



‘Alaw’ project Evaluation report

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Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**



**Barnardo's
Cymru**

**Equality, diversity and inclusion
together we must make it happen**

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE 'ALAW' PROJECT AND RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

Overview of the Alaw project

Bernardo's Cymru Merthyr Young Carers Service received funding from Spirit 2012 to deliver a series of four, 12 week programmes of music, to female young carers aged between 8 and 18, in partnership with Community Music Wales. Due to caring responsibilities, young carers often cannot attend clubs and activities that other children and young people take for granted, and they can experience high levels of isolation and low self esteem. The Alaw project aimed to offer young carers a safe and relaxing space where they could express themselves creatively, have a much needed break and experience:

- Increased confidence and resilience
- Improved mental health and wellbeing
- Reduced social isolation
- Supported skill development
- Wider access to support networks

Evaluation purpose

The Alaw project had a multi-layered evaluation approach, as required by the funders, Spirit 2012. The table below details the 3 outcomes the project was working to, the 7 areas of interest that the evaluation was required to focus upon and the 5 subjective viewpoints the evaluation was required to explore.

Outcome	Key areas of interest to assess	Subjective viewpoint to explore
Increase the wellbeing of participants	Personal subjective well being Self care Self perception of the caring role	Being able to have time away from caring responsibilities
Reduce social isolation and/ or loneliness	Loneliness Engagement and participation Social networks	Opportunity to be part of a group Spending time with others who experience similar things to me

Increase self esteem or sense of potential	Sustainability (personal and project exit)	Feeling a sense of achievement Opportunity to develop music making skills
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Evaluation methods and methodology

The evaluation used mixed methods. Funders required the project to follow the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Subjective Wellbeing measures; asking 4 questions to each participant before and after each 12 week music programme. The evaluator adapted the questions to be meaningful and accessible for children and young people and the service staff undertook the questionnaires pre and post attendance at the music programmes. However, given fluctuations in attendance not all participants were able to complete both questionnaires. The guidance for staff in undertaking the questionnaires and the questionnaires themselves are given in Appendix 1. The questionnaire baseline and impact scores were reported upon by Barnardo's Cymru for monitoring purposes and reflect the changes reported upon within this qualitative report.

In addition to quantitative monitoring the project had an external qualitative evaluation. This consisted of the following methods:

1. Creative method focus groups facilitated during the last session of each programme. They each lasted for 30- 40 minutes and comprised of activities and discussions. Whilst the first focus group was conducted in person, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the second focus group did not take place, the third focus group was conducted online and the fourth focus group consisted of 2 face to face interviews since there was low attendance at the evaluation session. In total, the evaluation engaged directly with 22 children and young people and another 12 through secondary data feedback gathered by staff.
2. Secondary data analysis. This included the final report of project monitoring, Theory of Change documents, monitoring and evaluation meeting notes and documents arranged by the funders, paper based evaluation forms for cohort 2 and 3, feedback from cohort 2 in place of

delivery of a focus group, music and poetry produced by the project, and the first baseline report for cohort 1.

Ethics

The evaluation research design was submitted to, and passed by, the Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee (BREC). Information leaflets and consent forms were completed by parents of children under the age of 16, and by all children and young people themselves. With a move to online activities in the advent of Covid-19 restrictions, information leaflets were emailed to relevant parents and children and young people and verbal consent was sought prior to focus groups being undertaken. Gaining parental consent was difficult and required effort on behalf of service staff due to some of the home circumstances of the young carers. The focus groups were designed to be ethical for young carers of various age ranges to participate within. Young carers will often have unexpected issues arise related to their caring roles that are emotionally and physically exhausting. This required an informal 'drop-in' workshop style focus group, sensitive facilitation and staff available to undertake any potential emotional support in case the focus group triggered upsetting thoughts or memories for participants.

Reporting on project activities

In total the Alaw project worked with 56 children and young people, all of whom were female.

Demographic category	total
8- 14 years old	36
15- 25 years old	20
disabled	17
Non- disabled	38
Disability status unknown	1
asian/ asian UK	0
Black/ African/ Carribean/ Black UK	0

Mixed ethnicity	0
Other ethnic group	3
White	53

The funders used a scale of 1- 4 in terms of intensity levels of work. Upon reading the guidelines the external evaluator confirms that all of the work of the Alaw project has operated at an intensity level of 3, with some participants progressing to a level 4 intensity. This means that the majority of the Alaw project has involved delivering regular, sustained support more than fortnightly for a period of at least 3 months. Some participants became mentors for the following cohort, were involved in some of the sustainability outcomes once the funding had finished or were support to continue to write poetry and therefore could be evaluated at level 4 intensity.

Impact of Covid-19 upon project activities

The Alaw project had to postpone activities in March 2020 due to Covid-19. The project re-started, after considerable planning to ensure good practice in safeguarding and to design effective participatory activities, delivering on-line sessions via zoom. However, the impact of Covid-19 should not be underestimated. Group 2 was slightly cut short, delivering 9 of 12 sessions, but still produced lyrics and a rough version of a song. Groups 3 and 4 were delivered online but participants varied with their ability to join online sessions for the following reasons:

1. Many young people did not feel comfortable in online groups, regularly reporting feeling anxious and scared in front of a camera. Whilst staff suggested they could attend with cameras turned off, this was reported to be intimidating and potentially feeling that they were not fitting in with group dynamics.
2. Many young people had intermittent internet connections or poor wifi coverage, affecting their ability to stay with sessions.
3. Many young people have faced a range of additional challenges due to lockdown. This has affected concentration, mental health and energy levels. For young carers, this has been more pronounced as their caring duties have expanded and become magnified with lockdowns. Evaluators

observed how some young carers were asked to leave sessions in order to fulfil caring duties during the online evaluation sessions.

