



**gamh**

Glasgow Association  
for Mental Health

**Young Adult Mental Health Programme**

Developing capabilities in young people

# 1. Background, Aims and Values

## Context

*‘Until we address inequalities and ensure a consistent culture of prevention for all children, young people and their families, we will keep failing the next generation right at the start of their lives’*

- The Mental Health Foundation 2018

(<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/news/our-response-new-childrens-mental-health-data>)

*‘The role of organisations that support children and young people’s engagement is to encourage policy makers to give children and young people’s voices sufficient status and recognition amongst other evidence that may influence decision-making’*

- Scottish Government 2018

(<https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-children-young-peoples-participation-policy-making/pages/2/>)

*‘Even before we are born, exposure to adverse environments can increase our susceptibility to chronic health conditions and lead to diminished wellbeing. Life chances, however, are not set in stone, and an improved environment, such as that produced by engagement with the arts, can help to redress the balance.’*

-All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing 2017

([https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_Inquiry\\_Report\\_2017\\_-\\_Second\\_Edition.pdf](https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf))

## **Project Overview**

The Young Adult Mental Health (YAMH) Programme was created, and continually develops, in response to the mental health needs of young people aged 16-25 in Glasgow. We know that rising social and economic inequality, high levels of stress and social pressures, along with mental health stigma are having a detrimental impact on young people's wellbeing. YAMH provides opportunities for participants to learn new skills and connect with their peers in a socially meaningful way, providing protective factors in relation to the adverse circumstances which they experience.

We work in partnership with a range of community organisations to deliver diverse and engaging blocks of activities/courses, including creative and expressive arts, cooking, photography, personal and social development workshops and outdoor learning. We take a flexible approach and, depending on individual circumstances and needs, it is possible for participants to be involved for more than just one programme phase. GAMH staff provide positive, consistent engagement with young people, supporting participation at all stages of their learning and development journey and providing advice, information and signposting.

## **Participants, referrals and support**

From point of referral, GAMH provide guidance and support to meet young people's individual needs. Young people referred to GAMH are offered 1-1 support from our service centres - they may be referred to the YAMH programme during or at the end of their 6 months support. Through an initial meeting with project staff and completion of a personal plan, the young person is supported to identify how the programme can help them to meet their own personal aspirations. We also look at how it can enhance any other support or activities they are currently engaged in, within GAMH or external agencies. An

ability to attend regular group sessions maximises the benefits which members can gain through participation.

## **The Capabilities Approach**

Our work is very much informed very much by Nussbaum's 'Capabilities Approach' and we aim to empower young people to gain autonomy and make positive choices about their own lives. This includes opportunities to take part in mainstream age appropriate activities; engage in critical reflection; develop imagination and thought; express their emotions; gain control of their lives, and have bodily health and integrity.

We plan and deliver our programme with a focus on human rights and dignity, paired with a strong understanding of how inequalities can impact on these. 'What matters to you?' is the most important question we can ask our young people. We provide opportunities which allow the young person to identify and seek out experiences which provide them with a sense of meaning and purpose. This happens in the context of a cooperative environment where social interaction and communication are essential.

During our most recent 'Capabilities Consultation' workshop we found that, although what matters to young people is unique to the experience and circumstances of each individual, there was a shared belief in the importance of:

- Independent living and learning practical life skills
- Identifying and engaging in hobbies and interests we find meaningful.
- Socialising and communicating with peers
- Receiving adequate support for mental health issues, including stress and anxiety
- The chance to try new activities and experiences

