

# Impact Report

# Children's

# Parliament

## Community Initiative



Funded by:



realising  
ambition

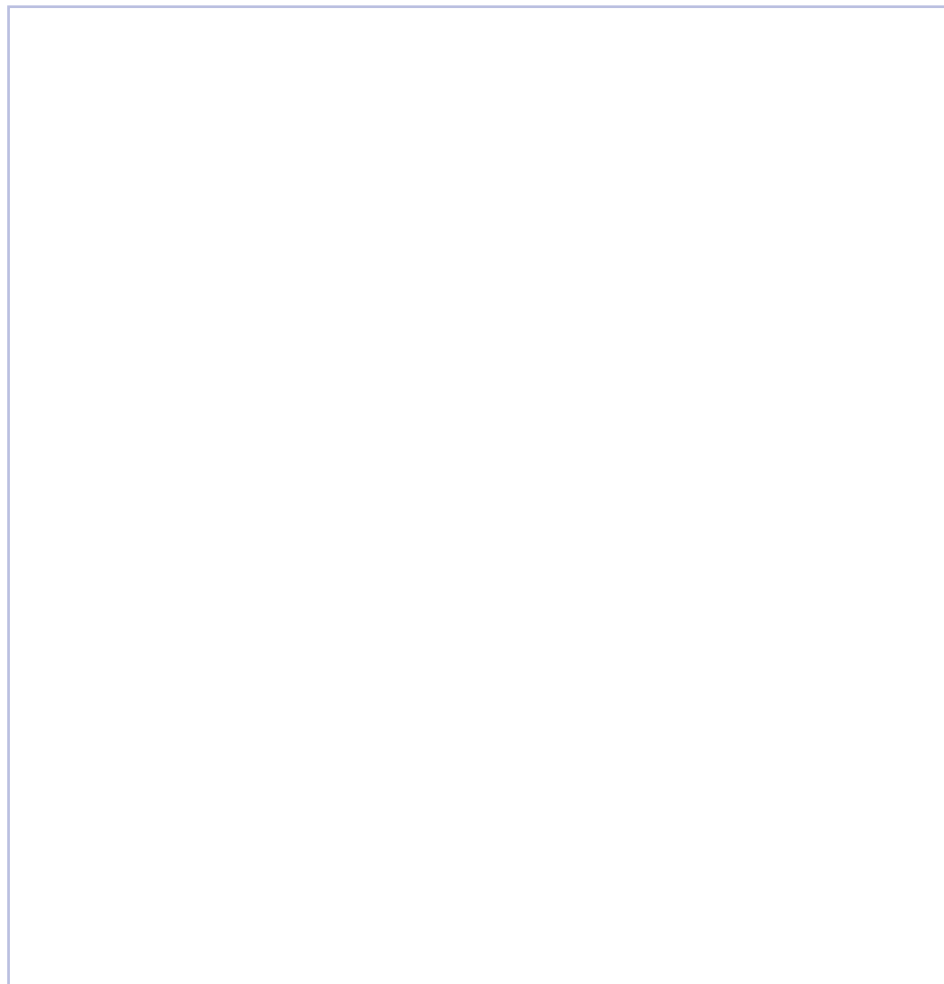
# Children's Parliament is Scotland's Centre for Excellence for children's participation & engagement.

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## DVD

A filmmaker was embedded in the project. Watch the films to see the outcomes for yourself!

- |  |                            |                                   |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Introduction to Children's Parliament Community Programme | 3. Group 1 - May 2013      | 6. The School Perspective         |
| 2. The Role of Breakfast                                     | 4. Group 2 - October 2013  | 7. Sir Harry Burns Reflections    |
|  | 5. Group 3 - November 2013 | 8. Prof. Ross Deuchar Reflections |



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# About Us

## Our Vision

Children's Parliament works for a future where all children in Scotland are actively engaged in shaping our world, so that everyone is healthy, happy and safe. We believe all children should live and grow with dignity and be valued for what they can offer the world.

## What We Do

We work creatively through projects, consultations and training programmes, to improve communication between children and adults and to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. This enables us to explore our world together.

We provide children with opportunities to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings so that they can influence life at home, in school and in the community through change at a local and national level.

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## About This Programme

Realising Ambition is a UK-wide, £25m Big Lottery Fund programme, replicating 25 interventions that were aimed at preventing children and young people, aged 8-14, from entering the criminal justice system. Launched in 2012, the five year programme provided grant funding and specialist support to 22 organisations to refine and build the evidence base of their interventions.

The programme invested in outstanding projects that have a strong track record of helping children and young people to fulfil their potential.

The fund has sought to do this by replicating evidence-based programmes and by supporting charities to refine and evaluate promising interventions - that are not yet conclusively proven to work but are excellent candidates to become evidence-based programmes. The programme invested in outstanding projects that have a strong track record of helping young people to fulfil their potential.

Through this programme, Children's Parliament had been funded between 2012 and 2015, to work with children in the East End of Glasgow, to improve outcomes for individuals and to demonstrate how to replicate evidence-based work, with fidelity.