4. Many young people in low income households did not have devices with which to join sessions or did not have privacy within the household to be able to join alone. The service bought prospective participants devices such as laptops or phones to enable them to take part and in monitoring reports commented upon the level of deprivation many of the children and young people were living with. Evaluators observed how some participants had other family members in the room with them with a significant level of background noise and distraction. Depending upon family circumstances, this was also a barrier to some young people taking part since the home environment was a potential source of embarrassment.
5. Online learning and activities are not inclusive. Evaluators observed how hard it was for younger children, those with low literacy, those with low technical knowledge and those who have any behavioural conditions to manage to maintain concentration or focus for a full session.

Given these challenges, it is unsurprising that attendance fluctuated for sessions 3 and 4. Young carers attendance cannot be expected to be 100% anyway due to their caring responsibilities, with group 1 attendance achieving 74% and group 2 71%. However, with online sessions groups' 3 and 4 attendance dropped to 46% overall. This is despite overwhelming evidence of the level of staff time that was dedicated to texting, phoning and otherwise contacting children and young people reminding them of the sessions and giving support where needed. Group 4 engagement was made increasingly difficult with young carers often called away from sessions to attend to immediate caring needs, 3 self isolating due to possible covid and 1 had Covid and was therefore ill.

ASSESSING OUTCOME 1: PARTICIPANTS WELLBEING IS IMPROVED

Introduction

To an extent, the term 'wellbeing' encompasses all 3 evaluation outcomes and therefore the assessment of outcome one focuses upon improving wellbeing through having a break from caring duties, leaving the house and increased general feelings of positivity.

Gaining a break from caring duties

One fifth of the evaluation participants directly spoke about how the Alaw project had enabled them to have a break from their caring duties and family members, regardless of whether the sessions were face to face or online:

'I care for Dad, I do his food and pass things to him. It's a break from Dad and all the arguments in my house.'

'I have been looking forward to it after looking after my mum, having my zoom time.'

'My mum takes my brother upstairs, so I can come into the living room on my own and have some me time.'

63% of participants valued being able to leave the house and having personal time; suggesting that whilst zoom sessions were a necessary measure given the circumstances presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the project's impact for giving young people a break was reduced by being online:

'It's a break from my house, a time to go out.'

Many participants spoke about how the young carers' service was the only place they went or was the only personal time outside of the house they had. Some participants spoke of how being in the house made them feel 'stuck', with a minority saying that they had to learn to leave the house, whilst others spoke about how much they needed to get out and have the support of a young carers service:

‘[I am] Stressed in the house, I hate my house, I would rather be homeless. I’d rather be here because I get comforted.’

Supporting wellbeing through alleviating deprivation

Children and young people do not talk about poverty or deprivation, but rather talk about what they do without or what they gain materially from the project. One third of the group spoke about how much they enjoyed having food at the project, often commenting that it was free. A minority mentioned they enjoyed having access to wifi, which they did not have at home; or that without transport they would not be able to attend the project. One sixth of participants said that Alaw had ‘kept me from boredom’; with both caring duties and lack of money combining to reduce the participants opportunities to learn new hobbies outside of a school environment. Evidence showed that the Alaw project was alleviating the deprivation that some participants experienced.

Supporting wellbeing through positive mental health

Over a quarter (29%) of evaluation participants directly spoke about how the Alaw project had helped with their mental health, with anxiety and eating difficulties commonly mentioned:

‘It helps my anxiety.’

‘We have plenty of stress, so we know what anxiety is.’

‘I learnt how to eat in front of people’.

Outside of this 29%, another 34% of participants spoke about positive mental health, but in less concrete terms. When asked about a safe space, some participants alluded to the importance of having a safe relaxed spaced where project workers took time to get to know young people as individuals:

‘Building a relationship with X’ [project worker]

‘Having fun with X’ [project worker]

All participants valued the time they had with project workers and felt they benefited from the support and interest that project workers took in them.

There was also consensus across participants that it made a difference that they were all girls and the space felt safer to learn new things and relax:

‘Learning new instruments with people I feel safe with All girls’.

When asked in focus groups how the project had made them feel, many participants struggled to articulate emotions but described the project as ‘amazing’ and ‘awesome’ and they felt ‘happy’ ‘excited’ and ‘good’ to be a part of it.

The importance of having fun

In all focus groups consensus was that the project had been ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyable’. Within services and academic evaluations assessing impact of intervention, judgement is often made according to adult based criteria, and the notion of ‘having a laugh’ is not considered as a goal. However, ‘having fun’ is an essential part of a positive childhood and being in a ‘fun’ atmosphere enables learning, socialising and all elements of positive mental health. For children and young people, having had fun in positive and affirming ways was highly valued.

Concluding observations

All of the qualitative data showed that the Alaw project had met outcome 1 regarding improving the wellbeing of participants. The project has worked holistically and therefore contributing factors to wellbeing are project worker skills in individual support, being able to have a break from caring duties, providing a safe atmosphere for socialising, openness regarding specific mental health conditions, and the skill of workshop leaders to make learning a fun experience.

