

Healthy Young Minds Evaluation

Final Report
February 2025

Youth Community Support Agency

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1 Introduction

This is the final report of Iconic Consulting’s evaluation of Youth Community Support Agency’s Healthy Young Minds project. Funded by Comic Relief the project aimed to promote mental wellbeing and resilience among Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) young people in the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow through a combination of counselling, play/art therapy and groupwork in local schools. This final report assesses the implementation and impact of the project from its launch in February 2020 ahead of the end of Comic Relief funding in March 2025. This report follows our initial report in April 2022 and mid-term review in July 2023.

Overview

YCSA developed Healthy Young Minds in response to an increasing number of service users reporting experiences of racism and discrimination. YCSA identified other issues which specifically impacted on BAME young people including the pressure to succeed at school and conflicting expectations between their families, culture, peers and school. In parallel to this, YCSA’s experience of counselling confirmed the need for faith and culturally sensitive services for BAME young people and their parents/carers.

The Comic Relief funding application form described Healthy Young Minds as follows:

The service will work with BAME/asylum/refugee young people primarily aged 10-16 (later broadened to 7-25) in South Glasgow, to help promote mental health and resilience, by providing counselling, play/art therapy and groupwork in partner schools and from our offices. A particular emphasis will be placed on transitions from primary to secondary and tackling discrimination.

Comic Relief awarded YCSA £318,716 to deliver Healthy Young Minds. The project set out to support BAME young people, parents/carers and school staff with the following activities:

- BAME young people:
 - 1:1 therapy – play, art or counselling (CBT, person centred & integrative) according to the young person’s requirements, in school or YCSA’s office, provided by staff or trained volunteers. Referrals primarily by schools as well as parent/carer, social work and self-referrals.
 - Small group sessions in school using art/play therapy or mindfulness techniques, where appropriate, for young people to work through emotions, express themselves, and learn how to deal with stigma, stresses and anxiety. For some young people working in a group may feel less pressured than 1:1 work so group sessions offered as an alternative or supplement to 1:1 therapy.
 - Groupwork with young people around puberty, reconciling family/faith/cultural expectations versus growing up in Scotland with different cultural norms, and their own sense of self identity.
 - Full class sessions on understanding of mental health, resilience building, appreciating diversity and tackling discrimination. Schools indicated this would likely take place at certain times of the year such as the transition from primary to secondary, or the lead-up to exams.
 - Referring young people to and from YCSA’s existing BBC Children in Need/

Robertson Trust funded term-time activities for 12-18 year olds, homework club and a summer holiday programme.

- School staff:
 - Provision of, or co-delivering, training for school staff and providing inputs on how to recognise mental health needs, make appropriate referrals and deal with discrimination. To link with work already being undertaken by schools using Education Scotland provided materials and training for teachers.
- Parents/carers of BAME young people:
 - 1:1 counselling support for parents/carers as YCSA's experience has shown that supporting parent's mental health needs is important for the mental wellbeing of their children, and that a holistic approach can reap dividends. To be delivered by a different therapist unless filial or family therapy is being undertaken.

YCSA set the expected outcomes for the project as:

Outcome 1: Black & Minority Ethnic young people in Glasgow aged 10-25 (primarily 10-16s in the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow) have improved mental wellbeing.

Outcome 2: Black & Minority Ethnic young people in Glasgow aged 10-25 (primarily 10-16s in the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow) are more resilient.

Outcome 3: Parents/carers of Black & Minority Ethnic young people in Glasgow aged 10-25 (primarily 10-16s in the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow) will have improved mental health and wellbeing.

Outcome 4: School/youthwork staff serving the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow feel better able to support BME young people with mental wellbeing and discrimination concerns.

For outcomes 1-3, the age limit was later lowered from 10 to 7.

Evaluation methods

The evaluation has involved extensive fieldwork in 2022, 2023 and 2025 consisting of:

- A review of key documents including the application form, updates and progress reports submitted to Comic Relief.
- Analysis of information gathered by YCSA on service beneficiaries.
- A series of interviews with: YCSA staff who developed and delivered the project; primary and secondary schools that utilised the service; and young people and parents/carers who benefitted from the service.

