

REPORT FROM THE LOTHIANS GIRLS PROJECT

RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

MARCH - APRIL 2019



PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Lothians Girls Project (LGP) was created by EPIC Assist as a weekly safe space over the course of 5 weeks for young girls to come together and receive group mentoring to help encourage the girls to make informed choices regarding their mental, physical and emotional health as well as to develop new and pre-existing peer support networks.

During the Project, different topics related to healthy living, positive self-image and self-development of pre-teen girls was addressed each week, with the group exploring the topics through interactive activities and discussions. The following topics were covered throughout the sessions: Physical Activity, Relaxation and Stress Relief, Relationships and Communication Skills, Self-esteem, Gender Stereotypes and Healthy Eating.



LOCAL PARTNERS

EPIC Assist partnered with the local youth organisation West Lothian Youth Action Project (WLYAP), who have been working with youth in the area for 25 years. The organisation also provided EPIC with staff members and volunteers who assisted with project delivery.

The fact that WLYAP is such an established organisation in West Lothian and already have regular youth clubs and facilities meant that they provided EPIC Assist with a clear link with the community. They also gave the project legitimacy and enabled EPIC Assist to reach the target group that would directly benefit from being involved in the LGP. As the Project also ran with a girls' group who was already meeting weekly, there was little need for advertisement or recruiting participants. Nevertheless, the girls in the group were fully informed about the implications of LGP prior to its commencement and EPIC and WLYAP ensured that participation was voluntary.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The LGP has a flexible, person-focused design which means that the topics and activities covered can be adjusted and tailored to fit the needs and interests of the group. The Project was advertised as a 5-week course from March to April, where one session was held each week. Despite being a coherent course in its own right, the sessions were independent of each other. As a result, the girls were freely able to choose which sessions they wanted to participate in.

By choosing how many and which sessions to attend, the girls were also able to engage with the topics they were most interested in.

The flexibility of the LGP meant that attendance numbers varied from week to week. 19 girls were involved in total and the turnout each week was generally high. The highest number of attendees in the same week was 14 while the average attendance rate was 10 per session.



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DATA MONITORING

The participants were given an initial survey at the end of the first session. This comprised questions related to whether the sessions were being enjoyed so far and what issues the participants identified as most important to their health and well-being. The participants were also asked about what kind of group activities they enjoyed doing the most and the least and if there was anything specific they wanted to do or learn about over the course of the Project.

A summative evaluation also took place at the end of the Project by distributing questionnaires to participants in the final week. More detailed feedback forms were sent to parents after the fourth week to allow enough time for completion. As well as this, WLYAP was involved in the evaluation process both through providing constant feedback and through a follow-up meeting after the final session.



THE FINDINGS

88% of the participants who completed the questionnaires in the last session stated that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the LGP. 100% said that they would recommend the Project to a friend, whereas as many as 80% stated that they had met new friends through the LGP.

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The girls also reported that they had improved their knowledge in a range of different skills and topic areas. Most notable were team-work, self-esteem and gender stereotypes, which 60% said they had learned more about. There was also a self-identified change in attitudes among the participants towards many of the topics discussed. For instance, 70% stated that their attitudes towards team work, self-esteem and well-being had changed.

When it came to which sessions and activities they liked the most, the Healthy Eating Session was the big winner. This was voted as one of the most enjoyable activity by 70% of the participants. Physical Activity, Relaxation and Stress Relief and Gender Stereotypes were other topics which were particularly liked by the girls who attended the LGP.

Feedback from parents was extremely limited, despite several attempts from WLYAP staff of chasing them up.



ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The LGP has proved to encourage girls to adopt some good behaviours and habits which are important in order to live as a healthy young person. However, most importantly, these behaviours and habits are likely to continue later in life and the Project thus has the capacity to make an impact on participants' lives for a long time after the completion of the Project. This is also one of EPIC Assist's goals with the LGP; to create sustainable and active communities.

Due to the success of the LGP, West Lothian Youth Action Project and their teenage members have requested running another version of the Project with one of their older age groups. EPIC Assist Charity Scotland is currently working with the group to realise this request.

Other versions of the Project have also been run successfully in different environments across Central Scotland, where calls have been made to run another level of the Project. The positive experiences of these girls' projects have additionally motivated EPIC Assist to run the projects at new locations in Scotland. We strongly hope we will be able to realise all these plans in the future.