

# Exploring the impact of the Seasons for Growth programme on Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing and Learning

---

March 2018

Karen McPherson, Andrea Montgomery and Katarzyna Wojtyniak  
Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to acknowledge all those involved in the process of developing and conducting this research. Specifically, the children who participated in the Seasons for Growth programme and their parents and carers who supported them; the Companions and members of their senior management team; primary school teachers and Seasons for Growth Trainers.

Thank you to Inverclyde Educational Psychology Team and members of Inverclyde Scottish Attainment Challenge team who supported the training process.

## **Abstract**

The promotion of health and wellbeing in schools underpins children and young people's attainment and achievement which subsequently improves their wellbeing now and in later life. However, significant change and loss experiences such as bereavement and parental separation can impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing. Supporting children and young people to make sense of their grief reactions can be a key factor in promoting their health and wellbeing. Seasons for Growth (SFG) is an eight-week programme facilitated by skilled adults (Companions), which gives children and young people the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings within a supportive peer group setting. The overall aim of this study was to explore the views of children, parents/carers and professionals in relation to the impact of the SFG programme on the health and wellbeing and learning of children who have experienced change and loss. A repeated measures design combined pre and post-intervention quantitative scaling statements and post-intervention qualitative interview data. The questionnaires, developed by a group of researchers, measured perceptual changes in relation to children's health and wellbeing over the duration of the eight-week programme and corresponded to the Curriculum for Excellence Health and Wellbeing outcomes. Questionnaires were completed by children (N=37) from six primary schools, their parents/carers (N=24) and their teachers (N=39). Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researchers with different focus groups of children (N=18), parents/carers (N=7) and Companions (N=6). Analysis of the data provided strong evidence that the SFG programme was viewed positively by children, parents/carers and professionals. Statistically significant gains were recorded in key areas relating to children's health and wellbeing and learning which correspond with the Health and Wellbeing curriculum outcomes. The findings suggest that the educational approach of the SFG programme can contribute to the promotion of children's mental, social and emotional wellbeing and can provide a structure which supports learning. Future research could explore the longer-term impact of the SFG programme on health and wellbeing and learning.

## Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
1. Introduction	6
2. Methodology	11
3. Results	15
4. Discussion and Limitations	27
5. Conclusion	31
6. Future research	32
Reference List	33

<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Page</b>
Appendix 1 – Parent/Carer Information	38
Appendix 2 – Parent/Carer Consent Form	39
Appendix 3 – Young Person Consent Form	40
Appendix 4 – HWB Pupil Questionnaire (pre)	41
Appendix 5 - HWB Teacher Questionnaire (pre)	42
Appendix 6 - HWB Parent/Carer Questionnaire (pre)	43
Appendix 7 - HWB Pupil Questionnaire (post)	44
Appendix 8 - HWB Teacher Questionnaire (post)	45
Appendix 9 - HWB Parent/Carer Questionnaire (post)	46
Appendix 10 – Children and Young Person Focus Group	47
Appendix 11 – Companion Focus Group	48
Appendix 12 – Parent/Carer Focus Group	49
Appendix 13 - HWB Pupil Questionnaire Data	50
Appendix 14 - HWB Teacher Questionnaire Data	51
Appendix 15 - HWB Parent/Carer Questionnaire Data	52
Appendix 16 - HWB Pupil Questionnaire post-Comments	53
Appendix 17 - HWB Teacher Questionnaire pre-Comments	55
Appendix 18 - HWB Teacher Questionnaire post-Comments	57
Appendix 19 - HWB Parent/Carer Questionnaire pre-Comments	59
Appendix 20 - HWB Parent/Carer Questionnaire post-Comments	61
Appendix 21 – Thematic Data Analysis: Children and Young People	62
Appendix 22 – Thematic Data Analysis: Companion	71
Appendix 23 - Thematic Data Analysis : Parent/Carer	81

# Introduction

## ***1.1 Health and wellbeing within an educational context***

Research conducted within education has increasingly focused on children and young people's health and wellbeing and the impact on attainment (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Fattore et al., 2007). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2006) defines health and wellbeing as "physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (p.1). Wellbeing is now widely considered in a more holistic way, incorporating the interrelated dimensions of mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing (Rees et al., 2010). This is reflected in the Scottish Government's commitment to improve outcomes and support the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of children and young people through education and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) (Scottish Government, 2009). CFE is located within the wider national framework 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) which aims to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of children and young people across eight areas: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (Scottish Government, 2014). Developing a holistic understanding of the nature of wellbeing and the factors which can impact on it is a key part of the GIRFEC framework (Scottish Government, 2014). How effectively children and young people develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the Health and Wellbeing curriculum is measured through a set of experiences and outcomes including: "I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them" and "I am learning skills and strategies which will support me in challenging times, particularly in relation to change and loss" (Scottish Government, 2009, p.2).