Report structure

This concise report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 reviews the implementation and evolution of Healthy Young Minds.
- Chapter 3 assesses the project's impact.
- Chapter 4 presents our overall conclusions.

2 Implementation

This chapter reviews the implementation of Healthy Young Minds. It assesses delivery of the three main strands of work to engage young people, parents/carers, and professionals, as well as reviewing staffing, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. It also highlights the key challenges that arose during the project including the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19

Healthy Young Minds began in February 2020, only a month before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns and restrictions that followed had a significant impact on all aspects of life including the implementation of Healthy Young Minds. School closures and home schooling during extended spells of 2020 and 2021 prevented YCSA setting up the intended delivery model. During this time schools, understandably, focused on core teaching and there was very limited contact with external organisation such as YCSA. This meant YCSA was not able to build relationships with schools to kick start the project. Even when pupils returned to schools there were restrictions in place on the presence of external organisations such as YCSA and group working which continued to impact on the project until all restrictions were lifted in the spring of 2022, two years after the project started. YCSA reported that Comic Relief was very understanding and supportive during this period. Partly as a result of the delivery challenges created by the pandemic, the project targets were revised.

Staffing

Healthy Young Minds was overseen by YCSA's Manager/Executive Lead and delivered by two staff with some additional support from sessional workers, trainees and volunteers.

The two delivery staff initially consisted of a part-time counsellor and a part-time art psychotherapist. The part-time art psychotherapist has remained with the project since the outset. The counsellor moved on in 2023 and was replaced by a second art psychotherapist who had gained valuable experience of the project from their time as a trainee and sessional worker. The trainee had received excellent feedback helping to consolidate relationships with secondary schools and securing rooms and storage space for art materials and folders. The trainee was part of a positive partnership YCSA set up with Queen Margaret University to provide work placements for MSc Art Therapy students. Delivery also benefitted from volunteer counselling.

YCSA's Manager/Executive Lead has changed twice during the project. The original manager retired, and their replacement started in June 2021 before moving on in August 2022. Since then a YCSA Board member has stood in as the Executive Lead. YCSA has also re-located offices and faced funding challenges during the project which the Executive Lead has had to oversee. Although the managerial changes disrupted relationship building with partners and oversight of delivery and staff, they do not appear to have had a significant impact on the project.

Throughout the evaluation consultees, including school staff, have provided very positive feedback on the Healthy Young Minds staff. In particular they praised the art psychotherapists and counsellor for their enthusiasm, commitment, skills and knowledge. The project has also benefited from continuity in the delivery staff and it has not been adversely affected by staff turnover which

can be a challenge in time-limited projects such as this.

“We have been working with the project for several years now and the therapist has been a real asset to the school. They are very much a part of the school and will be a big loss when they’re gone”. School consultee.

Individual support for BAME young people

Healthy Young Minds set out to provide individual support to 282 BAME young people in play/art therapy or counselling. Over the course of project, a total of 254 BAME young people have benefitted from 1:1 support.

Those benefitting were aged between 7 and 25, with the majority aged around 11 reflecting the project’s focus on the transition between primary and secondary schools. More females (60%) have been supported than males (39%); 1% of pupils identified as transgender or preferred not to provide this information. The majority of referrals came directly from the schools. The young people were pupils of 4 primary schools and 5 secondary schools. The uptake varied among local schools with 5 schools making most use of the service. The reasons for this variable uptake are discussed in the challenges section.

