

Project Proposal- Sunflower Starts



Image 1- Canva ND

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Introduction

Sunflower Starts is a programme that focuses on building the well-being and resilience of age 16+ LGBTQ+ young people through working outdoors and learning new skills through hands-on activities. This project will initially run for 12 months, and then the effectiveness will be assessed for this project to continue with a new group of young people. This portfolio will extend a previous proposal for this programme and evaluate its potential effectiveness. It will also investigate the broader social impacts of the Youth Work taking place in this programme, and how the programme will be marketed and how results will be communicated to potential funders.

“While many other public services step in when problems occur, youth services prevent so many of those difficulties from occurring in the first place.”

Unison (2016, p. 10)

Need

In Wales, there are only six LGBTQ+ specific youth support groups, such as Guys Gals and Non-Binary Pals, LGBTQ+ DrMZ Youth Group, Ypop LGBTQ+ Youth Group and LGBTQ+ Group Youth Service (Mind,

2024, Umbrella Cymru, ND), and none of them is focused on the outdoors. This shows that there is a high need for more organisations that focus on supporting LGBTQ+ young people in Wales, and being the only programme that focuses on working outdoors, this programme will be entirely individual and new, offering new opportunities for LGBTQ+ young people in Wales. Cabera and Prothero (2025) report that rates of anxiety, depression and self-harm are far higher for LGBTQ+ young people than for their heterosexual peers. They found that between 58 and 68 percent of LGBTQ+ young people report having suicidal thoughts. They argue that this, as well as the higher rate of experiencing anxiety and depression, is because of discrimination, exclusion and lack of appropriate support. They argue that by creating a tailored, identity-affirming approach to support allows LGBTQ+ young people to explore gender and sexual identity, cope with bullying and cope with life events such as family rejection and building in group activities to this support allows the young people to create a sense of community and belonging. This shows the importance of LGBTQ+ specific support services, especially in places such as Wales, where there are few.

Aims

01

Building LGBTQ+ young people's well-being and resilience

Working with a minority group who face many challenges that can affect their well-being and resilience.

(Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015, Williams *et al* 2021)

02

To create a safe space within the programme

LGBTQ+ young people need a safe space where they can build their own community

(The Proud Trust, ND)

03

The older young people becoming mentors for younger members

Once older members gain confidence, they have the opportunity to help younger members to build their resilience and wellbeing, allowing them to become young mentors. Empowering both parties.

(Lazz, 2024)

Objectives

01

Running activities focused on building wellbeing and resilience

Encouraging the young people to reflect on how they feel while working outside and informally educate them about the different ways to be resilient.

02

Create a trusting bond within the group and its members.

Running icebreaker activities and maintaining a code of conduct. Whilst maintaining a professional trusting relationship and solving any conflicts between members.

03

Running mentorship programmes for older members interesting in mentoring

Once members become confident, offering them the opportunity to learn how to become a young mentor to new members, working alongside the lead youth worker and helping them with activities.

Method

As previously explained, this programme will focus on working outdoors. Taking young people into the outdoors has many benefits. Allan, Doren, Jones and Farrell (2024) conducted research with post covid-19 young people and found that the immersion of young people into outdoor natural settings results in many positive psychological outcomes, mental-health related benefits and wider skill development that may help them attain employment in the future. The outcomes of working outdoors, such as independence, confidence, self-efficacy, creativity, coping strategies, and interpersonal skills, have been proven to be retained by individuals over time. Additionally, Slee and Allan (2019, cited by Allan, Doren, Jones and Farrell, 2024) argue that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who do not do well in formal education settings, may also perform better in a natural environment because of the high-quality stimulating activities associated with working outdoors.

Additionally, they also argue that when young people work outdoors, their short-term resilience improves, enabling them to bounce back from adversity, and their general well-being and mental health also improve. Ward, Duncan, Jarden and Stewart (2016) argue that programmes focused on working outdoors may be especially beneficial for young people with mental health problems and learning disabilities for similar reasons. Trilling and Fadel (2009) argue that outdoor learning is especially important in the modern world as it cultivates a young person's sense of purpose and passion alongside traditional cognitive skill development, which creates powerful learning experiences in tune with a digital world of constant change. Allan, Doren, Jones and Farrell (2024) argue that outdoor learning enables young people to change their perspective through a range of means and experiences, allowing them to perceive their environment at a personal and global level, encouraging them to reflect on how their actions may affect themselves and the people around them.

