NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

the anchor
Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service

Guardianship Scotland

Wellbeing Project

The Allies Project:

People and resources on your side

Evaluation summary 2019 to 2022

Contents

What is the Allies Project?

Statistics

Key findings

Young people's feedback

Reflections from facilitators

Recommendations from the project

What is the Allies Project?

The Allies Project is a partnership between

Guardianship Scotland

Experts in supporting unaccompanied children seeking asylum or who have been trafficked and integrating into life in Scotland.

the anchor – Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service

Specialist NHS mental health service who supports unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people with experience of complex trauma.

FUNDED BY COMIC RELIEF

This project is part funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.

Funded by Comic Relief from 2019-2022.

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The Allies Project is a psychosocial group for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked young people.

We teach young people coping strategies to help them manage symptoms of trauma, anxiety, stress and tension.

We help young people reflect on their past and identify their aspirations for the future.

We also help them understand how their experience as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UASC) and/or trafficked child impacts their feelings of safety, relationships, identity and access to justice.

Development of Allies

The Allies Project was developed to offer unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked young people an alternative and/or addition to mainstream psychological services and to provide a much needed shared space for young people to find mental health support.

It draws on four models:

1

The ADAPT model (Adaptation and Development after Persecution and Trauma) by Derrick Silove.

2

Michael Ungar's body of work on cross-cultural resilience.

3

The Tree of Life narrative theory co-developed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough.

4

The clinical work of Safety and Stabilisation in response to the needs of people experiencing complex trauma.

Trauma-informed practice

A trauma-informed approach is a framework that recognises the trauma experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The framework realises the effects of trauma, minimises the risk of re-traumatisation, builds on strengths and resilience to support recovery, and develops quality relationships.

Unaccompanied young people have faced the trauma and adversities of war and violence, and sometimes exploitation through trafficking.

They are “unaccompanied”, without caregivers, relatives or friends, and they have to face these multiple challenges without any safety or certainty about what the future holds, and who will be there to face it with them.

They have experienced very significant trauma without access to protective factors and social support that can help them to buffer the effects of trauma.

Their situation is extremely precarious and the memories of the past, the stress of the present and the fear of the future often feels overwhelming.

Peer support

Empowerment

Cultural humility

Acknowledgement and validation

Principles of The Allies Project

Building trust

Relationship-based practice

Creating/finding safety

Collaboration

The pillars of Allies

The Allies Project is structured around acknowledging how young people's lives have been affected by their experiences as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking or trafficked child / young person, and creating a space where they can share experiences.

Young people learn and share new ways of coping with their symptoms of trauma, stress, anxiety and tension. It creates a sense of shared understanding and solidarity between group members and makes it less likely that individuals will blame themselves for their difficulties.

Each session's learning outcomes are aimed at helping young people rebuild the five areas of their lives represented by the pillars.

Click each pillar for more information

The pillars of Allies

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Safety

Understand how my past experiences can impact my wellbeing 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.

Identity

Meaning

Click each pillar for more information

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Relationships

Discuss and reflect on how past relationships can influence how I relate to others and build relationships.

Identify characteristics and behaviours that 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 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

Meaning

Click each pillar for more information

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Justice

Understand that the denial of my human rights is wrong and that not having my rights upheld can influence my wellbeing.

Discuss what a child needs to be safe, active and healthy.

Learn about my rights as set out in **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 anger can trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response.

Learn exercises that help release tension in my body and think about other activities that may also do this.

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Identity

Understand that leaving my country and community may influence my identity due to the loss of my roles and relationships.

Understand that 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 routine in my day.

Re

Identity

Meaning

Click each pillar for more information

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Meaning

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 an unaccompanied asylum-seeking and/ or trafficked child and how I can manage and overcome these challenges.

Identity

Meaning

Click each pillar for more information

Key statistics from The Allies Project evaluation

Statistics

Statistics: 2019 to 2022.

Number of young people supported by the project: 95

91 supported aged 0 – 18

4 supported aged 19 – 25

How young people were supported

65 young people – online

30 young people – face to face

Nationalities

Vietnamese

Chadian

Sudanese

Libyan

Gambian

Kurdish Iraqi

Kurdish Iranian

Somalian

Yemeni

Eritrean

Syrian

Afghan

Albanian

Young people attended The Allies Project from across Scotland.