YCSA reported art therapy was the primary support provided over the course of the project with 145 young people benefitted. Throughout the evaluation, consultees reported that art helped engage young people and allowed them to express some of their feelings in a way that talking therapies may not have. The technique was felt to be particularly appropriate for young people who had experienced trauma in the lives. It was also seen as an effective technique where there was a language barrier or with young people who were non-verbal. Delivery staff reported that support was very much young person-led and this allowed them to choose what activities took place and what they talked about. Staff explained they would plan for sessions and have activities and a structure in mind but the final choice was down to the young person. Staff provided examples of art sessions which included asking a young person to draw or list all of the people in their life which was used as a way of talking about relationships and issues that arose, and another where young people focused on their connections with another country and the differences between it and Scotland. The flexible approach enabled some young people to use the individual sessions purely to talk to the YCSA staff so some sessions did not involve art-based activities. When the part-time counsellor was in post until 2023 they focused on talking therapy. The support also focused on goals which were identified by the school at the time of referral or by the young person as the support progressed.

“Art therapy helped me express my feelings and thoughts through art and helps me see my progress. I enjoyed making the art and having conversations about it. What helped the most was being able to explore feelings I can’t put into words”. Young person.

“What I liked the most about art therapy was making art and being able to talk with someone who is not judging me, because family and friends judge me and they often put their feelings first instead of listening to my feelings”. Young person.

“It’s useful in art therapy to talking and make art, and this helped me clearing my head.

Art therapy is good because I could talk about all my feelings and I was not able to do that before [after dad passing away]”. Young person.

The support Healthy Young Minds provided to BAME young people during the transition from primary to secondary school was noteworthy. The same member of YCSA’s team continued to support some young people as they progressed from primary to secondary school. This continuity was praised by school consultees and was seen as helping pupils cope with a potentially stressful and worrying time. The use of art therapy was again complemented as a way of engaging pupils.

“Lots of kids enjoy art supported transitions to High School”. School consultee.

Another noteworthy feature of the individual support was its flexibility. The starting point for the 1:1 support was to make it available to primary school pupils for 8 weeks and over a term (usually 12 weeks) in secondary schools. However, the team reported the support was very flexible and was extended, where appropriate, to meet the needs of individual young people although they stressed support was not indefinite. When support was provided through the transition period, some young people had been supported for up to a year. There were also examples of young people re-engaging with the art therapy for a second time when their circumstance changed or another need was identified. This level of flexibility sets Healthy Young Minds apart from other school based therapeutic supports we have experience of.

The individual support provided by YCSA through the Health Young Minds project brought numerous benefits and the impacts which are summarised in Chapter 3.

Group support for young people

Healthy Young Minds set out to engage over 800 young people in group work; the application form setting out that this would involve small group sessions using art/play therapy or mindfulness techniques, groupwork around puberty, family/faith/cultural issues, and self identity, and full class sessions on mental health, resilience building, appreciating diversity and tackling discrimination.

As noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic meant group work was not possible during the first two years of the project. When COVID-19 restrictions were lifted the sessional worker – who was later employed as an art psychotherapist – delivered anti-racist and health and wellbeing group sessions to 58 secondary school pupils. Participants had a range of ethnic backgrounds and came from countries including Iran, Africa, and Afghanistan. The sessions were flexible, and discussions were based on young people’s emerging interests such as identity and empowerment. The worker reported that young people were curious about each other’s backgrounds, and this was helpful in exploring issues around identity and belonging. Most young people reported feeling not heard or listened to in their daily lives in the UK. The sessions provided a safe space to be heard without fears of discrimination, and it was suggested may have improved social cohesion and sense of belonging amongst the participants.

Latterly, Comic Relief agreed to a request from YCSA not to deliver any further groupwork with young people. YCSA reported there was limited interest from schools in the groupwork, and they were better served supporting young people individually where they could focus on the issues that the groupwork sessions were intended to cover.

Individual support for parents/carers of BAME young people

Healthy Young Minds set out to support 20 parents/carers of BAME young people with the application form stating that YCSA's experience had shown that supporting parent's mental health needs is important for the mental wellbeing of their children, and that a holistic approach can reap dividends. Throughout the delivery period only 9 parents/carers of BAME young people benefitted from individual support. YCSA reported that generally secondary school pupils, did not want the project to involve their parents/carers and consequently limited approaches were made to engage parents/carers. YCSA also reported that the parents/carers of primary school pupils were happy for their child to take part in the project and provided their consent for this, but were not, on the whole, interested in support for themselves. We previously reported that limited awareness and understanding of counselling and art therapy may have been factors.