ASSESSING OUTCOME 2: PARTICIPANTS FEELINGS OF ISOLATION HAVE IMPROVED

Introduction

As the previous section mentioned, young carers face multiple barriers to socialising due to caring duties, and often in combination with other barriers such as poor mental health or lack of money. These circumstances can lead them to face social isolation and feel that peers will not understand the situations within which they live; leading to a sense of loneliness. The previous section discussed how the Alaw project enabled young carers to have a break from their caring duties through 'getting out of the house', and Outcome 2 aimed to decrease isolation through offering an opportunity to have group experiences, peer support and grow friendships with other young carers. In discussing these issues, this evaluation includes examination of loneliness and the development of social networks. It should be noted that, under repeated national and local lockdowns, young carers in Merthyr have faced additional isolation compared to when the project was first designed. Given that isolation has generally risen with lockdowns and that the activities had to be delivered online, it is exceptional for the Alaw project to have met outcome 2 and reduced feelings of isolation.

An increase in social networks

Unanimously, participants spoke about having 'made new friends' and through the Alaw project they could 'get to see people' and 'socialise with other people':

'I come here every Tuesday because otherwise I would just be in my house on my playstation ... I've met so many new friends.'

'being able to just talk to my friends.'

Throughout the evaluation, participants spoke about valuing the opportunity to socialise and meet new people; whether the workshops were delivered online or face to face. Three participants were new to the service during lockdown and the online music workshops had attracted them to become involved. However; the evidence suggested that face to face work offered a

much stronger sense of connection and was far more inclusive (as outlined in the first section of this report).

The impact of being able to see friends and make new friends should not be underestimated. It was mentioned by every participant within the evaluation, and often more than once. Some young people recounted past experiences of isolation and negative social interactions:

‘I haven’t done stuff like that [music] before, before I was bullied at school, so I never had friends until now.’

Others explained that by having friends and meeting new people they realised the level of their previous isolation:

‘I learnt that I was lonely.’

The importance of peer friendships

Participants stressed that it was important for them to be able to meet with and make friends with other young carers. When socialising with non-caring peers some young carers felt “different” and that they had to hide their family circumstances. Having caring in common helped friendships to be established:

‘If I need to be with my mum, they understand.’

However, through learning music together, participants explained that they also had something else to talk about rather than just their home circumstances and how they felt about it:

‘I knew one of them [young carer] already, but I have got closer to her. It’s given us something else to talk about ... It gives us something to talk about that isn’t caring. We talk about our poems.’

The Alaw project has not just extended friendships and social networks, but also made existing friendships and acquaintances stronger.

Learning socialising skills

Whilst the project set out to enable socialising opportunities; it did not plan to increase soft skills regarding sociability. However, approximately one third of evaluation participants spoke about learning people skills that helped them not

only socialise but develop soft skills. These included trust, teamwork and how to socialise:

‘I learnt trust.’

‘...to meet new people, I learned how to socialise more.’

‘I learned how to work as a team.’

‘I learnt how to cooperate more with people’.

‘I learnt ... to be more confident about being around more people.’

Such statements from one third of the group shows in depth learning and constitutes a significant outcome, beyond meeting new people or even making a new friend.

Concluding observations

The Alaw project has achieved outcome 2, and enabled participants to extend their social networks and friendships, thus reducing social isolation. However, the Alaw project has also surpassed this outcome through not only widening networks, but through also deepening existing friendships, and developing soft skills. This has enabled some profound learning for a significant minority of participants in understanding how to make friends and socialise and increasing trust and confidence to be able to be oneself within a group of people.

ASSESSING OUTCOME 3: INCREASE IN SELF ESTEEM OR SENSE OF POTENTIAL

Introduction

Whilst aspects of the other two outcomes link to self esteem; this section predominantly discusses the extent to which feeling a sense of achievement and having had the opportunity to learn new skills and self express through music has increased self esteem. This section also examines whether increases in esteem or potential will be sustained through personal commitment to continue with a new-found activity.

The impact of having learnt new music skills

Unanimously, participants described having learnt new music skills. Certain instruments and skills were mentioned as shown in the table below. Covid-19 meant that learning instruments was much harder and therefore Bandlab and lyrics had more of a focus.

Instrument/ Skill	Number of mentions
singing	19
ukelele	18
guitar	10
Putting songs together (composition)	10
Writing raps/ poems for lyrics	7
Chords (music theory) and songs	6
keyboard	4
bandlab	3
drums	2
bass	2
How to use a microphone	2

All evaluation participants clearly had a sense of achievement from learning music skills. Whilst participants found it hard to articulate what the musical creative expression had meant to their own learning and sense of self; there

was clear enthusiasm for the musical skills they had learnt and a great excitement at being able to try out different instruments that was expressed through body language and facial expression to evaluators rather than only in words:

‘I liked learning how to play different instruments.’

‘It’s amazing because I’ve learnt new songs and stuff.’

‘We’ve been writing raps and poems. It helped me get my confidence up in rhyming things.’

‘I learnt that I am able to write a song.’

Participants appreciated learning music in an environment other than at school and enjoyed learning together and teaching each other

Evaluator: Have you done music before?

YP: Not much, just when I was bored. [in music lessons at school]

‘I liked learning to play ukulele and not be forced into anything’
[different to school music lessons]

‘Not compulsory. Much better than at school. Get to choose get to listen. No instruments in schools and only nerdy kids get to do it. Music teachers choose who is going to do it.’

‘Need to be grade 5 on instrument and a singer to be able to pick music. If there’s behaviour things may not be able to pick music.’

‘I taught people to play a ukelele.’

It can be concluded that the project was highly successful in teaching children and young people new music skills and that participants unanimously gained a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment from learning music in a workshop style environment.

