**Evaluating the effectiveness of a group-based intervention for loss, grief and bereavement: What impact does Seasons for Growth have on children and young people?**

**What did we ask?**

We asked 45 children and young people about their experiences of participating in Seasons for Growth. Seasons for Growth is an evidence-based group intervention for children and young people, aged between 6-18, who have experienced loss, grief and bereavement. Inverclyde Council carried out a research study looking at the effectiveness of the programme (McPherson et al, 2018). The current study looked to part replicate the Inverclyde study, to gain contextual evidence that Seasons for Growth continued to be effective in eliciting positive outcomes for Glasgow’s children and young people.

**What did we do?**

We asked 45 children and young people from 8 schools across Glasgow to take part in focus groups. In line with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, 9 focus groups with children and young people were conducted to centre this research around their views. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to group the qualitative data into themes.

**What did we find?**

A range of themes were identified supporting the hypothesis that Seasons for Growth remains an effective evidence-based intervention for children and young people experiencing loss, grief and bereavement. Identified themes included enhanced emotional wellbeing, strengthened social connections, enhanced personal growth, and benefits of participation.

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| **What impact does Seasons for Growth have on children and young people?** | | |
| Enhanced Emotional Wellbeing | Positive emotional impact | *“When I feel sad SfG is a happy place for me because I can take my mind off stuff.”* |
| Expression and management of feelings | *“I figured out more ways to keep happy and not just be sad all the time.”* |
| Coping strategies | *“I go to the park round the corner from my house. There’s a gym area there with a running area. When I go there it takes it all away”.* |
| Knowledge about loss and change | *“Obviously, when someone goes through something, you can understand now that other people are going through similar things”.* |
| Strengthened Social Connections | Social connections | *“I was in the same class as the other girls but we didn’t talk much before. Now we got to know each other”.* |
| Support systems | *“My dad, my brother, all my friends and everyone in the group”.* |
| Enhanced Personal Growth | Behavioural change | *“Normally I would sit in my room and watch telly. I feel like now I talk to my parents more, and I can talk about stuff better.”* |
| Confidence and communication skills | *“The group developed my confidence to talk more”.* |
| Benefits of participation | Academic benefits | *“I feel like I’ve got my work done a bit quicker. Before I would do my math and only get to question 3, and today I nearly finished my maths. I think it’s helping me to get more done because I’m not worrying as much in class.”* |
| Enjoyment of intervention | *“I enjoyed doing the memory bottles and talking about our favourite memories”.* |

**Summary of Findings**

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| Participants indicated that taking part in Seasons for Growth had a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing as it supported them to express and manage their emotions, helped them to develop coping strategies and increased their understanding that loss and change is a part of life that everyone experiences. Many participants suggested that they felt happier due to taking part in the group. |
| Taking part in Seasons for Growth enabled participants to establish new relationships and build upon friendships with other children and young people in the group. Children and young people indicated that these connections were strengthened through sharing their personal experiences and supporting each other. This helped to foster a sense of affiliation and belonging within the groups. Participating in Seasons for Growth also helped participants to identify key people in their lives who they could go to for support. Their support systems included family, friends, school staff and fellow members of the Seasons for Growth group. |
| Children and young people reflected on the positive impact that Seasons for Growth had on them personally. Participants noticed changes in their behaviour such as talking to or playing with more people and feeling more able to work with others. Participants also highlighted that the group helped them to increase their confidence and their communication skills. This allowed participants to feel more comfortable to share their feelings and ask for help when they needed to. |
| Participants reported various benefits of being involved with Seasons for Growth including academic benefits and enjoyment of the activities which they took part in. Children and young people reflected that Seasons for Growth helped them to feel less stressed and worried in school. Therefore, as Seasons for Growth was helping to support their emotional needs, it had a positive impact on their engagement in learning as they felt more able to tackle class activities. In addition, some EAL participants reported that being involved in the group supported them to develop their English language skills.  Finally, participants recalled various aspects of the intervention which they found enjoyable, including playing games, having time out of class and engaging in fun activities like creating memory bottles. Having opportunities to have fun within the group was beneficial for participants. |