Central Belt

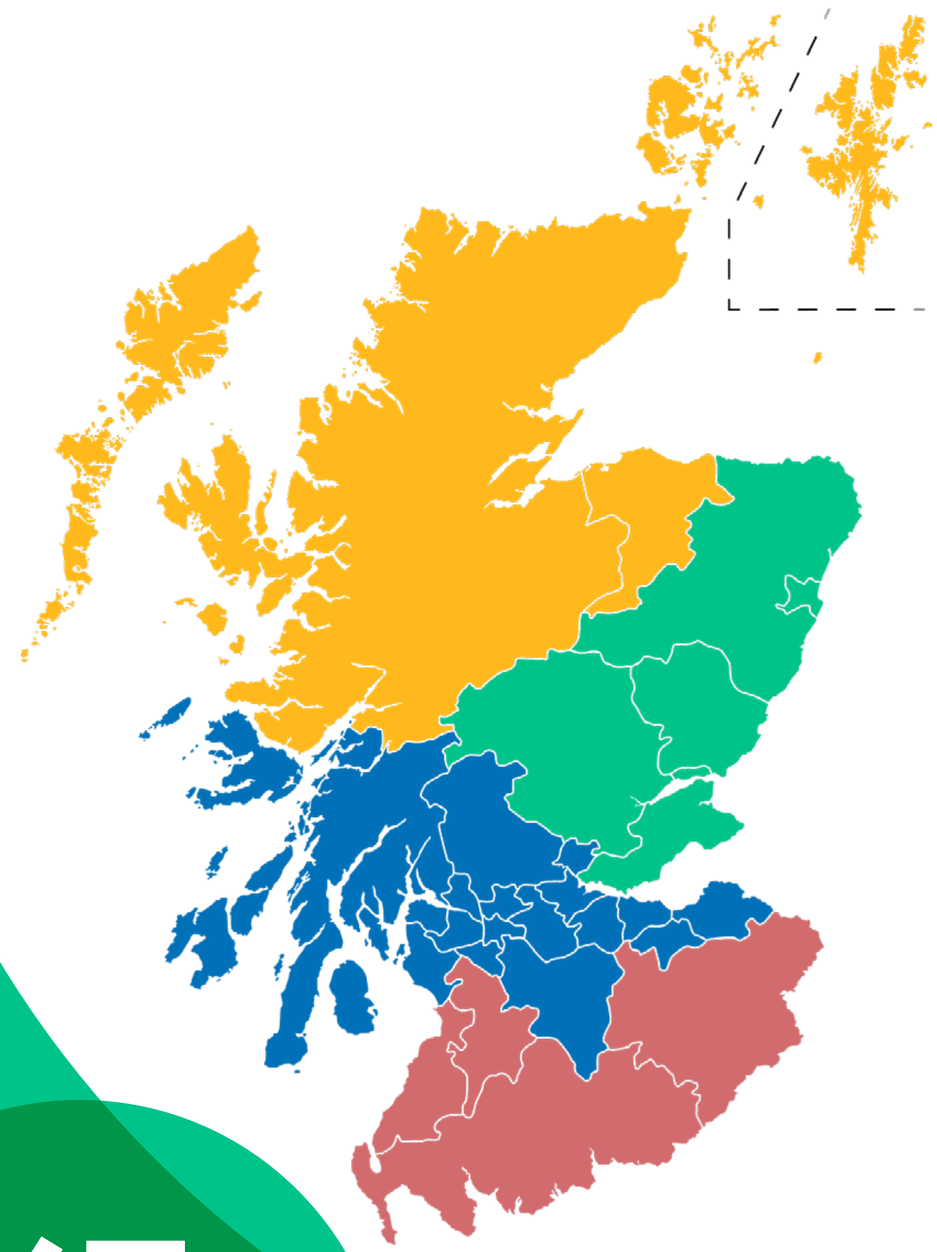
City of Edinburgh	5
Clackmannanshire	1
Glasgow City	59
Inverclyde	2
Midlothian	1
North Lanarkshire	5
South Lanarkshire	10
West Dunbartonshire	2
West Lothian	1

Fife and Dundee

Dundee City	1
Fife	1

Ayrshire

North Ayrshire	1
East Ayrshire	5
South Ayrshire	1



47

Number of young people with trafficking indicators referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

Key findings from The Allies Project evaluation

The Allies Project full evaluation report

Resilience

Why is resilience important?