Support for school staff

The project had a target to support 70 school staff in training on how to recognise mental health needs, make appropriate referrals and deal with discrimination. This element was another adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the first two years of the project. As a result of these difficulties, Comic Relief allowed YCSA to concentrate on supporting individual young people for the latter part of the project. YCSA did report that by the end March 2024, 97 school staff had been supported.

Evidence gathering

The project outcomes set out to evidence improvements in young people's mental wellbeing and resilience (outcomes 1 and 2); improvements in parents/carers' mental health and wellbeing (Outcome 3); and school/youthwork staff feeling better able to support BAME young people with mental wellbeing and discrimination concerns (outcome 4). Discussions between YCSA and Iconic took place at the outset of the project, and during progress review on how to gather evidence. Throughout these discussions the parties acknowledged that there was a balance to be struck between gathering the evidence and the means of doing so which needed to be unobtrusive and cost effective. YCSA initially used the YP-Core tool with young people and Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire with school staff making referrals. However the tools were not found to be appropriate to the support provided by the project. Subsequently the team used the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) which was found to be more useful. WEMWBS is a validated tool that was developed to enable monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of interventions such as Healthy Young Minds that aim to improve mental wellbeing. The team used the 14 question WEMWBS with secondary school pupils and the shorter 7 question SWEMWBS with primary school pupils. The team also developed a feedback form to gather views from young people in a less formal way and this was also used in the latter years of the project.

Although YCSA has gathered evidence throughout the project, it has not been analysed on a regular basis. YCSA explained this was because staff did not have sufficient time to do so. There was also limited expertise within the organisation to analyse the information, particularly the WEMWBS data. As a result there was limited quantitative evidence of the impact the support had on young people available for this final evaluation.

Challenges

Healthy Young Minds experienced a number of implementation challenges. These challenges are highlighted below to share YCSA's learning with Comic Relief, other funders, schools and other third sector organisations with an interest in similar initiatives:

- **COVID-19** – As previously noted, the lockdowns and subsequent restrictions had a significant impact on YCSA's ability to raise awareness of the service and deliver individual support and groupwork in schools during the first two years of the project.
- **Limited referrals from some schools** – The number of referrals from primary and secondary schools in South Glasgow varied with some making very few referrals. The project tried to address this by raising awareness and meeting with school staff to explain art therapy. In some schools this improved referrals, however they remained low in other schools and in some cases, YCSA withdrew their service.
- **Inappropriate referrals from schools** – YCSA reported that art therapy was not appropriate for some of the pupils referred by schools. This included pupils who were not attending school regularly, pupils aged under 10 years, and pupils who did not give their consent. YCSA sought to address the issue with schools including in schools where there were limited referrals and those that were made tended to be inappropriate.
- **Accommodation** – Some schools struggled to provide YCSA with an appropriate space to deliver art therapy sessions although this became less of an issue as the project established itself in schools. The practical problems were the appropriateness of the space for art activities, and the double booking of rooms. This was exacerbated, at times, by poor communications with schools not informing the team which room they were in or that the room they had booked was being used for other classes or other purposes when they turned up. There was a suggestion that a lack of consistency and disrupted sessions could have a negative impact on the young person being supported. Some young people were supported from YCSA's offices when schools could not provide suitable space for the service to operate from.
- **Communications** – as noted above some schools did not communicate room availability with YCSA and there were also times when referral information was limited, inappropriate pupils were re-referred or information about pupil's attendance was not communicated to YCSA. This created some tension, at times, between YCSA and schools.
- **Understanding of art therapy** – throughout the evaluation it has been evident that there was limited understanding of art therapy among some school staff, young people and parents/carers. Although the project staff provided written and verbal explanations this was an ongoing issue. There were suggestions that socio-cultural issues were an issue in some cases.
- **Engagement** – staff reported challenges engaging some young people in the individual and group sessions. Several factors were cited as reasons for this including understanding of art therapy, feeling slightly pressured to be referred, poor attendance records at school, and timing around exams. The project also faced specific challenges in engaging young people from the Roma community although they did seek to address this through additional work with relevant schools.