Research studies have shown that significant change and loss associated with bereavement can impact on children and young people's emotional, social, mental and physical wellbeing. Holland's (1993) study highlighted that, at any one time, seventy percent of primary schools had a recently bereaved child in their classrooms. Jones et al. (2013) found that, after controlling for other factors, the death of a parent by the age of thirteen impacted negatively on young people's emotional wellbeing. Other change and loss experiences which can act as stressors on children and young people's health and wellbeing include conflict relating to

friendships, illness, parental separation and parental unemployment (Sawyer et al., 2000). Dyregrov (2004) outlined some common grief reactions which children and young people can experience including anxiety, sleep disturbances, vivid memories, sadness, anger, shame, physical symptoms and difficulties related to learning.

### ***1.2 Relationship between health and wellbeing and learning***

Research carried out in UK schools has shown that there is a strong relationship between health and wellbeing and learning (Suhrcke and Paz Nieves, 2011). A study published by the Department for Education reports that pupil wellbeing was a successful predictor of engagement in school and later academic achievement (Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012). Green et al. (2005) also found that problems associated with health and wellbeing impacted on aspects of children and young people's capacity to engage with their learning, develop relationships and make positive lifestyle choices. Dyregrov (1998) suggested that grief reactions following a bereavement can impact on pupil's attention and concentration, self-confidence, completion of tasks, and their ability to process and recall information. Brooks (2013) proposed that the promotion of health and wellbeing in schools underpins pupil attainment and achievement which subsequently improves their wellbeing now and in later life.

### ***1.3 Importance of Relationships and Connectedness***

Schools can play a crucial role in promoting the development of children and young people's health and wellbeing through a social climate of mutual respect and friendship (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006). This has been found to help pupils build a sense of connectedness, recognition and acceptance (Millings et al., 2012). Weare (2015) also proposed that pupils who have opportunities to make appropriate decisions about their learning develop social interaction skills which enable them to maintain peer relationships and increases their sense of belonging to their school. In an analysis of data collated from a sample of secondary school pupils, Resnick et al. (1997) concluded that the stronger young people felt connected to their school, the less likely they were to engage in health-risk behaviours such as alcohol and drug misuse. The concept of connectedness also incorporates feelings of belonging to others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) which Maslow (1962) identified as being foundational to the pursuit of knowledge. It is argued that poor attachment to school or feeling socially isolated

can lead to disengagement with learning, increased levels of truancy and non-attendance, and low attainment (Dornbusch et al., 2001).

It is recognised that there is an increasing need for children and young people to have access to evidence-based interventions which promote the social and interpersonal aspects of school such as the need for connectedness to peers and adults, as well as the academic needs (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children publication 'How Safe are our Children' (Bentley et al., 2016) indicates that nearly a third of calls to 'Childline' are in relation to mental health issues including feelings of unhappiness, social isolation, low self-esteem, self-harm and thoughts of suicide. In response to this need, the Scottish Government has outlined a ten-year vision to actively promote wellbeing and effective early intervention for children and young people (Scottish Government, 2016). This is reflected by the GIRFEC approach which stresses the importance of interventions which are "appropriate, proportionate and timely" to help develop children and young people's health and wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2009, p14) and highlights the key role that schools can play in offering additional support to children and young people. This is also in line with the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, which recognises that a wide range of factors may give rise to children and young people requiring additional support including experiencing "bereavement" (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006, p.8).

#### **1.4 Understanding about change and loss**

*"For some young people...bereavement may be compounded by other disadvantages or multiple difficult life events, and this may clearly indicate an increased risk of negative outcomes"* (Ribbens McCarthy and Jessop, 2005, p.64).

Childhood bereavement charities such as Winston's Wish (2012) report that children and young people can often feel isolated following a bereavement and that people lack an understanding of how they feel. Understanding about change and loss and how children and young people can learn to adapt to these experiences is an area of increasing interest amongst educationalists and researchers (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2009). Although studies show that some children and young people can experience a range of 'risk' factors such as family stress associated with poverty, bereavement and mental health (Young Minds, 2014), many have the capacity for coping with adversity (Graham, 2004). Creating opportunities for children and



young people to share their thoughts and feelings in relation to grief and learn new ways of thinking and responding to change can be a key factor in promoting their wellbeing. It has also been proposed that learning how to make sense of the changes that have occurred is best achieved through conversations and social interactions within a supportive peer group facilitated by adults (Theis, 2009). However, adults adopting this supportive role would require access to professional learning opportunities which aim to develop their knowledge and understanding of how grief experiences can impact on children and young people's wellbeing (Dyregrov, 1998).

