

Date(s): January to February 2025

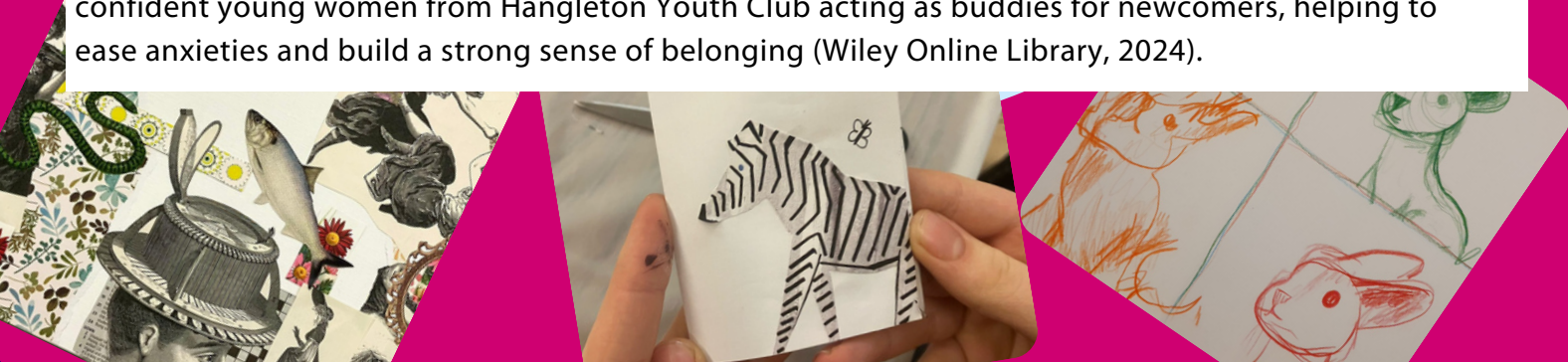
Summary of Project

The Wellbeing Art Group was formed to support young women aged 13 to 18 years facing mental health challenges, including anxiety, low self-esteem, and social isolation. Through a six-week arts-based programme, we provided a safe, creative, and therapeutic environment to foster confidence, connection, and self-expression. This pilot project was delivered in collaboration with an experienced Arts Youth Worker and the HKP Youth Team. Our Youth Workers are delivering a wide range of universal youth work running youth clubs and 121 targeted youth work with links to our social prescribing project based in school, the Family Hub Team, and Health and Wellbeing Youth Work in schools which provided a pathway for young women to access the opportunity. The approach was underpinned by the National Youth Work Curriculum, ensuring a youth-led, informal education framework that supports personal and social development.

Our primary goal was to offer a nurturing safe space where young women could explore their creativity, develop confidence, engage with others and have fun! The programme was designed to reflect key principles of youth work, including participation, equality, education, and empowerment. Research highlights the benefits of creative activities in reducing stress, improving emotional resilience, and fostering social connections (Husson University, 2024). By creating an environment where young women could safely express themselves, the project addressed issues linked to social isolation and anxiety, reinforcing the protective factors associated with mental wellbeing (University of New South Wales, 2024).

Methodology

The sessions incorporated a range of artistic methods to encourage self-expression and emotional exploration. Activities such as mindful ink painting, creative collage, zine making, and experimental drawing provided opportunities for participants to process emotions, build self-awareness, and develop coping mechanisms. The programme also promoted mindfulness techniques, including sensory engagement through nature based materials. Research from the Mental Health Foundation highlights the importance of creative engagement in enhancing psychological wellbeing (The Guardian, 2024). The peer-support element of the programme was particularly effective, with more confident young women from Hangleton Youth Club acting as buddies for newcomers, helping to ease anxieties and build a strong sense of belonging (Wiley Online Library, 2024).



Impact and Outcomes

Feedback from participants highlighted the programme's success in supporting their mental health and wellbeing. Many described the group as fun, expressive, calming, and friendly, reflecting the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Several young women noted that they felt more confident, particularly in their artistic abilities, and had discovered new ways to express themselves. A number of participants shared that they had felt bored or stressed before attending the sessions but left feeling relaxed, happy, and more willing to engage in future activities. The sessions encouraged conversations around mental health, providing a space where young women could discuss their experiences in a supportive environment.

The wider impact of the programme is evident, with two young women who previously lacked confidence now aim to regularly attend youth club next term, demonstrating increased social engagement and self-assurance. The structured yet flexible nature of the sessions allowed participants to take ownership of their creative journey, embodying the principles of youth work by ensuring young people have a voice in shaping their experiences (National Youth Agency, 2024). This is supported by research from the National Youth Agency, which emphasises that positive, informal learning experiences contribute to resilience and long-term wellbeing (Wiley Online Library, 2024).

Looking Ahead

Given the overwhelmingly positive outcomes, there is a clear need for continued investment in this kind of initiative. Additional funding would allow for increased session capacity, a broader range of activities, and greater accessibility for young women in the community. Expanding to different venues, such as The Downsman in Hangleton, which has been highlighted as a preferred location by participants, would further enhance engagement. Providing essential resources and additional craft supplies, would enrich the experience and ensure that the programme continues to support mental health and wellbeing effectively.

By incorporating principles from the National Youth Work Curriculum and drawing on current research in youth mental health, this 6-week programme has proven to be an essential resource for young women navigating challenges related to confidence, anxiety, and self-expression made accessible by the HKP Youth Team. With continued support, it has the potential to become a cornerstone of youth wellbeing initiatives, empowering young women to develop resilience, build meaningful relationships, and harness the transformative power of creativity.





Outputs



6 sessions



14 participants



References

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