Implementation

The programme will be implemented in cooperation with Cynefin Green Health Hub in Southwest Wales. This organisation is run by the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) in partnership with local groups. The website explains their mission is to “help people feel better by spending time in nature, moving more, and noticing and engaging in the world around them.” (UWTSD, ND, Para 4). This is why this project has been chosen as a space to run this proposed programme. The author works closely with a master's student working at the site and has written a short bid for a proposal for a similar group, focusing on LGBTQ+ people in Carmarthenshire. The bid has been included below.

Good afternoon, as you are aware, I am looking to start an LGBTQ+ nature group, and I think Cynefin Green Hub would be a wonderful place to hold this. My target audience would be LGBTQ+ people around Carmarthenshire, and I will use the links I have with Carmarthen LGBTQ+ to see if people would be interested in joining a queer gardening group. I want to start this project as I really believe that working outside in nature really benefits people mentally, and people, especially LGBTQ+ people, are struggling a lot in these times. I think a queer nature group would create a safe and sustainable community where people can reconnect with nature and learn about horticulture. I would love to teach people how to grow their own food, even if they have small gardens, and how they can use their waste, food or otherwise, to help their plants grow sustainably.

As for activities, I think growing vegetables would be most beneficial, potentially if people are interested learning about the environment and how we as gardeners can help protect it. Nature walks and outdoor activities would also be amazing, if we could learn about foraging and wild camping i think a lot of people would be interested in this.

To do this project, we would probably need a risk assessment, which I would be happy to help with, and gardening tools such as gloves, spades and trowels, as well as as a space to work in. I hope that the team at Cynefin will understand the need for this group and I hope that this is something we can get started!

Kind regards
Leo Smith

As previously mentioned, the programme will originally run for 12 months, and then hopefully, if it is funded for another year, a new group of young people will start with the

previous members of the group having the opportunity to stay on as mentors for the new members. The author hopes to access many different funders for this project. However, this may prove difficult as funding for youth provisions has significantly declined. Gov.UK (2024) states that funding for youth provision declined from £1.058M in 2011 to £408.5M in 2021. This significant decrease in funding resulted in the number of youth clubs operating in local authorities being cut almost in half. Additionally, Consortium (2025, para 2) found that LGBTQ+ organisations “receive just 10p in every £100 given to Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) in the UK every year.” Walker (ND, quoted by Consortium 2025, para 3), states that all sources of funding for LGBTQ+ VCOs are currently under threat, but the need is “greater than ever”. This shows that it will not be easy to attain funding for this programme. However, the author hopes that by approaching funders with evidence of the needs of LGBTQ+ young people, and the evidence that LGBTQ+ specific programmes help, the funders will see the need and fund the programme.

Evaluation

By participating in the project, the author hopes that the LGBTQ+ young people will gain more confidence in themselves, gain self-efficacy and build on their wellbeing and resilience. Throughout the programme, the young people will be encouraged to measure their subjective well-being using scaling questions, where 0 is ‘not at all’, and 10 is ‘completely’; for example, a question that could be asked would be ‘overall, how happy did you feel in the past week?’ These questions will be asked at the beginning, middle and end of the project; hopefully, the answers will show the progress that the young people will make under the project's influence. Similarly, the young people's levels of resilience will be evaluated by scaling questions such as ‘How likely do you feel you would be able to cope in a difficult situation?’. The author hopes that by encouraging the young people to reflect and self-report on how they feel, this will allow them to be in touch with their emotions and see how spending time outside or with a community may help them. The author hopes that the outcomes from this project will enable the LGBTQ+ young people to have greater well-being and resilience scores and feel more confident to face the challenges of adult life.



Image 2- Canva ND

It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of a programme that has not happened yet. However, due to the nature of this programme and the nature of youth work. The author believes it will be effective in helping build the well-being and resilience of LGBTQ+ young people. As seen above, evidence has shown that similar programmes run in communities and with neurodivergent young people have had a significant positive impact on the well-being of the groups; therefore, it can be argued that a similar group for LGBTQ+ young people will have the same results.

Well-being

This programme focuses on working outdoors, as much research has shown that spending time outdoors improves a person's well-being. For example, Mind (2025) argues that spending time in nature can help improve a person's mood, reduce feelings of stress and anger, help with mental health problems, improve confidence and self-esteem and help reduce loneliness. Alatarseva and Barrysheva (2015) argue that four aspects constitute well-being: (1) harmony with others and the environment, (2) understanding what is good for you, (3) being able to realise your own potential and plan for life, and (4) empowering people to fulfil the first three suggestions and increasing activity and awareness around well-being. Additionally, research on community gardens by Koay and Dillon (2020) shows that when gardening with others, people report higher levels of subjective well-being than those who garden alone. This shows that the programme building a community will have more benefit than if the young people were just taught gardening techniques. Furthermore, Koay and Dillon (2020) also state that exposure to natural environments can help reduce the negative effects of stress because the way humans are biologically wired to associate natural environments with survival, reducing the stress response. This reduction in stress levels from spending time outside will widely benefit the young people taking part in the programme because, according to Safer Schools NI (2025), young people produce higher levels of cortisol than adults when stressed. This is dangerous because high cortisol levels have been related to increased heart rate and blood pressure, and even cognitive impairment.