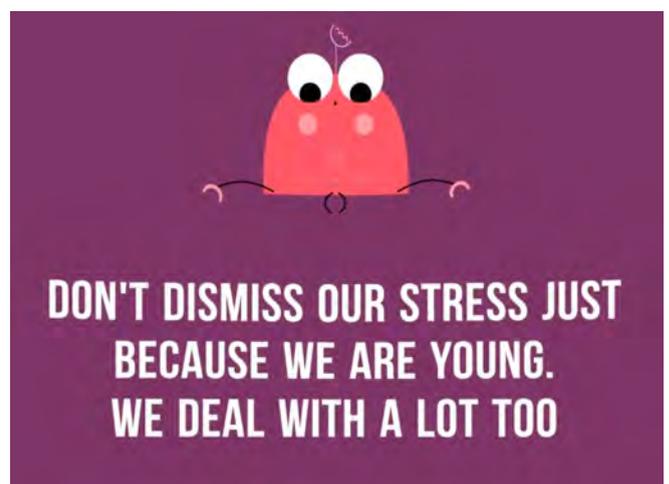
A focus on capabilities and human rights/dignity feeds into our monitoring and evaluation processes as well as our service delivery. There is a focus on what matters to the individual, what they have gained from their participation and

how this has impacted on their mental health recovery. The I-ROC evaluation tool (<http://www.penumbra.org.uk/innovation/iroc/i-roc-and-outcomes/> ) is employed at key points throughout the young person's journey, helping us to tailor support, activities and signposting which is relevant and purposeful. It also helps us to piece together a broader picture of what mental health recovery looks like for the young people we support.

## Consultations and Young People's Voices

Participant's views are at the heart of the YAMH programme and we ensure ongoing opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making. This includes:

- Actively engaging participants about what will help them to get the most out of the programme through setting personal goals which are unique to their own interests and priorities.
- Consulting with participants about how the programme can be developed and improved to meet their needs
- Supporting young people to use their voice of lived experience to influence policy and practice in relation to young people's mental health, if this is something they are keen to do.





Through our engagement and consultation we have found that many young people often feel disempowered and disengaged. They may already have had poor experiences in education, primary care and other statutory services. Young people need to be given a voice to help them repair some of the adverse experiences which had a negative impact on their mental health.

We are delighted that a number of our YAMH members have been empowered to share their own experiences to improve awareness of issues which affect young people's mental health. Our young people have influenced policy and practice through involvement within the following platforms:

- Planning and facilitating a youth led workshop at the ACAMH (Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health) conference in June 2019, working with clinical staff to explore the impact of social media on young people's mental health.
- Involvement at the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival in May 2019, showcasing self-created animations and live music performances on the theme of 'Connections' and mental health

- Thanks to funding from the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Chairman's Charity Draw, we supported our YAMH group to produce some valuable information resources for professionals. These 'Top Tips' mental health related animations and posters highlight helpful ways to respond to a when a young person is struggling or emotionally distressed.

Watch the young people's animation playlist about helping young people who are struggling, created with support from Mind Waves project, here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvXPOMvQcRs&list=PLCbb2kcEzfJHDMO5FBQ\\_e-z6IW2dfJD-w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvXPOMvQcRs&list=PLCbb2kcEzfJHDMO5FBQ_e-z6IW2dfJD-w)

## **2. YAMH PROGRAMME CONTENT AND DELIVERY 2018/19**

## Phase 1: Visual and Expressive Arts

### Background

The first phase of YAHM was a varied and dynamic programme of practical and creative activities. This was made possible by the 'More Choices More Chances Grant' administered by Glasgow Clyde College, facilitating partnerships with Glasgow Clyde College, Project Ability, Operation Play Outdoors, Glasgow Council on Alcohol and Lyrical Life Lessons.



### Photography Course

Glasgow Clyde College delivered an eight week photography course to our Young Adult Mental Health group. This was a practical skills based programme, focusing on exploring Glasgow while learning some basic photography techniques. The course was designed to help reduce anxiety in relation to public spaces, an issue which affects many of the young people we engage with.

### Healthy Cooking Workshops

The group took part in two healthy cooking workshops, trying hands on activities and learning healthy recipes which they could then try at home. The workshops were designed to help participants to recognise the relationship

between mood and nutrition, as well as developing skills and knowledge in relation to budgeting.