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## Who We Worked With - The Children

This programme targeted primary school children, aged 9-11 years old, (P6 and P7) attending school in the east end of Glasgow.

Areas of high socio-economic deprivation, where wellbeing outcomes for children are poorer, were the focus for delivery. We also sought to intervene at an early age and early stage of difficulties experienced by children. We defined children's need by factors known to highlight children with a greater risk to offending in later life. These risk factors were:

- Children who display challenging behaviour in school
- Children with a record of exclusion
- Children with poor attendance
- Children with a difficult home life or from a family where there was a history of offending
- Children who tend to be susceptible to negative peer influences
- Children who find it difficult to form positive relationships with their peers and/or adults

Poor engagement with school and learning, as well as poor emotional wellbeing during childhood, are key factors that infringe on a child's ability to engage in learning and development opportunities and are key indicators for a range of social and health inequalities, including, amongst others: offending behaviours; drug, alcohol and tobacco use; teenage pregnancy and mental health difficulties.

# The Delivery Model

There were 3 key strands to the delivery of this work. All three interlinked to create the complete package.

## 1. Training for teaching staff

Each participating school received CPD for all staff to explore the role of children's rights within education. This included how a rights based approach can improve outcomes for children, in line with Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child. This training gives schools an introduction to the project and helps to frame expectations and what Children's Parliament was able to offer.

## 2. Children's Rights Education

Pupils in P6 and P7 from each participating school, took part in a one-day workshop which explored:

- Children's rights
- The role of home, school, community and peers to support children's rights
- Wants and needs
- How adults can help children

## 3. Referred Intensive Paper Mache Project

12 children at a time were referred from 3 schools (4 per school), following the one day workshop.

Children took part in 5 days of creative model making. Each child made a model of themselves in 20 years time. Creative work was complemented by focused group work, paired and individual work.

Each child worked towards self-identified goals through the week. Goals were based on the referral criteria and the child's understanding of their own life and their needs.

All children who participated in the Paper Mache week also took part in a celebration event, where invited friends, family and teaching staff, saw the models they made and children presented to the audience to share their experiences and outcomes.

## Outcomes

The programme had a clear focus on outcomes and this report illustrates the outcomes we saw regarding:

- Children's emotional wellbeing
- Children's engagement with learning
- Cooperation, pro-social skills and better relationships





## Pathways to Offending

We humans understand quite well the science involved in our personal development. We know relationships and connections with other humans are the building blocks of our existence, our wellbeing, even our survival. In our early years, we learn how to establish and maintain these relationships and this skill allows us to go on and live a good life. We learn how to communicate, negotiate, compromise, problem solve and how to make good decisions about ourselves.

Sadly, for some children, acquiring these human skills is not always easy and for these children life can be very challenging. These are often the children who don't communicate very well, who don't know how to establish good relationships and as a result they can become disconnected. This disconnection becomes most obvious in school, where they are often the children who are described as disruptive and very often excluded. They may seem like they are seeking attention but they are really seeking connection.

It is vitally important that these children are given extra help to acquire the skills they will need to be the best they can be. Children's Parliament works effectively with such children to connect with them, to help them acquire these vital skills. The children can then get the most out of school, helping them become resilient adults, more able to successfully negotiate life.

In some cases, the change is obvious but sometimes it's less so; it's paying more attention in class or relating better to classmates. Parents are often the ones who see the difference in their children immediately and so it's important too that the parent's role is acknowledged, valued and parents are included.

The earlier we intervene to help, the better it is for everyone. Frederick Douglass said, "It's easier to build strong children than repair broken men." I agree. This idea is at the very heart of the work of Children's Parliament.



John Carnochan OBE QPM FFPH

Former Deputy Chief Constable Strathclyde Police  
and co-founder of Violence Reduction Unit



# The Importance of Early Intervention

This programme reflects the Government's assertion that a key part of any early intervention policy is building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure the best outcomes for themselves. It is about moving from intervening when a crisis happens towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise.

In the joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement, 'Early Years and Early Intervention', it states: "A key part of any early intervention policy, is building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure the best outcomes for themselves. It is about moving from intervening when a crisis happens towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise."

In 2010, The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, concluded that involvement in offending by young people, is strongly linked to their experiences of multiple aspects of vulnerability and social adversity. Disengagement from education, including lack of attainment, disaffection, truancy and exclusion are strongly associated with offending. This Children's Parliament Community Initiative actively helped children to re-engage with learning, enhance their pro-social relationships and build a sense of purpose, possibility and ambition. We worked with children before their challenges became entrenched.

Every baby, child and young person needs support to achieve their potential, however, some children require extra help along the way. Early intervention is about getting additional, timely and effective support to children who need it, enabling them to flourish and preventing costly, harmful long-term consequences.

This all matters because we have a duty to protect children. It matters because the longer a child is left without hope and a belief in themselves, or others, the greater difficulty they will experience in relationships later in life. It matters because doing nothing has a cost for public services picking up the pieces of a more complex situation further down the line. The Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services made such a point: "A clear conclusion that we draw is that, if public services are at once to promote social justice and human rights and to be sustainable into the future, it is imperative that public services adopt a much more preventative approach and that, within that, they succeed in addressing the persistent problem of multiple negative outcomes and inequalities faced by too many of the people and communities of Scotland."