This programme gives young people the opportunity to explore these four concepts by encouraging them to form a community with other LGBTQ+ young people and spend time in nature, encouraging

them to reflect on what makes them feel good, and building their self-efficacy through informal education and empowerment to allow them to realise their full potential. Self-efficacy, a theory of motivation by Albert Bandura, refers to a person's belief in their own capacity to respond to specific situations confidently. Hudd (2026) argues that self-efficacy is extremely important in youth work, as, unless young people believe in themselves, they will not have the confidence to do the things youth work teaches them to do. Because of this, the programme will focus on building young people's self-efficacy by allowing them to run their own activities if they wish to do so, encouraging them to mentor others and supporting them to reflect on the improvements they have made throughout the programme. Another aspect of the programme that will help the young people believe in themselves is the mentorship opportunity, as well as empowering them, the mentors will gain belief in their own ability to help others (Lazz, 2024). The mentorship opportunity is important in building the young people's self-efficacy because, as the Federal Mentoring Council (ND) and Jekielek, Moore and Hair (2002, cited by Youth.Gov ND) argue, mentors gain increased self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, increased patience and supervisory skills and insight into childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. This shows that by acting as mentors, the young people will increase their self-efficacy while helping others, building their potential for future careers.

Resilience

Masten (2011) argues that resilience is an important factor in understanding children and young people who experience adversity. Shilo *et al* (2015) and Hendricks and Testa (2012) argue that LGBTQ+ young people are a minority group with heightened vulnerability who face persistent stressors that may affect their resilience. Sulimani-Aiden, Shilo and Paul (2024) describe resilience as a protective factor for LGBTQ+ young people, which allows them to recover from setbacks and adversities. Therefore, the programme focuses on building the resilience of a minority group, so they have the strength to face the many adversities of living as a minority young adult. Additionally, Koay and Dillon (2020) argue that when individuals face stressful life events, aspects such as their resilience and self-efficacy levels impact their ability to successfully adapt and cope.

Koay and Dillon (2024) indicate that individual resilience is connected with multiple mental-health related outcomes such as levels of stress, burnout and general indicators of well-being. They argue that, given the relationship between resilience and stress, and the fact that natural environments help reduce mental fatigue and stress, spending time outdoors in a community garden should also be helpful in increasing resilience to stress and therefore improving well-being. They also argue that community gardening furthers resilience on three levels: individually, socially, and in cooperation with the natural environment. Furthermore, Sustainability Directory (2025) explains that successfully nurturing a plant from seed to harvest can boost a person's self-efficacy and create a sense of achievement. Reachout.com (2024) argues that feeling a sense of achievement can help boost a person's resilience.

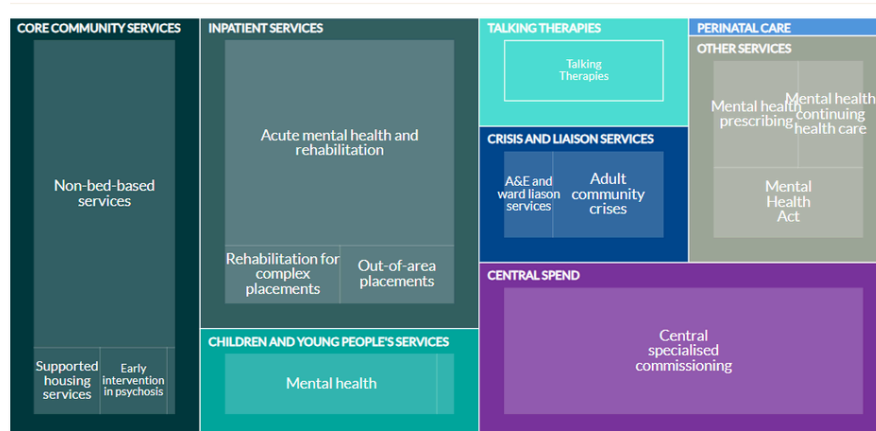
To conclude, the research above shows that the programme will be highly likely to be effective in improving LGBTQ+ young people's well-being and resilience, given the above evidence.