The young people supported by the Allies Project have already experienced adversity and trauma. Supporting our young people to acknowledge their strength in what they have already faced is critical for their future growth and development.

The Allies Project measured young people's levels of resilience by using the Children and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-R) questionnaire. This 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. A higher score on the CYRM-R is indicative of greater resilience. 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.

It's a positive finding that the group supported an increase in resilience. The young people have already faced adversity and trauma in their lives and have shown strength in surviving this.

Young people's self-reported resilience

increased for 67%

of young people who attended the group.

Safety

Why is feeling safe important?

To help our young people recover from the trauma they have experienced, they need to feel safe and supported.

28% of young people reported an increased sense of safety.

63% of young people reported sense of safety stayed the same.

What makes me feel safe?

“Getting refugee status would change everything for me.”

“I am safe at the moment, but I don’t know about the future.”

“If I was with a family, safe and settled.”

“Being more integrated into the community. I would like to move into student accommodation and have more independence.”

“Knowing people are looking out for me and care for me, I feel safe here.”

Belonging

Why is a sense of belonging important?

A sense of belonging is important for adjusting to living in a new country and supports integration.

31% of young people reported a greater sense of belonging.

53% of young people reported sense of belonging stayed the same.

When I felt like I belonged in Scotland...

"When I play football with Scottish people of all ages, they make me feel welcome."

"At Allies group and playing football with friends."

"When I am at college and Guardianship."

"I have been made to feel important, makes me feel that I belong, treated the same... I love people from Glasgow."

"I feel Scottish people are friendly and I have been lucky."

What makes me feel I belong?

"When I get status, I will feel like a local."

"Learning the language is motivating me, as I know it will help me belong more."

"If I build relationships, go to school, make friends."

"Getting my status would give me more rights and feel like I belong."

Accessing help

Why is it important to ask young people what help they need?

It is important young people know their rights and know how to access them.

20% of young people reported an increase in their ability to access help since attending the group.

67% of young people reported ability to access help stayed the same.

What help do I need access to?...

"I need my lawyer to help with my claim."

"I would like help and guidance for my future."

"I would like to see a psychologist."

"I would like to change my accommodation."

"I would like to be interviewed by the Home Office.

It is taking too long, and I also want to go to college."

"Different educational classes, more ESOL (English for speakers of other languages.)"

Evaluation conclusion

Overall, on all measurable outcomes, the Allies Project improved outcomes for young people following group attendance. The majority of participants in both the face-to-face and online delivery, reported an incremental increase in resilience following 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 them developing an internalised sense of safety and being able 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 feeling of belonging. They also described how being part of the group and experiencing respect and kindness helped them to feel safe.

Young people also gave comments which clearly indicated that the Allies Project 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 learnt coping skills that they utilised 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 supports. They developed their identity through assimilating their life experiences and considering what is meaningful to them.

Young people's feedback

Young people's feedback

"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."

"It was good to discuss things with different people and share with each other."

"The group was useful. The exercises that we learned to do when I feel sad or scared to distract my mind were good."

"I liked it because I got to meet people. I learned about 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."