3 Impact and benefits

This section assesses the impact of Healthy Young Minds over the course of the project including progress on the outcomes. Overall, the project had a positive impact that benefitted young people, parents/carers, schools and YCSA as a whole.

Improved mental wellbeing and resilience among young people

Healthy Young Minds delivered on its goal to improve the mental wellbeing of BAME young people in South Glasgow (outcome 1). Evidence – particularly feedback from young people, school staff and the YCSA team - showed that young people’s mental health and wellbeing benefitted from the support especially the art therapy. The person-centred 1:1 support provided BAME young people with a safe place where they could identify, share and explore experiences and feelings with YCSA staff that led directly to improvements in their wellbeing. Through the art-based sessions they opened up about issues that were adversely affecting their emotional and mental wellbeing. They reported feeling understood. Consultees suggested young people benefitted from having dedicated one on one time with an adult who would listen to them. Our previous reports included WEMWBS data that provided some, albeit limited, quantitative evidence that young people had improved their mental wellbeing.

YCSA staff explained that part of their work with young people during the individual support sessions involved sharing self-regulation tools and coping techniques which the young people have, subsequently, been able to apply to their life. The young people referred to these techniques in their own feedback explaining how it had made them more resilient (outcome 2) helping them to face challenges and situations with more confidence than they had previously. This is a significant impact as it shows Healthy Young Minds’ impact is, potentially, longer-term and not confined to the sessions themselves.

“You helped me so much, before art therapy I was thinking several times to end my life and now I can see I have overcome so much, thanks to the talking, the art and the somatic exercises”.
Young person.

“I’m feeling a bit better with everything, sleep, tiredness, mood, concentration, and it’s because of art therapy, it’s good to talk and make art”. Young person.

“Every time it was good to talk about difficult things and then I would leave and think about the session and think positive instead of thinking negative. It was good to draw my feelings and to talk about them with someone so that I would not keep them for myself”. Young person.

“Art therapy helps me with anger, I like drawing in art therapy and it’s useful to talk about difficult things that happen in school”. Young person.

“Art therapy helped me a lot, I used to get angry with my sister and now I am not, also I didn’t want to go out after school and now I am, I am not worried as before”. Young person.

“I am not worried now about people’s judgment and I am happy doing my own things without

worrying about other people’s opinion”. Young person.

“Coming here helps me feel calmer, also with my friends, since I started I feel I can be more open and I talk more with them”. Young person.

“What I find the most useful about art therapy is that I don’t feel I’m crazy anymore because I can talk about my life, and I feel understood”. Young person.

“Very valuable, enhances emotional and health wellbeing of our pupils”. School consultee.

“It helps pupils with their resilience and in managing disappointments”. School consultee.

Significantly, there was supporting quantitative evidence that young people increased their mental wellbeing and resilience. Outcome 1 included an indicator to increase confidence which was measured by an increase of at least one point in response to the question 'I've been feeling confident' on the WEMWBS tool the team used with secondary school pupils to track progress. Although the data was incomplete at the time of this report as support was ongoing for some young people, it did show that the median score had increased from 3 (some of the time) to 4 (often) thereby achieving the target. Further analysis of the data showed that the mean score increased by 0.8 from 2.7 to 3.5, and that approximately two thirds of young people recorded an increase in their confidence. The question was not part of the SWEMWBS tool the team used with primary school pupils. Outcome 2 included an indicator to increase resilience which was measured by an increase of at least one point in response to the WEMWBS question 'I've been dealing with problems well'. The data showed that the median score remained at 3 although the mean score increased by 0.5 from 3.0 to 3.5, and 55% of young people recorded an increase in their score. The question was part of the SWEMWBS tool the team used with primary school pupils and the median score increased from 3 to 4. Quantitative data showing a positive impact on young people’s mental wellbeing and resilience is valuable to YCSA as it provides robust evidence which complements the qualitative evidence highlighted above. The tables below summarise the WEMWBS and SWEMWBS responses recorded by the team up to February 2025. The first table shows that increased scores were recorded for 11 of the 14 WEMWBS questions. The second table shows increase on all 7 of the SWEMWBS questions.