## Screen Printing Workshops

Glasgow organisation Project Ability delivered a five week screen printing course, during which the group experimented with a range of techniques before creating a final collection of work. This collection displayed language or activities that contribute to positive health and wellbeing. Members reflected on their own wellbeing to consider what words or activities they found positive and helpful. The work was displayed at the Moving Minds event at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery as part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival 2018.



## Branching Out

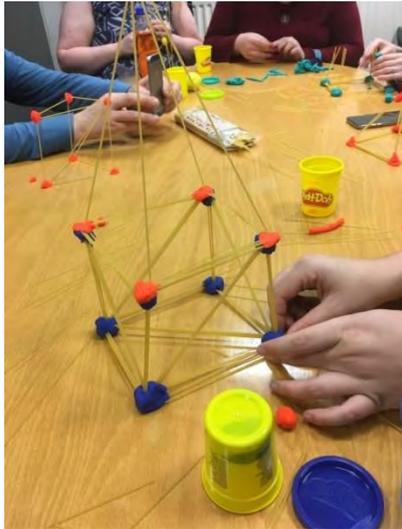
Operation Play Outdoors delivered a 12 week Branching Out programme. This builds confidence by developing a range of new outdoor skills, improving health and wellbeing through physical activity. This resulted in a wealth of personal development opportunities for our young people including cooperation and problem solving skills and understanding of the natural environment.

### **Glasgow Council on Alcohol**

The interactive sessions delivered by Glasgow Council on Alcohol created an open and non-judgemental forum which facilitated lively group discussions around the theme of self confidence. Together the young people explored various aspects of self confidence such as self esteem, the power of language and emotional resilience. This allowed members to reflect on their own experiences and feelings, helping build a personal 'toolkit', promoting choices and strategies which can develop self confidence.

### **Life Lyrical Lessons**

Lyrical Life Lessons was a project created by illustrator Caishnah Nevans to celebrate the connection between music and mental health. Focusing on lyrics, the project encouraged the open discussion of mental health topics by using lyrics as a springboard for both creativity and conversation. Caishnah worked with the group creating a variety of artwork, albums covers and patches inspired by favourite lyrics and lyrics promoting positivity. These were then part of an Exhibition of the group's work at Glasgow's Theatre Nemo.



## **Group members' feedback**

“Creating space for sessions talking about emotions and self-esteem were really good.”

“It was enjoyable being around my own age group where I met my best friend.”

“I liked every activity but my favourites were photography and music illustration.”

“It was good to have a variety of activities so there was something for everyone.”

“I didn't know Glasgow at all. Attending the group has helped me get to know the city better.”

“I now find it easier to speak to people.”

“Before the group I never really left the house.”

## **Phase 2: Creating Music**

### **Background**

From March-August 2019 members of YAMH took part in 'The Jam Project', a unique and innovative initiative developed and delivered in partnership with Glasgow Music Studios and made possible by a Young Start grant administered by The Big Lottery. This allowed GAMH to provide young people affected by mental health issues the space and time to develop friendships, offer peer support and a supportive environment in which to learn new skills. Weekly 3 hour afternoon sessions took place at Glasgow Music Studios over the 6 month period (with sessions increasing to twice weekly in the month leading up to a final showcase). Every young person who was involved in The Jam Project left with skills in one or more musical instruments and having been involved in writing at least one piece of music.

### **Support, resources and approach**

Young people were given access to professional rehearsal and recording facilities in Glasgow city centre, with support, guidance and tuition from a group of professional musicians specialising in youth and community engagement. These staff worked closely with project staff from GAMH, helping young people to feel comfortable in this practical, creative environment.

From the outset, the planning and delivery of activities was informed by the young people's views, needs and interests. Each session began with some whole group time, gathering to allow members to talk about their week in a relaxed, open and informal way. The music young people had been enjoying and the impact of music on emotions were regular topics of discussion.

The initial sessions were an opportunity for young people to experiment with different instruments or vocals in the studios, receiving group tuition to help

them get started. Tuition was delivered as the young people chose songs to jam and experiment with in a responsive way, rather than a traditional music lesson.