PAPIER  
AREA

Only loved the  
world that we are  
and only  
believe in a  
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be!





## Outcome 1: Improved emotional wellbeing

Children, teachers and Children's Parliament Staff reported that children showed clear improvements in a number of key areas:

- Increases in confidence and self-esteem, reporting that they felt much more positive about themselves, their abilities and skills and their futures.
- Children were more aware of their feelings & emotions and how to effectively manage them.
- Children were more able to cope with uncertainty and recover more quickly from incidents.
- Children were actively involved and achieving in a safe environment where they reported they felt included, respected and nurtured – learning to make healthier and safer choices and were more responsible.

The majority of children (89.9%) felt extremely happy about what they'd achieved:

"I feel I have achieved something new, I feel good about myself."

"I feel more than happy because I have confidence, now I can speak out loud and speak to other people confidently."

"I feel proud of myself. I feel confident about meeting new people and adults and proud that I made new friends."

Children felt good about themselves and what they'd achieved and mentioned that their confidence had grown as a result:

"I feel proud that I managed to get more confident. I enjoyed speaking on the Hot Seat and talking to an audience. It made me really happy to imagine myself as an artist and answer questions."

"I feel better about myself 'cos I've made new friends, became more confident, less hot headed, less angry and I think I can change my attitude."

Children felt included, valued and respected on the programme.

"I felt really included and it made me more confident."

A small amount of children (4.4%) felt positive but were not as enthusiastic in their responses stating they felt "okay" about what they'd achieved.

100% of Teachers who referred children were positive about the project overall. Teachers noted that all children had fully or partially achieved their goals. In relation to improved emotional wellbeing, teachers reported that children had changed or adapted their behaviour and were managing their anger better.

"Roland was the perfect candidate for this project and he got so much out of it. He is very happy with the result of his model and was very proud to present it at the celebration event."

"He felt valued and listened to."

"He has been enthusiastic about school in general and art in particular, cooperative and happy in class. A great positive experience for the boys."



Many teachers commented on the way Children's Parliament had helped the children develop their confidence, self-esteem/self-belief. They reported that increases in confidence and self belief had led to pupils experiencing less anger or knowing how to manage it more successfully; being less shy and more proud; making better friendships/bonding; more willing to talk and share, talking more and fewer playground problems.

"He has developed more confidence and self belief, he lacked this and for moving into secondary school, this should help him."

"Before the project Derek was extremely shy. During the project he was putting himself out there and engaging with other children. This raised his confidence."

"He gained confidence in his artwork; he is talking more and seems happier. A great self-esteem boost for him."

During the project, staff recorded their observations of how children's self confidence was manifesting. Daily recorded comments included:

"Sara spoke out, put herself out there, was polite, being helpful. She overcame challenges to reading in initial circle and did well in the hot seat - fantastic at expressing herself."

"Kai is very happy today. He takes great confidence and pride in his ability to contribute to groups. He focusses well."

"Worked hard on his model, struggles to read but still gave it a go. Really amicable, friendly with everyone, positive and happy."

"I used to  
just get a shrug.  
Now he talks to me.  
It's really brought  
him out of himself."  
- Parent

These changes were also seen in the home environment, where an increased sense of self worth and motivation was enhancing relationships and enabling children to engage in new social activities:

"Derek is now joining a basketball club as a result of this project. Thank you so much for everything you've done for Derek." Parent



## Outcome 2: Increased Engagement with Learning

Children, teachers, parents and Children's Parliament staff reported that children showed clear improvements in a number of key areas:

- Improvements in children's behaviour, being helpful and co-operating with others, reporting that they felt much more positive about their abilities and skills.
- Children were better at working independently and in a team.
- Children had developed a more focused approach to tasks, even if they were difficult.
- Children were more able to concentrate and had more confidence to try new things and take risks.
- Children were more willing to discuss problems with school and more able to identify skills (academic and other) they had and were developing.
- Children were making safer, healthier choices.

The children commented on an improvement in their behaviour in school:

"I can ask the teacher for time to calm down now."

"I wasn't managing a full week in school and now I feel I'm doing much better."

"I got better at working in a team because I made friends."

"Having breakfast gave me energy and I didn't lose confidence or focus. I kept going even when it was hard."

The children also mentioned their confidence, focus and concentration had improved:

"I'm actually concentrating everywhere a lot more."

"I've been concentrating a lot on my maths."

The experiences on the project of being an active group member and being supported to participate, remained with children after the project. Children and teachers could see participants taking a more active role in their learning environment, applying their skills and new-found confidence from the project back in the classroom:

"I have spoken out in P7's leaver's assembly and I have offered to do a variety of different things."