Sustaining music skills learnt

A minority of participants (approximately one fifth) spoke about continuing with the music skills they had learnt. Three girls had really enjoyed writing poems and raps for song lyrics, with 2 of them having spent time outside of sessions writing words to bring to sessions:

‘Mainly by myself in school, just do it and get on with it.’ [motivation for writing raps and poetry]

‘I might do it myself and join with others.’ [writing lyrics]

YP: ‘So I wrote one or two [poems] in a session, then about 10 at home. One night I think I wrote five.’

Evaluator: ‘Will you carry on once you’ve finished?’

YP: ‘Yeah’

Evaluator: Will you write them just for yourself or have them heard?

YP: Maybe not just for myself, maybe I’ll share them.’

Other participants spoke more generally about how they planned to continue with music:

‘Everyday it feels like I’m going to learn more music.’

[I’m going to] ‘Listen to music more. At home and in music group.’

The evidence suggests that, for a fifth of the total group, the Alaw project has had a significant impact upon increasing creative expression in the longer term (i.e. beyond the end of the music sessions) and offered a valued creative outlet.

Increases in self esteem

Learning new music skills and having the opportunity to socialise enabled participants to learn many skills, which all contributed to an increase in self esteem, but 80% of the young people themselves spoke directly about the increased confidence they felt they had due to achieving new skills and managing to overcome the challenge of writing and playing music. Sources of new confidence varied between individuals from learning an instrument to

singing in front of people, seeing songs written up properly, gaining friends or trying new things; but they all contributed to gaining a sense of achievement, a willingness to learn new things and developing the confidence to give new challenges a go:

‘I had confidence to sing in front of the tutors.’

‘I got the confidence to play a keyboard.’

‘I had really low confidence and self-esteem before this. Now I have friends, which I never had before.’

‘I learnt to feel more confident in what I do.’

Increased technology skills

In addition to socialising skills, confidence and music, participants of Alaw also learnt technology skills; particularly with the change to online delivery due to Covid-19 restrictions. Participants gained a sense of achievement for having learnt different video platforms to interact with each other, even though most stated they would have preferred to have face to face workshops and some children and young people struggled to use the technology, mainly due to literacy difficulties and not being used to video platforms on different devices:

‘At first I didn’t know how to work everything online, but now I’ve got used to it.’ [band Lab and zoom]

‘It was pretty hard using zoom. It’s not hard now.’

Concluding observations

The Alaw project taught all participants to learn music skills, including quite complex tasks such as composition and music theory, to young people who felt distanced from music classes within school. Through learning music, participants gained longer term satisfaction whereby effort and perseverance led to overcoming challenges and an increase in feelings of self worth and esteem. In a relatively short space of time, through the medium of music and creative expression, participants also learnt other new skills including teamwork, sociability, technology and self expression. The project has motivated a fifth of the participants to continue with a new found activity, which exceeds meeting the outcome set regarding increased self esteem.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND IDENTIFIED LEARNING FROM THE ALAW PROJECT

Introduction

The Merthyr Young Carers' service has undertaken reflective practice during the delivery of the Alaw project, addressing specific issues either related to delivery during Covid- 19 or to the needs and preferences of young carers to effectively learn music skills.

Project recruitment

Recruitment to the Alaw project was from existing groups of young carers known to the service. However, in order to maximise recruitment, the service offered taster sessions prior to the delivery of each 12 week programme. This helped children and young people know what could be expected and familiarised them with the tutor and facilitator musician. Even though young carers were familiar with the service, the music programmes were additional to the support they received and therefore needed to be offered in a way that was appealing and accessible for the children and young people. Additionally, the facilitator musician purposefully matched tutor to groups which helped the learning dynamic. The physical presence of staff, a tutor and peer dynamics aided engagement and attendance at sessions when they were held face to face.

Comparing online and face to face delivery

Whilst it may cost less to deliver online services there were distinct disadvantages, as shown by the sporadic engagement and attendance of groups 3 and 4. The project found it hard to recruit to group 4 as online services are remote and by their very nature are not engaging. Additionally, consultation with children, young people and families that were not involved in online activities revealed that many children and young people found online interactive learning too challenging and exposing; with video cameras on they felt self conscious, but they felt they were not in the group if they kept their cameras off, it opened the home environment to potential external scrutiny and, if they did not have privacy at home, it exposed family members to acquaintances and potential friends. These families said that if face to face delivery had been available it was likely their daughter would have joined the

groups. These problems to online delivery are in addition to those already discussed in previous sections regarding the impact of over crowding in households, the impact of deprivation upon the home environment and lack of devices and difficulties of managing low technological or literacy levels in online environments.

Within the face to face sessions, whilst the primary objective was to learn music and participate in group music activities, there were also other benefits such as food preparation, informal one to one chats with project staff and peer support. These secondary benefits were lost in online sessions.

Fulfilling monitoring requirements

Questionnaires are not the most accessible form of data collection for children and young people, even when questions are re-phrased to ensure straightforward language is used. Young carers often have less regular attendance due to caring duties and unexpected family emergencies that other young people do not have. This can affect a services' ability to carry out data collection that is designed upon a comparison of pre and post intervention scores. A move to online services made quantitative data collection of questionnaires more difficult.

The qualitative evaluation data collection also needed to be made accessible. Vulnerable children and young people often do not find it easy to talk in group settings and therefore activities and creative methods often maximise engagement. With the move to online delivery, the interaction of the qualitative data collection was reduced; noticeably affecting the quality of the data gathered. Qualitative researchers are still experimenting with online interactive tools to try and make engagement easier for people who may not like speaking in groups or have low literacy and technological skills.