Anticipated impact of the programme

It is important to measure the broader social impact of a youth work project as it allows the community and stakeholders to access information about the impact of the project, helping the project gain stakeholders and support from the local community (Social Value Portal, ND). To measure the social impact, Social Return On Investment (SROI) and the social value, the project will use the Social Value TOM (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) system. According to the Social Value Portal (ND), this system is scalable, flexible, accessible and quantifiable, and is ultimately outcome and impact-focused. It uses a theory of change model to capture inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact of a project.

As well as using the Social Value TOM system, the project will also focus on how the project will help the government avoid the costs of mental health programmes, CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) intervention and mental health sanctioning. According to the National Audit Office (2021/22, quoted by Gilbert and Mallorie, 2024), the NHS spent 8% of its total budget, £12 billion, on mental health services in England alone, with services for children and young people occupying 8% of the total spend on mental health services. The graph below shows the way this money was spent.

Community and inpatient care accounted for nearly half of mental health spending in 2021/22



Source: NAO - Progress in improving mental health services in England



The cost of mental health crises are not only financial, according to Praeger and Bernhardt (1985), when someone in a community commits suicide, the community begins to question

its role in the incidence of the suicide, and there are a number of questions about how effective the community as a whole is functioning. Additionally, the family and the community start grieving; while this process can be healthy, some may decide to hide emotions, leading to stress and the health implications of long-term stress, such as high blood pressure, headaches, and various pains. According to The Trevor Project (2024), LGBTQ+ young people in the UK are at an extreme risk of committing suicide. They report that more than half of LGBTQ+ young people in the UK (58%) report seriously considering suicide, and one in five, 19%, reported attempting suicide in the past. This is quite a high figure, and as explained above, it will have a detrimental impact on the economy and communities.

By focusing on the well-being and resilience of LGBTQ+ young people, it is possible that the programme can reduce these statistics. The author will use statistics in areas where the project has not been run for over five years to see if the area where the project is run has a significant reduction in suicidal ideation than in the area where the project is not run.

Additionally, many studies have proven that youth work not only impacts young people as they are, but also has an ongoing long-term effect on them as they reach adulthood. For example, research by Silliman, Edwards and Johnson (2020, para 1) conducted research on the long-term effects of a youth work internship. They found that up to six years after engaging in a youth work internship, young adults continued to regard the training experience as “highly important for their current work.” Similarly, research conducted on the power of youth work in Scotland by YouthLink Scotland (2024, p.4) found that youth clubs are often described as a “key pillar” of the community, with some young people describing the youth clubs as “like family”. The research found that many participants remembered specific details of the youth workers at the centre, down to their mannerisms and the way they dress. Davidson (2024, cited by YouthLink Scotland, 2024) suggests this shows the importance of the professional relationship that youth workers form with young people. Many of the participants pointed out the fact that youth workers were the only people to ‘listen to them’ and often were more supportive than other professionals, such as school teachers. This shows the importance of youth work not only for young people but also for the community, as it helps the young people become progressive and influential members of their community as young adults (Silliman, Edwards and Johnson, 2020).

How will the programme be marketed?

The programme will be marketed using many methods, particularly social media, to reach potential new members for the project. As well as using social media sites such as TikTok and Instagram to promote the programme, it will also be marketed with posters around the community, and in community spaces such as supermarkets and libraries. An example of what the poster would look like is included below.



As well as this poster, a monthly newsletter will be written, including pictures of the activities that the young people are taking part in in the programme. This newsletter will be shared with stakeholders, parents and anyone in the local community who is interested in what is going on around them locally. By making the community and young people aware of the programme by using social and physical media, it will allow the project to advertise and communicate easily with its members, extend its community profile and promote social connection in the community (UKA Safeguarding Toolkit, ND).

As well as making sure the project is marketed correctly, it is also important to make sure that the project is trusted by the community. An important way to do this is to include stakeholders. Castillo (2020) argues that stakeholders such as volunteers, donors and other businesses are important as they are essential for an organisation to be effective, accountable and ethical. By including prominent members of the community as stakeholders or trustees of the organisation, this allows the community to place more trust in the organisation, making it more likely for the organisation to have the

community's support (Plinth, 2026). A monthly newsletter will also be created to send to the stakeholders and trustees of the organisation. Gov.UK (2018) argues that trustees are very important members of charity projects as they have independent control over, and legal responsibility for a charity's management and administration. They are often trusted members of the community, such as priests, mayors and community leaders. Trustees are trusted by the community to hold an organisation accountable for their actions. This will also increase the community's trust in the organisation and allow them to trust the organisation with their vulnerable members, i.e. young people.

To conclude, for this programme to be effective, it needs to be trusted by the local community, marketed well and evaluated if it is to continue being funded for the foreseeable future.

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Canva (ND) Image 1

Canva (ND) Image 2

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