One head teacher talked to us of a child who struggled with reading and lacked the confidence to read aloud in his classroom. Whilst this project was not designed to increase literacy skills, the boy's sense of confidence, borne from his experiences with Children's Parliament, led him to not only read aloud in his class but to be genuinely excited and proud of the opportunities to do this, which previously he would have avoided. This increased engagement with learning opportunities had clearly enabled this child to make better use of the learning opportunities available to him back at school.

Other children appreciated a non-traditional creative learning environment as a new form of expression, allowing them to connect with others, to be heard and understood:

"I felt like I had the support I needed. Lots of people [were] cheering me on, including my new friends. I like doing art because I think it helps other people to understand me."

Teachers reported children's confidence had increased and this led to them being more enthusiastic about school. This highlights how interrelated the project outcomes are: children need a sense of self confidence to be able to engage well within the school environment and this enhanced relationships and engagement in school. Teachers reported children were more cooperative, more helpful, more engaged in class, working hard to respect and listen to others, more willing and confident about having their say, and getting into trouble around school less.

"He has gained self-confidence and is behaving more maturely on the whole. I think it was an excellent opportunity for the school and child. He thoroughly enjoyed his week and loves to talk about it. He is very proud."

"Last year we lost Tanya. We don't know what happened but she just withdrew. Now we've got her back! Thank you."

"When Ryan came back from the project he was very enthusiastic and was well behaved in class and outside in the playground."

"She is cooperative in class and is less worried about trying new things. Selma is managing well in school."

"He never usually makes it to the end of a day. It's amazing that he's stayed focussed all week."

"Logan gained a great sense of achievement from the project and therefore his confidence has grown."



## Outcome 3: Better relationships, cooperation and pro-social skills

Children, teachers, parents and Children's Parliament staff reported children showed clear improvements in a number of key areas:

- Children were developing better relationships with peers and adults and as a result reported feeling more secure, included and respected.
- Children were better at making and maintaining friendships, bonding and better at working co-operatively and co-operating with others.
- Children were more willing to talk and share, admitting wrong doing, were more helpful and were more able to recognise and understand their potential role to contribute in relationships, their school and in the community.

Throughout the week children told us they felt secure in relationships developed with staff, peers and visitors:

"At first I was nervous about meeting new people, children and adults, but [the project] was fun and exciting so I could talk to people – everyone."

"I stopped arguing with people."

Beyond the life of the project, children also told us that these gains had been maintained. They reported better relationships with peers, friends, teachers and parents:

"The friends I made at the project helped me to help my confidence."

"I feel confident about meeting new people and adults and proud that I made new friends."

"I am more likely to go on trips now. I feel like I can talk to more people. I feel I care more about other people now."

Teachers and visitors reported that increases in confidence and self belief had led to pupils being more cooperative, more helpful, more willing to talk/share, creating better and more connections with parents:

"Pupils have shown a vast improvement since the project. All the children are still talking about the project and staff members they worked with. All had positive experiences and developed so many life skills working as a team – problem solving/ decision making. I love the work you do with young people. A BIG thank you."

"[It] brought a few tears to my eyes when his parents saw [his] sculpture. The connections with parent/child was enhanced. This developed his self worth/esteem."

"Selma does not get so annoyed with others. She has good relationships with all adults."

"[She is] not as grumpy and getting into less scrapes in school. [She's] being more honest when things go wrong and admits wrong doing now!"

"He is working hard to respect and listen to others."

"Antony says that he knows adults will listen to his opinions now."



"[It was] just amazing to see the difference in the children. I was able to have respectful conversations, which is unusual for a Police Officer!"

"I feel  
it's up to me to  
make sure I stay  
calm and in control  
but adults can help  
by staying calm  
around me."







## Learning from Elsewhere in Scotland

When this same programme was delivered in Fife, in 2012-14, we tracked a cohort of 42 children using a questionnaire of 19 validated statements. We assessed their wellbeing across 4 domains:

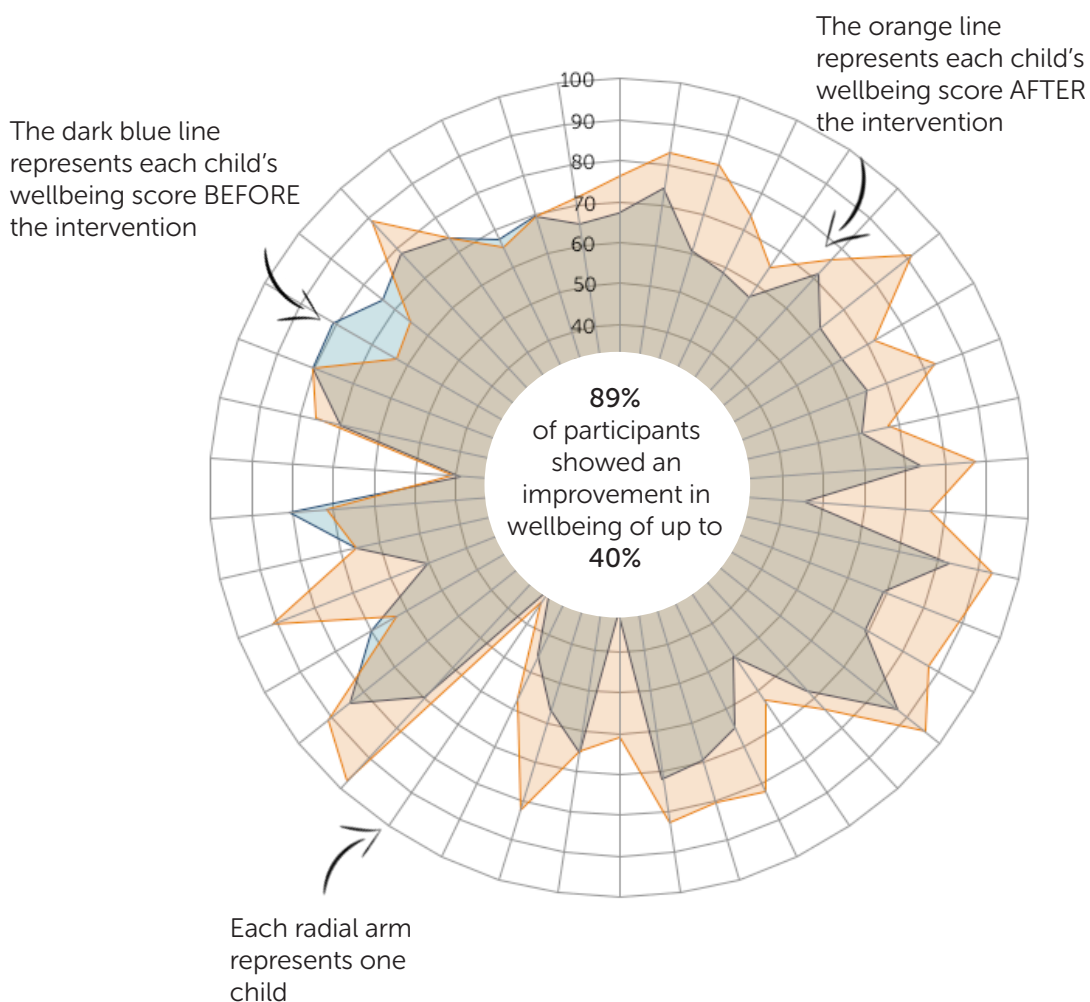
1. Engagement with Learning
2. Cooperation and pro-social skills
3. Peer Relationships
4. Aggression and Misbehaviour

Each child completed a questionnaire before the programme and a few weeks afterwards. The web diagram below highlights the shift in self-reported wellbeing these children experienced. The average improvement in individual self-reported wellbeing was a positive shift of 10%. Children were more likely to enjoy being at school, more likely to find school subjects interesting and more likely to try hard at school. Children were less likely to hate school.

Children reported a:

- 9.1% positive shift in responses relating to their engagement with learning
- 11.5% positive shift in responses relating to peer relationships
- 11.2% positive shift in responses relating to aggression and misbehaviour
- 11.2% positive shift in responses relating to cooperation and pro social skills

Children were more likely to be able to share, more willing to volunteer to help, more able manage their anger and less likely to get into fights. Children were less likely to prefer to be alone, and felt they were more liked by children their own age.







## Case Studies

The following selected case studies highlight the impact the project had for 3 children who took part in the intense creative arts project. A teacher also shared her reflections.

Each child was interviewed after the project by Children's Parliament, telephone interviews were conducted with each child's teacher and where possible, a parent or carer was also contacted.

The case studies reflect the key outcomes of the programme. In total, 11 case studies were documented, available in our full report ([www.childrensparliament.org.uk/glasgow.html](http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/glasgow.html)), read collectively these illustrate the overall impact the project had and highlight the range of responses we typically saw from each group.

All names have been changed.



## The School's Story

The class teacher started by sharing her reasons for selecting children to refer onto the project.

"They told me it would be Paper Mache sculptures and thinking about the future and making decisions and things like that, I thought that was perfect, especially for Primary 7s who are going on to make new friends and make big decisions. A lot of children, especially in areas like this, don't know what they want to do, don't really think about their futures."

"There were a few problems with behaviour and I felt that this would be an opportunity for them to think about their future and do something totally out of their comfort zone."

"I was thinking about Primary 7s, transitions and moving on. I felt that these children needed a confidence boost. They also needed to make good decisions over bad ones, as some of them were going down a slippery slope of making a lot of wrong decisions. There were a few problems with behaviour and I felt that this would be an opportunity for them to think about their future and do something totally out of their comfort zone."

The school contributed the time of a Pupils Support Assistant (PSA) to join the children on the project, creating a valuable link between the school and the project week. To start with Janie the PSA was not sure what to expect:

"I really knew nothing about it. I thought it was more of an art project. I didn't really realise what was involved about the respect and discipline that would be in place. It was quite interesting to see the reaction to it all and I think the majority of the children really enjoyed it and understood what it was all about. I thought there was a great ambience about it and calmness. I thought the children were treated as equals, it was really great team work. I think some of them had quite low self esteem, as the days went on, it was really, really confidence building for them. I thought it was amazing. Really and truly amazing."