WEMWBS question	Median score at first survey	Median score at final survey	Change
I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I’ve been feeling useful	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I’ve been feeling relaxed	3.0	3.5	Increase of 0.5
I’ve been feeling interested in other people	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I’ve had energy to spare	3.0	3.0	No change
I’ve been dealing with problems well	3.0	3.0	No change
I’ve been thinking clearly	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I’ve been feeling good about myself	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0

WEMWBS question	Median score at first survey	Median score at final survey	Change
I've been feeling close to other people	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling confident	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling loved	4.0	4.0	No change
I've been interested in new things	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling cheerful	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
Notes:			
Responses recorded on a scale from 1 to 5 where: 1 = none of the time; 2 = rarely; 3= some of the time; 4= often; and 5= all of the time.			
Sample size: 58 young people who completed WEMWBS on at least two separate occasions.			

SWEMWBS question	Median score at first survey	Median score at final survey	Change
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling useful	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling relaxed	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been dealing with problems well	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been thinking clearly	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been feeling close to other people	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.0	4.0	Increase of 1.0
Notes:			
Responses recorded on a scale from 1 to 5 where: 1 = none of the time; 2 = rarely; 3= some of the time; 4= often; and 5= all of the time.			
Sample size: 36 young people who completed SWEMWBS on at least two separate occasions.			

Improved engagement at school

School staff reported some young people who had benefitted from the individual support had subsequently improved their engagement at school. They explained this was evident in a number of different ways including improved attendance, better behaviour in school, improved engagement in classes, and better relationships with school staff and pupils. As above, this is also a significant impact as it again suggests Healthy Young Minds' impact is longer-term beyond the sessions themselves.

“Art therapy is useful because I can talk about my things and make art and this makes me feel calm and so I come to school much more often and it’s easier for me to do so. I don’t do this with other people, I don’t know why but I am able to talk to you about my separation anxiety and about overthinking and worrying, and this is useful because then I do that less after talking to you”. Young person.

“We have seen pupils are more engaged in the classroom, they’re more ready to learn and more

confident in joining in lessons. Art is a really good way to engage them as they're no pressure to speak about things unless they want to". School consultee.

"One child, a refugee from Sudan, has not been showing dysregulated behaviour as before working with <Project Worker>". School consultee.

Improved relationships

Healthy Young Minds has made a positive impact on young people's relationships with their family and friends. This was most evident in feedback from young people. Improved relationships could help young people's resilience as they have support networks around them in the future.

"Art therapy helped especially with friendships, I now feel closer to friends and family members, and more confident in making friends". Young person.

"I have been feeling closer to other people, especially my mum, and this feels good". Young person.

"It was good to talk about all these good things I do with my family because usually I talk about bad things about my family". Young person.

Raising awareness of art therapy and YCSA

We heard numerous times throughout the evaluation that there was limited understanding of art therapy among some school staff, young people and parents/carers. It is our view that the delivery of the service from 2020 to 2025 will have raised awareness of art therapy with all the above, particularly in those schools where the service was most active throughout the delivery period. School staff reported building relationships with YCSA's therapists over time which helped improve understanding of the support. This was particularly the case with school pastoral staff who were responsible for the majority of referrals – the team focused latterly on explaining the support and providing information for them to improve awareness, understanding and ultimately referrals. The young people who engaged in the support were also more aware of what art therapy involved and this may have helped improve understanding among their peers and parents/carers, if they chose to talk about it. The groupwork sessions and presence of YCSA staff in the schools also helped raise awareness of art therapy and YCSA among other pupils in the schools even if they did not participate directly. In doing so it will have improved understanding and helped address some of the misconceptions about art therapy. Overall, the project has helped some school staff to support BAME young people with mental wellbeing and discrimination concerns outcome 4).

