)
5. Health Services (n=4)	4. Would contact Police (n=3)
6. Legal advice (n=3)	5. Health Services (n=2)
7. I know how to access help (n=2)	5. Legal advice (n=2)
7. Would ask School (n= 2)	6. Police (n=1)
8. Everyone is helpful (n =1)	
8. Money advice (n=1)	
8. Ask a friend (n=1)	

Following group there was a decrease in the variety of services young people were reporting to access and an increase in young people who felt able to access help themselves.

Q. What help would you like to access?

Young people were asked about the help that they felt they needed:

- "More activities"
- "Leave to remain, I fear my government will find me here"
- "College"
- "My friends get laptops, bikes – I don't get anything"
- "I have all the help I need"
- "Physical Health issues I need help with"
- "I don't need anything just now, the social worker told me I will be able to get a laptop and study soon."
- "I would like social media so that I can have friends and information"
- "I want to be finished with the Home Office"
- "Right now I have what I need"
- "Nothing apart from papers"
- "Don't have an answer to this right now"
- "Yes but I don't want to talk about them"
- "I would like learn language, to cook, would like independence"
- "I'd like to access health care"
- "Psychological support"

- "I'm scared won't be allowed to stay here"
- "I would like to learn how to play the guitar and to meet other Vietnamese friends"
- "I would like to be interviewed by the Home Office. It is taking too long and I also want to go to college"
- "I need to go to college, get a computer and I need glasses"
- "Access college so I can chase my dreams"
- "I would like help and guidance for my future"

Q. How could Scotland be more welcoming?

Group Members were asked to contribute to suggestions on how Scotland could be more welcoming and supportive to New Scots. Comments are provided below:

- "I want a family to be part of society"
- "No, I feel welcomed"
- "Let me stay"
- "People welcome me but the Home Office don't. They need to take a long time to think about if I am welcome, so I'm not really welcome."
- "I'm happy just now. Would like to hear from the Home Office and have my age accepted"
- "No I have enough"
- "I already feel welcome, so it is ok"
- "I didn't have a good welcome to this country"
- "An education"
- "Glasgow is already welcoming"
- "Keep giving me protection and my human rights"
- "People are friendly, but they could talk to us more, that would help"
- "Just protect me"

Summary

The majority of participants in the online groups reported an increase in resilience following completion of the Allies Group. Whilst there were improvements in terms of sense of safety and sense of belonging following attendance at the group, these were smaller. From the qualitative data, it seems that for young people to fully establish a sense of safety and belonging, their ability to stay in the UK (i.e., granting of refugee status) remained a key factor. Young people reflected that without this certainty, they were unable to build a life that felt stable and secure.

Many members of the group emphasised the importance of being shown kindness and the willingness of others to help them in increasing their sense of safety and belonging. In the qualitative comments made by young people, it was clear that there is a link between safety and belonging, with many young people indicating that the feeling of safety gave them a feeling of belonging.

It was clear that following attendance at the Allies group, young people had maintained their relationship with Guardianship Scotland, citing them as one of the most used supports in accessing help.

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aberlour.org.uk
scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Guardianship Scotland

National Child Trafficking Support Service

Delivered in Partnership by

aberlour
scotland's children's charity

scottish refugee council