After the project, the Class Teacher was clearly able to evidence the outcomes for her pupils, in terms of improved confidence, increased commitment and engagement in school and improved peer relationships:

"I noticed a difference. Yes I did notice a difference in the boys. We have a boy who's now part of a hip hop group in the school and taking part in championships and he's going on to dance at the SECC [Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre] with us. And a boy who is making better decisions. I think he feels more confident and able to do that. He doesn't have to do what his friends say and follow the crowd. And so his behaviour has massively improved and he seems to be trying a lot more and wanting to do things when he'd normally sit back and go, 'hum, I can't be bothered today'."

"The other boys, there's a difference, not so much as the other two, but there's definitely been an improvement in their decision making and being able to step away from the crowd and say 'I don't want to that, I want to do this instead'."

"I've noticed a change in them wanting to do things. We've just had our Primary 7 graduation and all of the boys wanted to do something. They all wanted to say something, take part in a poem. All of the children were singing a P7 song and I don't think they would have even contemplated ever doing anything like that before."

"The People's Palace [celebration] event was fantastic. It was great to see all the

children with the people they have been working with and their parents and being able to see what they have been working on. They were desperate to see you and tell you about it. They were so happy to show everybody the hard work they have been doing."

"Events give parents the chance to get involved. These special things that children really love, it gets them [parents] involved too."

"I think what they are doing now is perfect."

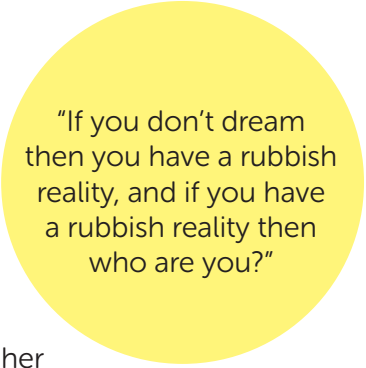
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## Reflective questions

- Why do you think these outcomes were so rapidly achieved on a short project like this?
- What can the class teacher and PSA do to maintain these outcomes?
- How can schools link into community activities that children may engage in?
- Why is it important to have good links between education and informal learning opportunities?

## Amy's Story



"If you don't dream then you have a rubbish reality, and if you have a rubbish reality then who are you?"

Amy was referred to the programme as the school felt she displayed challenging behaviour in class when she was struggling with class work. Her dyslexia affected her ability to understand class work which really upset her. She could become uncooperative at home and this could cause her to arrive late for school or miss school altogether. Amy wanted to improve self-image, self-belief and confidence during her time on the project.

Amy was a really positive, energetic member of the group. She engaged really well in activities, regularly putting herself forward to try new things and was fantastic at expressing herself verbally. Amy developed the confidence to ask insightful questions in front of her peers and she helped others to participate.

Amy volunteered to help both adults and children in a range of activities. With support and encouragement, Amy overcame her anxieties about reading publicly and read in circle time. She managed to deal with her reading difficulties without becoming angry. Amy was a consistent and considerate contributor and her confidence grew throughout the project as she continued to challenge herself to achieve her goals.

The teachers felt that Amy had enjoyed exploring her artistic side, working with other people and sharing her views.

"Amy really enjoyed the programme, particularly the creative aspects and getting along with all the children and adults."

"The programme was really well put together...the most valuable part of the project has been making new friends and being able to speak out and share her views."

In the weeks after the project, Amy's teachers commented on the longer term impact of the programme. They could see a difference in Amy. In particular the teachers observed an increase in Amy's emotional wellbeing at school.

"Amy has managed to stay calm in school...and says she doesn't feel as angry... however, she says she sometimes still feels angry at home...Amy does not get so annoyed with others."

"Amy is cooperative in class and is less worried about trying new things...Amy is managing well in school."

Amy's mother was very aware of the Children's Parliament Programme and stated that Amy regularly talked about her experiences during the week. Amy's mother observed that she has had more positive school experiences. Amy's mother felt surprised by Amy's future aspirations and how much thought and effort she put into her goals.

"Amy loved the week and the whole experience with the Children's Parliament. She spoke about it all the time during the week and has continued to speak about it since."

"The programme has really increased Amy's confidence as she normally has trouble in school and she succeeded at the week."

"During the week Amy volunteered to answer lots of questions and this helped her confidence too."



"She has started to cook more at home and makes us dinner quite a lot."

Most importantly, Amy feels the project had a great impact on her. From the start of the project Amy told us:

"I felt excited to be a part of the group and make new friends. I felt happy about it."

"I think I achieved my goal to be more confident. I pushed myself to let go of my fears, my fears were being nervous and not making new friends."

"I think the project will have a lasting impact, I think it will go on for generations because it is fun and people get you to believe in yourself, it's really good."



"Kids get tired of living in reality.

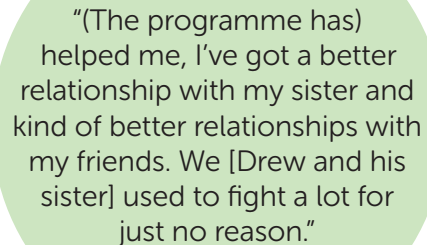
When you go to sleep you always want to dream that you want to be 'like this' or 'like that'. And then in the morning, when your parents want to wake you up, you still want to just dream. So why not take that chance and make something of what you are dreaming? My mum always says, reach up to the stars."