Need for project exit strategies and sustainability

Unanimously each group did not want the music project to stop. During evaluation activities participants asked the evaluator to tell funders that music sessions should continue and offered to fund raise themselves to try and continue the Alaw project:

‘Why has it got to stop? We want it to carry on’ [asked to evaluators]

‘Can’t you look for funding to enable it to go on?’ [asked to evaluators]

‘Why does the project have to end? I don’t understand why they don’t continue it.’

‘Could we start our own charity and do fundraising and then it could keep going?’

Participants explained to the evaluator that they felt unable to attend music workshops or lessons elsewhere; due to a combination of low confidence, needing to be in a group where people understand young carers’ lives, and experiences of exclusion with regards to music lessons conducted in school and more formal environments. The service was aware of the strength of feeling regarding continuing the project and developed exit strategies for each cohort, and sought continuation funding. Exit strategies included having celebrations and events at the end of each cohort and engaging in wider activities that utilised their musical skills. These included performing at the Barnardo’s Christmas concert online, having involvement from the poet laureate, involvement in the children’s Commissioner for Wales ‘Here I am’ project and uploading songs and raps that were created to youtube for circulation. Having an end result and a celebration helped young people feel the project had been celebrated and ended.

The service also secured some funding to deliver music workshops during the February 2021 half term week and continues to seek additional funds to ensure music can be offered to young carers when possible.

CONCLUSIONS

The Alaw project has met all three of its project outcomes and successfully engaged 56 vulnerable children and young people in creative expression. On the one hand the project design was relatively straightforward- delivery of four 12 week music programmes. However; the project was also complex and holistic since it used the medium of music to achieve a number of interrelated goals. Young carers found the Alaw project accessible to them since they knew that the project workers understood their home circumstances and would talk to them informally about pressures at home in 'down time' during the music sessions. Being with other young carers enabled participants to gain peer support and be able to express their experiences in a safe environment using the medium of music. This formed the foundations for being able to learn new skills in music, sociability and technology. These skills in turn increased self esteem. It can be concluded that participants experienced positive mental well being through participation within the Alaw project.

The service has maximised the outcomes of the Alaw project through building in exit strategies and seeking opportunities for sustainability in the longer term. It has also undertaken dissemination of young people's work and supported their continued interest in writing and creating music.

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROJECT WORKERS AND ADAPTED WELL-BEING QUESTIONS FOR USE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Four measures of personal well-being – Sheet for worker

Give the young people a sheet for their answers (below), and read out the following questions, to ensure those with lower levels of literacy feel confident in answering. You can number the questions and tally them up to the answers.

Introduction:

We want to check if what we are doing here makes a difference, so we have some questions about your feelings at the moment. There are no right or wrong answers and you don't have to answer all of the questions if you don't want to. You don't have to tell or show the others how you have answered. Once you have finished your sheet, you can put it in the box. You don't put your name on the answer sheet.

We will ask the question out loud, and then you can mark your answer on your sheet next to the number.

To answer the question, put a circle around the number that is closest to how you feel.

If you answer 0, that means you do not feel that way at all.

If you answer 10, that means you feel that way very strongly and/or very often.

All of the numbers in between are on a scale from 0 to 10, 5 is just in the middle.

If you don't understand, please just ask.

1) How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Prompt: things that make you feel comfortable/good, things are ok with your life.

2) Do you think that the things you do in life are worthwhile?

Prompt: important, enjoyable, worth doing

3) How happy did you feel yesterday?

Question for 16+ YP:

It is natural to worry about things sometimes, like if you have a test or a job interview. Anxiety is a way of feeling, which is like being nervous, worried or scared a lot of the time, when there is nothing obvious to be scared of. It can have symptoms in your body, like sweating, upset tummies or breathing fast, or symptoms in the way you feel like not being able to concentrate or feeling nervous or out of control. Anxiety can also make it difficult for people to sleep.

4) If 0 means not at all anxious and 10 means completely anxious. How anxious did you feel yesterday?

This final question is about loneliness and it is going to be answered slightly differently.

For question 5 on your answer sheet, you have a bar with words for answer choices which are:

always, often, sometimes, occasionally, hardly ever or never.

Always is above the red section of the bar, and never is blue.

Mark your answer by putting a cross in the bar next to the word that describes your feelings.

5) How often do you feel lonely?

Answer sheet for young people

1) Life satisfaction

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

2) Worthwhile

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

3) Happiness

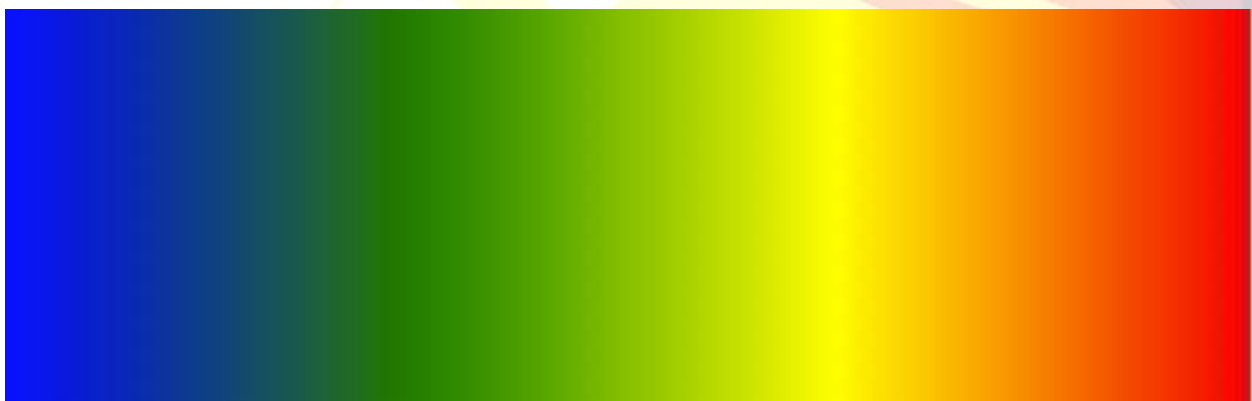
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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4) Anxiety (question for 16+)