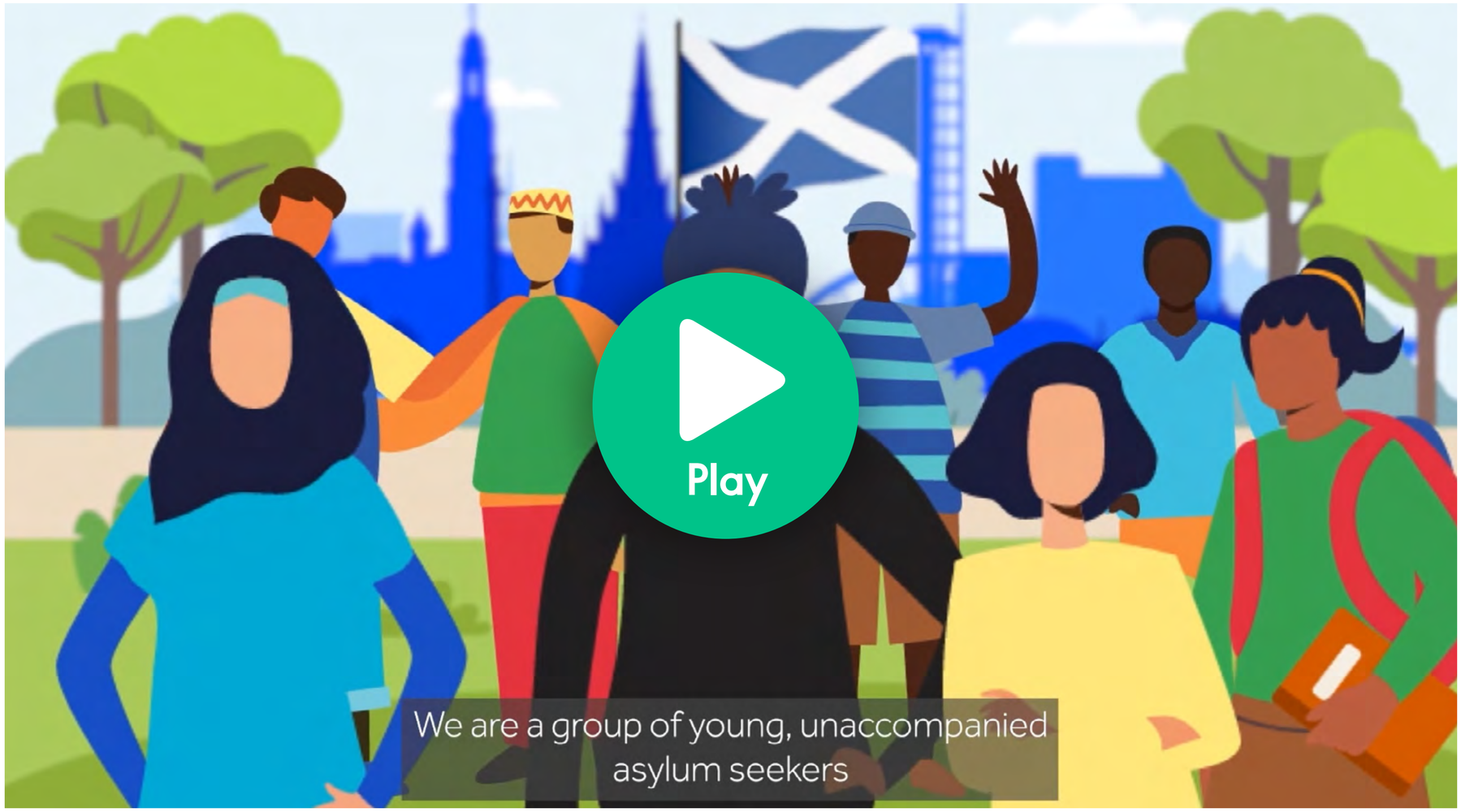
"I found the group helpful and enjoyed coming."

"Breathing when I feel like I'm stressed, most of the time at night. It helps a bit to relax me."

"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."

Our young people using their voice for change



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 Allies Project 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 it. We try and 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 it is delivered in the context of relationship-based practice. It is important that the facilitators and the 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 session adaptations and growth of the project. It’s 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.”

Recommendations from the project

The main recommendation is that the Allies Project must continue to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked children and young people.

The Allies Project has helped young people attending the group in developing resilience, feeling safe, and belonging in their new country.

Recommendations

1

Develop evaluation measures that are more closely related to the group's content and intended outcomes.

Any future Allies Projects must be evaluated in terms of helping young people understand the impact of their experience and learning coping skills to help them manage this in the areas of safety, relationships, identity, and access to justice.

2

There is an ability to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the group.

Continue to develop activities in response to the needs of young people and acknowledging the impact of external factors such as uncertainty of seeking asylum.

3

Guardianship Scotland and Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service should continue to collaborate.

The collaboration between Guardianship Scotland and the Glasgow Psychological Trauma service was successful and should be continued.

4

Continue with the delivery of the Allies Project.

The young people who participated in the Allies Project reaped numerous psychological and social benefits.

Attending the Allies Project was beneficial to some young people to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Attending the Allies Project means that some young people who require further referral for psychological work have already received psychoeducation, developed coping skills, and are more prepared for trauma-specific psychological interventions.

This increases access to low-level psychological interventions and makes the best use of specialist resources.

Thank you!

To read the full project evaluation
visit **aberlour.org.uk/publications/the-allies-project**

Thanks to our funders for making this project possible

FUNDED BY COMIC RELIEF

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Thank you to the young people from Guardianship Scotland who participated in the Allies Project, shared their stories, and contributed to our service evaluation.

For more information on the project please contact **guardianship.admin@aberlour.org.uk**

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