## Reflective questions

- Why do you think Amy struggled to get to school on some days?
- Amy is now more engaged at home, helping to cook and getting involved in family life. In what ways does this reflect protective factors for a child growing up?
- What is so important about children being able to speak out in front of their peer group and with adults? How can this improve their wellbeing?
- What difference has a confidence boost had for Amy?

## Drew's Story

Drew was referred to the programme due to concerns about his mental state and emotional wellbeing. Drew's Father had recently been in prison and this made Drew feel very depressed. A referral had been made to Educational Psychology. Drew's mental state improved greatly when his dad returned, however, he then became very unhappy again, uncooperative and unable to express his emotions. Throughout the project, Drew worked on recognising different emotions and developing a more positive mindset.



"(The programme has) helped me, I've got a better relationship with my sister and kind of better relationships with my friends. We [Drew and his sister] used to fight a lot for just no reason."

Being selected to take part in the project meant a great deal to Drew, who was visibly excited by the opportunity, but also a touch apprehensive. He told us:

"I felt excited and also nervous because this was a new experience for me. When I got there I felt really scared because I barely knew anyone, but throughout the week I started to speak to other people. By the end of the week, I felt like I knew everyone and what they were like."

Drew initially presented as a very shy, introverted boy. He needed a lot of encouragement to speak out and engage with other children. Staff felt that supporting Drew to speak to new people and try new things would help increase his confidence and bring him out of his shell. Throughout the week, Drew experienced different mood states, sometimes he was very happy and positive having lots of fun and at other times he could be shy, quiet, appearing quite low. Staff continued to nurture Drew's interactions with other children and set him challenges to achieve this. As Drew interacted with other children more, he appeared happier and was notably smiling and speaking out. He responded really well to praise and compliments. Whilst his behaviour was erratic at times, by the end of the week Drew was settled and constantly smiling.

The school felt that the programme helped to improve Drew's confidence and that this enabled him to speak to new people. The programme also helped him to envisage a positive future for himself.

"You don't know what a difference this has made and what an achievement it is for Drew to smile and experience a sense of happiness."

"Drew enjoyed working with new people...he thought the project was really good and it helped him develop his confidence...and he had a sense of responsibility."

"Drew's listening skills have improved since the project."

"The most valuable part of the project was making the Paper Mache model because it showed Drew what he might be like in 20 years."

Drew felt the social skills he had developed on the project, along with his increased confidence, had a positive impact on his relationships:

"People have been treating me better here, so I feel I should be treating people the way I want to be treated."

"You're meeting people that you don't know here and they are treating you the way that they want to be treated and that has an impact."

"When I'm playing football, if somebody pushed me I would have gone a wee bit angry and moaned at them...but now if somebody pushes me and they said 'sorry' then I would be like 'that's alright, I know'. I get into less trouble now."

He was able to link this with his long term aspirations:

"It's good see the people [at Children's Parliament], they treat you nice, they don't moan, they understand you, they're giving you your chance to say what you think. It's really good, at school sometimes you can get your say but not all the time."

"I'm really proud of what I've achieved, like a 9 out of 10! Because of the Paper Machê, not a lot of people can do that and to make a model in about 1 week, that's a big achievement for me."

The school acknowledges that there is still work to be done to maintain the gains that Drew made during the programme and plan to continue supporting him to build his confidence.

"The school continues to encourage Drew. His relationships with children and adults have improved and he speaks out more to his friends. He is not as shy."

"I always wanted to be a boxer but I never thought I could until I came to Children's Parliament."



## Reflective questions

- Drew now feels better about himself. How is this having an impact on his relationships with peers and his sister? Why do you think this is?
- What more could his school do to maintain the impact of this project?
- What did Drew appreciate about how adults treated him on the project? How usual is it for children to experience this kind of interaction from adults?



## Peter's Story

Peter was referred to the programme because he had been very withdrawn since the death of his best friend during the summer and could not talk about it. He often seemed quiet and sad and the school were worried about him because of this. Throughout the project Peter worked on building his confidence, having fun and sharing his views.

"Being part of the project has helped me be more talkative, even my Gran mentioned it. And at school I think I've been more willing to read out readings and stories. I think my teachers have noticed it, they say I've been talking a bit more. It's a good thing. It really helps my relationships, 'cause I get to know people a bit better."

Peter initially presented as shy but looked as though he was having fun. He was more open to discuss his opinions in a one-to-one setting. Staff worked to encourage him to come out his shell by setting him challenges, which involved talking to other children. Throughout the week Peter was a really hard worker who had a lot of focus.

As the week progressed, Peter began to speak out more in the group and appeared more confident, completing all of his challenges. Peter felt his confidence had grown. On the last day of the project, Peter took the Hot Seat and confidently answered questions about his future ambitions in front of the entire group and visitors.