Raised awareness of the specific needs of BAME young people

The project's focus on supporting BAME young people combined with delivery of culturally-sensitive support by BAME staff all contributed, in our view, to greater awareness in schools of the specific needs of BAME young people. Schools reported that they viewed art-therapy as a more appropriate support for some BAME young people compared to the "mainstream" counselling options available through the city-wide counselling framework. They explained this was because an art-based approach lends itself to young people, such as asylum seekers and refugees, who have experienced trauma and where there are language barriers.

“The project has shown how prevalent BME issues are, especially for asylum seeker and refugees, and how they can easily slip through the cracks of mainstream provision. The project has helped their voices to be heard”. YCSA consultee.

Improved mental wellbeing among parents/carers

Although the project engaged a limited number of parents/carers, there was some evidence it helped improve the mental wellbeing and confidence of those who had engaged (outcome 3). For example, one parent who had been supported by the project commented *“I get relief after talking to her”* and *“I feel more confident to speak up”*.

4 Conclusion

This final evaluation report has shown that YCSA successfully delivered the Healthy Young Minds project funded by Comic Relief during the period 2020 to 2025. The project overcame a number of challenges, not least the COVID-19 pandemic, to have a positive impact on BAME young people in the Govanhill and Pollokshields areas of South Glasgow, the parents/carers of BAME young people, primary and secondary schools in the area, and YCSA as a whole.

The delivery team was a real asset providing person-centred, culturally-sensitive support to BAME young people. The team members' skills, knowledge and commitment were highlighted by school staff on several occasions throughout the evaluation. Significantly, their support led to improved mental wellbeing, resilience and relationships among young people as demonstrated in both the qualitative and quantitative evidence presented in this report. It is especially significant that the support has the potential to benefit young people beyond the life of the project through the self-regulation and coping techniques they learnt which improved their resilience as well as improving relationships with family and friends which will provide a support network in the future.

The project has demonstrated that art therapy is a viable and effective option for schools or other organisations considering how to support young people with their emotional or mental wellbeing. The use of art-based support was engaging, with consultees reporting it helped some young people who may not have engaged in more traditional counselling or where language was a barrier including those who were non-verbal. At the same time, the project showed that understanding of art therapy can be a challenge that required considerable time and effort to address in South Glasgow.

It was noteworthy that the project evolved over the five year delivery period, with the support of Comic Relief. The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant challenge, initially, in raising awareness and engaging schools and in implementing the planned groupwork with young people. The expected demand for individual support with parents/carers of BAME young people did not materialise as YCSA envisaged at the outset – a reluctance among secondary age young people to involve their parents/carers and socio-cultural issues were seen as the main barriers. Demand for training and support for school staff was also less than anticipated and the main barriers were identified as limited capacity within YCSA to develop and deliver the support, and limited time among school staff to engage. YCSA reported that Comic Relief was very supportive throughout the project which enabled them to react to challenges and evolve the delivery model.

The individual support to BAME young people was, undoubtedly, the most important and effective element of the Healthy Young Minds project. Comic Relief funding is due to end at the end of March 2025 and YCSA would like to continue the support, in some guise, in the future. Our consultation with schools found that the fact the service was free was important to them. It was encouraging that, overall, schools reported they would like to access similar support in the future. However, they noted that YCSA was not on the city-wide counselling framework and the service could not be accessed in this way. Some school also noted that YCSA was not part of city's approved suppliers list for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The schools were aware that it was challenging for YCSA to compete with much larger and better resourced organisations to be part

of the framework and PEF approved suppliers list. YCSA may wish to explore partnering with one of these organisations when the framework is re-tendered in the future.

In conclusion, Healthy Young Minds overcame a number of challenges to have a positive impact on BAME young people, parents/carers, schools and YCSA during the period 2020 to 2025.