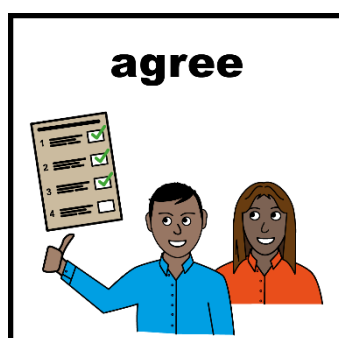
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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5) Loneliness

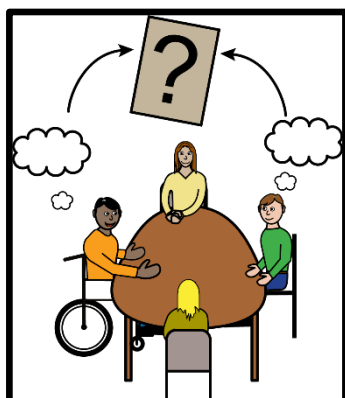
Never Hardly ever Occasionally Sometimes Often Always



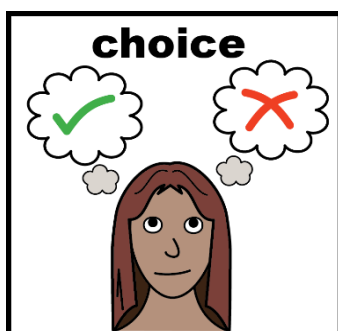
Agreement form to join in with the Alaw evaluation workshop!



I want to be a part of the “Alaw” evaluation workshop and I know this form is about me agreeing to join in the workshop.



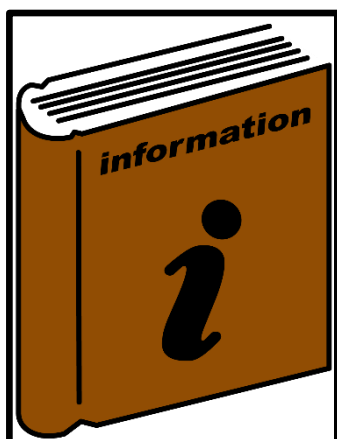
I know I will be working with others in a group. We will share ideas and experiences about the what we have learnt and enjoyed on the Alaw project. I know researchers will be taking notes to record what we all said. The notes written up and kept on a cloud drive. The written notes will then be destroyed. This means they are completely private.



I know I can stop being involved in the research if I want to. It is my choice to be involved and I can change my mind. I can ask for the information I shared to be withdrawn until the end of the



I know what I say to Vikki or Elaine will not be told to anyone else, it is confidential. But I know they will have to tell someone else if they think someone is being hurt. I know that this keeps us all safe.

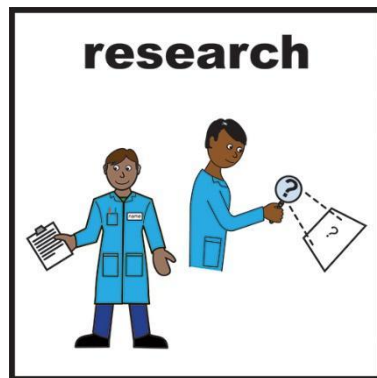


I know the information I share will be written in a report but the report will not name me or be about me. The report will be about all the different things people on the Alaw project have said. The report will be read by the people who have paid for Alaw project, and other professionals who work in similar projects.

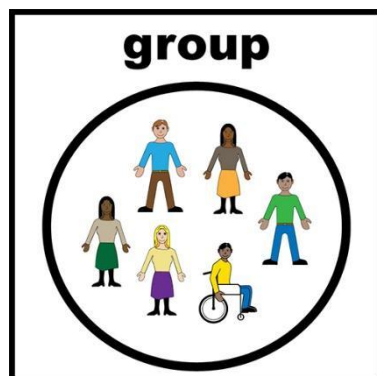
MY NAME IS

MY AGE IS

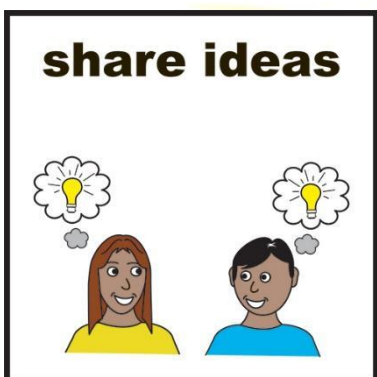
"What has gone well in the Alaw project?"



The people who gave money for the Alaw project want to hear about what difference it has made. They have asked for researchers to speak to people who have attended the Alaw project to find out what was good and what they have learnt. Barnardo's have asked Vikki, a researcher from C.A.R.P. Collaborations to help them do this.



Vikki will work with a Barnardo's researcher called Elaine. We will talk together as a group about what you have enjoyed, what you have learnt and what could make the project better.



We would like to work with you to share ideas and experiences of the project. We will do activities while we work together and hear about the project- we want you to have fun while you talk with us!



We will meet you at the project and the activities will last about an hour or so.

When we visit we will explain more about the project.

You can ask us questions before we do any activities.

After the activities staff that you know at the project will be available if you wanted to talk about anything that was concerning you.