## **Band work**

Whether performing covers of popular songs, or creating original material, the key element of the programme was working together cooperatively in bands to produce a well-rehearsed repertoire of music. In this context, young people were supported to share and explore interests and ideas and work together to learn and rehearse their chosen pieces, building up a set list over the course of the programme.

Young people were provided with chord sheets, lyrics, etc and participants who advanced quickly were even encouraged to take the lead on working out the basic structure and chord progressions of songs. As the group progressed it was evident that young people were sourcing inspiration outside of the session and taking forward additional rehearsals and study.

## **Songwriting**

This aspect of the programme was another example of youth led creative activities. Across different sessions, participants were encouraged to share their own ideas and try out different approaches to writing and arranging music - thinking about mood, tempo, structure, etc. Sometimes young people worked together 'sharing creative ideas in activities groups through guided group activities', and at other points young people chose to have some time to write individually or in small groups. Some young people even shared lyrics they had created at home in response to group sessions.

A small group of participants decided to work together throughout the course to focus on developing three original songs. They eventually completing a studio recording and being invited to perform their work at the Scottish Mental

Health Arts and Film Festival, with support from GAMH and Glasgow Music Studios staff.

## **Accreditation and showcasing of learning and achievement**

As they progressed throughout the programme, our group members were able to have their achievements formally recognised by working towards SQA Steps to Employment units. These were delivered in a person-centred way, with inclusive assessment procedures employed in practical group sessions. Participative discussions and activities where candidates were encouraged to relate their learning with wider employability themes formed part of formal assessment.

Towards the end of the project, bands had the opportunity to spend a full session recording their strongest track with a professional sound engineer. This involved finding out about the digital technology and practical processes involved in recording, following precise instructions and paying attention to detail to achieve a high quality end product.

Young people's journey of creative learning and accreditation then culminated in an end of project gig at renowned Glasgow entertainment venue The Stand. As well as performing at the venue, young people also gained experience of equipment load in and sound check in a live music environment. Participants performed well-rehearsed sets of original and cover material to an audience of family, friends and supporters. The impressive levels of musicianship, confidence, engagement, creativity and cooperation displayed by the participants were rewarded in a ceremony at the end of the evening where participants were presented with a certificate and a copy of their own professionally recorded studio track.

## **Group members' feedback**

*“When I first went I didn’t know how to socialise with anyone but now I would be able to speak in front of people. I never thought I would end up in a band working with other people. “*

*“You know it’s a safe environment”*

*“Today (for the gig) was the first time I’d used the Subway. I didn’t know I could do that. That in itself helped me realise all the other places I could go to”*

*“This is my ‘get away’ place”*

*“I picked up guitar quicker than I thought I would which has boosted my confidence.”*

*“The staff are really great, really friendly, they pick you up a bit and make you come out your shell”*

*“I feel good and free, I can sing as loud as I want, just having a really good time with everyone”*

### **3. NEXT STEPS**

#### **Phase 3 and beyond**

The third phase of YAMH is now underway, including experienced and new participants, which is allowing us to embed a valuable new element of peer support and learning into the programme. We are building upon our strong partnership with Operation Play Outdoors to deliver a STEM based activity project, helping young people to learn about the natural environment and their place within it. This incorporates a range of learning based on mental wellbeing, mindful activity, employability and environmental issues. As ever, we are finding that being outdoors with positive support and encouragement

provides a wealth of opportunities for cooperative learning and social interaction.

Through both formal and information consultation, our young people have consistently told us that they appreciate input related to independent living, awareness of social issues and essential life skills. With young people's priorities firmly in mind, we will work with existing and new partners within the community to provide young people with essential knowledge, skills and learning that will empower them to make informed choices as they progress to new opportunities and challenges in their lives.

**For further information about YAMH or to make a referral please contact Rena Ali, Young Peoples Manger on 0141 552 592 or [r.ali@gamh.org.uk](mailto:r.ali@gamh.org.uk)**

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