The school agreed that the programme helped to increase Peter's confidence in himself and with talking to other people.

"Before the project Peter was extremely shy. During the project Peter was putting himself out there and engaging with other children...this raised his confidence."

"Peter was able to take the Hot Seat and speak on stage in front of an audience, which he would not have been able to do prior to the project."

"Throughout the week it was clear Peter had great fun, as he was participating in all activities and was smiling and speaking out."

"He made new friends throughout the week. He now feels like he can achieve things."

Peter's mother felt the programme had been a really positive experience and that Peter had spoken about his experiences throughout the programme and was proud of his work. Peter's mother felt the programme had helped improve his confidence as he spoke out in front of the group. Peter's mother also felt the programme had impacted upon his emotional wellbeing. He recently began speaking about the death of his friend for the first time.

"Peter really enjoyed the week...he looked forward to each day...he talked about the group agreement and the Cuban lunch."

"The project helped Peter become more confident as he was able to take the Hot Seat, talking in front of an audience. Previously Peter would never have spoke out in front of people so this was a big deal!"

"Peter can't wait to display his model in the house he has chosen a space in his room to display it."

"Since the project Peter has started to open up about the death of his friend."

In Peter's own words, we can see that he connected with the purpose of the project and has a strong sense of the project's impact on him:

"It's important to know what you are going to do in the future, 'cause if you don't prepare then you might not get a job and you won't know what to do."

"I want to be a footballer and to be a footballer you need a good attitude, you need to be eating healthily like we do in Children's Parliament, we get fruit, toast and jam and all that keeps us healthy."

"My goals for the week were to grow my confidence, the project definitely helped me. It helped by making me speak out loud and share my views, and make the models."

"It makes me feel safer knowing my Gran a bit more and healthier knowing that she would like to know [me] a bit more. It also makes me happier just to know her a bit more."

"My three friends at school, when they used to ask me to play games, I would be a bit nervous sometimes but now it's actually a big difference, 'cause I actually just play. A lot of the time now I don't actually care what we play, I'm not so worried now."

"The project is important by helping you achieve stuff that you are not already too good at, like standing up in front of people and talking out loud."

"Children should have their own opinion, especially if someone disagrees with them, they shouldn't force their opinion onto them."



## Reflective questions

- How might Peter's relationship with his Gran help to uphold his rights as a child?
- What do you think was holding Peter back from playing with his peers? What changed?
- What might have helped Peter open up about the death of his friend? What role might this project have played in this and what else may have helped too?
- What are the indications that Peter is becoming more resilient?

## End Note

Our work in Glasgow has, for the first time, provided us with the resources to properly articulate and present our work against current national priorities. For too long, work focused on middle childhood has been seen as a 'poor relation'. Opportunities to invest in children's emotional health and wellbeing at an early stage and before problems and challenges become intractable, have lacked suitable levels of investment. Increased awareness, derived through robust evidence-based research, has brought us to the point where we have national policy and legislation that reflects a deep commitment to prevention and early intervention. In practice though, we still tend to wait for crisis before we intervene.

Our work at Children's Parliament evidences a significant positive impact on outcomes for children – increased emotional wellbeing, improved engagement with learning and improved relationships. Children's Parliament brings to life a rights and relationships based approach, which, as one Head Teacher recently put it, 'should be the foundation of all our work with children and young people.' In a country that still sees 'rights' as a vehicle for children to, 'get what they want', this is still a hard sell.

The training and support aspect of the Glasgow programme saw us engage directly with teachers and learning assistants. What came through clearly during that programme was a genuine wish to better understand the processes that underpin the rights and relationships based agenda. We are still in a transition period and adults need time and support to think, first of all why a rights and relationships based approach is effective in improving outcomes for children, and secondly how to go about doing this.

What children consistently tell us is, that what adults do – or don't do – directly impacts on their confidence, self-esteem and capacity for resilience. Our expectations of children and young people are often low and decrease with each problematic episode. What Children's Parliament has been able to demonstrate is that by involving children in meaningful goal-setting and by helping them take an appropriate level of responsibility for their own development, they relish the opportunity to rise to new expectations and to be part of their own success story.

For children involved in the programme, we hope that the benefits they themselves have highlighted some months after the end of the intervention, continue to support them into their teens and adulthood.

For teachers, we hope the increased knowledge and understanding of how a rights and relationships based approach continues to inspire and support their own practice.

For Children's Parliament, we are delighted to have been part of this UK wide, evidence-based programme and heartened that our expectations around impact have been largely realised. We look forward to supporting the development of networks of 'allies' who understand the challenges and opportunities along with the huge potential this approach has for transforming the culture around children – at home, in school and in the community.

We hope the rigour and commitment with which we and our partners engaged in this programme, will continue to provide an inspiring legacy of replication across Scotland and beyond.

Cathy McCulloch  
Director – Children's Parliament





"As a result of the project I behave better, I listen more and I feel better about myself. It's been a rollercoaster ride. I feel more confident to do things I may have been scared of. Friends and family have been surprised and they are proud of what I have done."



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