If you are not happy about this work or want to complain you can speak Vikki or Elaine on the day, or you can phone, text or WhatsApp Elaine on: 07730350615 or email: elaine.speyer@barnardos.org.uk

If you would rather tell someone else about your concerns you can talk to your Barnardo's worker or the manager of the service Linda Jones on 01685 725171 or linda.jones@barnardos.org.uk

If you are still not happy after that, you can contact Barnardo's complaints department on CS.Complaints@barnardos.org.uk or 07917187718

We hope you want to take part and look forward to meeting you!

Information for parents: About the Merthyr young carers 'Alaw' project evaluation workshops

The 'Alaw' music project has been running at Barnardo's Cymru Merthyr young carers. The people who gave money for the music project want to know from children and young people how well it went and what they have learnt. They have asked for researchers who work for C.A.R.P. Collaborations and Barnardo's Cymru to go and speak with all the participants about the music project.

C.A.R.P. Collaborations have lots of experience in doing research with children and young people. We will be doing activities with the whole group for about an hour to hear about the things that children have enjoyed and what they have learnt over the course of the music project.

The researchers will make written notes of the conversations children and young people have about the music project. The notes will be written up and put on a password secure cloud drive. This means they are safe and private. The hand written notes will then be destroyed. No personal information such as date of birth or address will be taken by the researchers.

The researchers have to write a report about how well the project has gone. The report will be read by other community musicians and people working with young people in other settings. No child will be named in the report they write. This means that it will be anonymous. Anything a child says during the research workshop will be kept confidential, unless

researchers are worried a child is in danger. This is unlikely, but we need to make sure that everybody we work with is safe. Every member of the research team has a current DBS check.

We think it is very important for parents to know what their child is participating in and why. We therefore need your consent for your child to join in the workshop. If you are happy for your child to be a part of the research we ask you to complete the consent form and give it back to the person who gave it to you. We will also ask children and young people themselves for their consent in the workshop and they can always change their minds- they do not have to participate if they don't want to! Project staff will also be available so children and young people can talk to them about any part of the research workshop.

Complaints information

If you or your child feel uncomfortable or are not happy with this work, we will be available to have a private chat and listen to concerns.

If your child is not happy they can talk to us privately on the day. If you are not happy, you can phone, text or WhatsApp Elaine on: 07730 350615 or email elaine.speyer@barnardos.org.uk

If you would rather tell someone else about your concerns about this work, you can talk to your Barnardo's worker in the usual way, or the manager of the service Linda Jones on 01685 725171 or linda.jones@barnardos.org.uk

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been handled, you can contact the Barnardo's Complaints Department on: CS.Complaints@barnardos.org.uk or 07917187718.

Parents' consent form for children to take part in Alaw project evaluation workshop

- I have read the information leaflet about the Alaw project evaluation and understanding why it is being done.
- I am happy for my child to participate in the session and understand that they will also be asked for their consent to join in.
- I know that the report will be anonymous and the sessions will be confidential unless workers are worried a child may be in danger.
- I know that only the research team will be able to see personal information (such as age, gender, village/town/city) about my child and it will be stored safely. No personal information will be sold and data protection rights will not be broken.

Parents/ guardian signature:

Parents/ guardian name printed:

Date:

Child's name:

Child's age:

APPENDIX 4: CASE STUDIES COLLECTED BY THE SERVICE

Clara

Clara is a 17 year old young carer. She lives at home with her mother, father and her 5 siblings (2 sisters and 3 brothers). Clara's siblings are aged between 1-21 years of age. Clara's father is from the gypsy traveller community and holds very strong views about how his daughters should behave and their role within the household. As such, the girls are not allowed to go out without a chaperone. Two of Clara's brothers have ADHD; her younger brother also has ASD while her father also struggles with mental health issues.

Clara left secondary school in July 2019 and achieved 5 GCSE's ranging from B-F. She is currently attending a local College where she is studying hair and beauty. Clara was subjected to bullying whilst at school and found it very difficult to deal with this, resorting to self-harm and bulimia to deal with her feelings.

Clara has been with Barnardos Young carers for 2 years; she attends fortnightly sessions and also attends activities and workshops during holiday periods. She states that these are the only occasions, other than going to college, when she is able to have time to herself and to have time with friends. Clara was excited to be a part of the Alaw music sessions, seeing it as an opportunity to 'get away from her home for a while'. She attended the majority of the Alaw sessions, only missing one due to being ill. During the sessions, she took the opportunity to catch up on her college coursework, seeking support from the other young people and staff. She explained that her parents could not help her with the work because they did not understand it as they could not read or write very well. Clara also used the sessions to write about her time at school and the bullying she was subjected to, she also devised a poster on these issues. Week 8 saw Clara actually engaging with the music, she finally found the confidence to sit with Justin (CMW tutor) and sang some songs. Over the next three weeks she sang a variety of songs and shared recordings of herself with the group.

The Alaw project has provided Clara with many opportunities. It enabled her to have a break from caring, a break from her family and a break from her home. She met and forged new friendships with other young carers, some of whom she thought she would not have had anything in common with. She found the confidence to sing in front of others. She was also able to have support with her college course work. Clara also found the confidence to eat in front of others. This was a significant advancement given her history of eating disorder and that for the two years that she has been involved with young carers she has never

eaten in front of others, always stating that she had eaten or would eat when she would get home.

Gillian

Gillian is a 16 year old carer who helps care for her mother. She lives at home with her mum, dad, and two sisters (1 older, 1 younger), she also has an older brother who lives locally with his partner. Gillian and her family moved to Wales from their native Poland 11 years ago. Gillian is currently studying child care (level 3) at the local college; she attended a local comprehensive school and passed her GCSE's with B and C passes.

Although having lived in Wales for 11 years, both of Gillian's parents have a poor understanding of the English language with all the children acting as interpreters for them. Gillian's mum and dad both held down full time work in local factories up until mum became ill (3years ago). Mum has a tumour/clot near her brain, she has had operations but due to the locality of the tumour the doctors were not able to remove it all. As a result of this, mum becomes very tired, disorientated and often stumbles and falls, she also suffers with severe headaches. During the Alaw sessions mum and dad had to go to Sheffield hospital where mum underwent radiotherapy sessions.

Gillian attended 5 out of the 12 sessions. Although she did not get involved in the music element of the project she really enjoyed the social aspect. Gillian said that Alaw provided a much needed distraction from her worries around mum having radiotherapy; she said that her peers offered her support and a listening ear. She said that she has made new friends and enjoyed being with these friends, listening to their stories helped her to feel that 'she was not alone with worrying and caring for someone'. Gillian said that she very rarely goes out of the house other than attending College or attending fortnightly young carers group. She also stated that an added bonus was the opportunity to attend the Girls Rights Development Day recently held in Cardiff. This was attended by some other members of the Alaw Project.

Flora

Flora is 15 years old and a carer for her younger brother. Flora's brother is non verbal and has ASD, he used to attend a local special needs school, however, the family felt that the school was not addressing his needs. As such, he now attends a school on the outskirts of Cardiff. Neither of Flora's parents drive and, thus, mam has to accompany her brother to and from school. Having dropped him at the school she spends her time wandering around Cardiff until it is time

to accompany him back home. Flora's father was a part time cleaner at a local retail park, he was laid off work two weeks ago, Flora said that this is causing anxiety to the family as they did not expect dad to lose his job. Flora said that mam and dad had only claimed benefits for a short period once before when she was born.

Flora attends a local comprehensive school, her attendance is very sporadic, she states that she has 'an aversion to school'. Flora has only been in this school since September 2019, she was initially in a school closer to her home where she became a target to ongoing verbal and physical bullying. Flora said that this was a particularly bad time for her, she said that a lot of 'her bullies' live close to her home, therefore, she refuses to venture out of her home by herself. The local Authority fund a taxi to transport her too and from school. Flora said that she is much more happy in her new school. Flora suffers with anxiety and states that she is 'socially awkward', she also suffers with heart problems and stomach problems.

Flora was assessed for Barnardo's Young carers project in July 2019. She was invited to attend holiday activities but refused to attend. Flora was then asked if she was interested in attending the Alaw music project, she agreed to this saying that she loved music, attending the first session gave her the confidence to go on to attend young carers after school group sessions.

Flora has attended 10 out of 12 sessions, missing two due to ill health. It was apparent from the first session that Flora had a natural talent for music and singing. Every session Flora gave 100%. Initially, she was quite shy and wary about singing, but, soon overcame this when she saw the support that the other girls offered. Flora tried playing drums, bass guitar and keyboard, however, it was the introduction of the ukulele that really captivated her. At the first session she was introduced to the ukulele she learned to play Riptide a song by Vance Joy, having mastered this she then sourced a second hand ukulele and taught herself to play 15 other tunes over the course of a week. Over the following sessions Flora sat with two girls and helped to teach them keys on the ukulele, ensuring that on the final session one of these girls was able to play a whole song on the ukulele.

Flora's confidence has increased immensely and she has now joined the young carers choir and sang a solo at a recent event hosted by Wales' First Minister in the Cardiff. She has also expressed an interest in attending the next two Alaw cohort groups as a peer mentor for the younger members. Flora has stated that

Alaw has opened up many doors for her, she said that it has helped her to interact with other young people, she has made new friends, but, most importantly, it has provided a safe environment outside of her home.

Mali-Rose

Mali is 8 years old and new to the young carer's service having been referred during the lockdown period, Mali has not attended any young carers groups and did not know any other members of the group.

Mali lives at home with her mother, younger sister and mam's new partner. She has recently been having contact with her father. Mali is pleased that she now has contact with dad and she has told me that she sometimes feel like she is the parent and dad is the child, it is Mali who rings dad to see 'how his day has been'.

Mali helps care for her mother. Mam struggles with her mental health, she has PTSD, depression, anxiety and medical condition which greatly impacts her day to day living. Mali also helps care for her younger sister when mam is poorly. Mali was unable to access week one of the Alaw programme due to having wi fi issues, she has since attended every session and also attended the further additional sessions.

Mam said that when the offer for Mali to join sessions came about she thought that Mali would not have participated, she said that Mali was nervous, introverted lacked confidence and she was also displaying undesirable behaviours at home. Although appearing a little shy at her first session Mali's confidence grew week by week, she participated and contributed fully at every given chance. Mali has been helpful and thoughtful to other members of the group and she would often say that she was glad she had made new friends. Mam has stated that as a result of Mali attending Alaw sessions it has 'brought out her confidence in leaps and bounds', others have also commented about this, Mali's behaviour at home is now 'a lot better'. Mam said that the group has really helped her and 'brought her out of her shell'. She said 'I am proud of the person Mali has become'.

Mali has told us that she has loved attending all the sessions, she said she is amazed at all that she has learned and is sad that she will be leaving the group, stating 'it has been my everything' she said that she asks her mam every day if there is an Alaw session. Mali said that she is really proud of the poems she has completed, saying 'I have also made lots of new friends'. Mali said she would love to 'do more stuff like this with Martin and Owen'. She said it has been great.