### ***1.5 The Seasons for Growth Programme***

Evidence-based programmes of prevention and intervention, such as Seasons for Growth (SFG), have been found to foster the promotion of children and young people's health and wellbeing (Riley, 2012). SFG is a grief and loss programme for children and young people (aged six to eighteen years) who have experienced significant change and loss (Graham, 1996). The programme, which is designed on four developmental levels, takes place within a small group peer learning setting and combines psychology and education with peer support to explore the nature of grief. SFG takes place over eight weekly sessions and is facilitated by two trained adult 'Companions'. The programme employs a range of activities such as discussions, narrative stories, journal writing, art and music to help children and young people explore their feelings, thoughts and reactions to change and loss.

The SFG programme is underpinned by William Worden's (1996) grief theory which views individuals as active participants in their grief process rather than passive recipients. Within the educational context of the programme, Worden's (1996) 'tasks of grief' are linked to the metaphor of the four seasons of the year. The core aims of the programme are for children and young people to learn that change and loss are part of life and that people can experience this in different ways. Children and young people also learn new skills and strategies to help them adapt to change and loss experiences, and Companions aim to help create a network of peer support within the group. In a large-scale study conducted by Newell and Moss (2011) involving fifty-seven SFG groups from Australia, New Zealand and Scotland, the experience of participating in the SFG programme was found to have helped to strengthen peer support networks and increase resilience and self-esteem.

### ***1.6 Aims of the study***

Within Inverclyde Council, Educational Psychology Service aims to provide training to school staff and partner agencies to build capacity for the implementation of the SFG programme within schools. This model of early intervention is sustainable as the principles of the programme become embedded within whole school cultures and support becomes universally accessible by children and young people aged between six and eighteen years. However, current literature (Riley, 2012) suggests that there are gaps within the existing critical evidence-base in relation to how children and young people participating in SFG groups view the impact of the programme on their health and wellbeing and learning.

The overall aim of the small-scale mixed methods study is to explore the views of children, parents/carers and professionals in relation to the impact of the SFG programme on the health and wellbeing and learning of children who have experienced loss and change. The practical relevance and significance of the study comes from the breadth of research which highlights that many children and young people are affected by loss and trauma and that these experiences can impact on school performance (Dyregrov, 2004). This study is situated within six primary schools as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge initiative which aims to achieve equity in educational outcomes for children and young people, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. In order to measure the impact of the SFG programme on children's health and wellbeing, the study will investigate two research questions as follows:

1. 'Is there an improvement in the pre- and post-intervention rating scores in relation to the health and wellbeing of children who have experienced loss and change and attended a Seasons for Growth group?'
2. In what way is the Seasons for Growth programme viewed as impacting on children's health and wellbeing and learning?

## **2. Methodology**

### ***2.1 Research Design***

In order to measure the impact of the SFG programme on children's health and wellbeing and learning, a mixed methods approach was used (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). This allowed qualitative and quantitative data to be collected, analysed and interpreted (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009) from six primary schools. Denscombe (2008) argued that mixed methods research can increase the accuracy of the data by providing a wider triangulation of data compared to using only a single research method. A repeated measures design was used which combined pre-intervention and post-intervention quantitative scaling statements and qualitative interview data (Robson, 2002). Qualitative methods such as group interviews were considered to be the most appropriate for this study (Cohen et al., 2011) in order to obtain the views of children, parents/carers and Companions in relation to the impact of the SFG programme on health and wellbeing and learning.

### ***2.2 Participants***

Purposive sampling was used to select participants from six primary schools as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Including participants from a number of schools will increase the reliability of the findings (Cohen et al., 2011). The sample consisted of a defined group of participants:

- children from primary 2 to 7 classes attending SFG groups (N = 37)
- the children's parents/carers (N = 24)
- the children's teachers (N = 39)
- Companions facilitating the groups (N = 12)

Prior to the start of the study, the two Educational Psychologists, in their role as researchers and SFG Trainers, delivered two separate SFG Companion training workshops. The two-day workshops were attended by education staff and a number of partner agencies. Following the training, Companions working within the Scottish Attainment Challenge primary schools collaboratively planned to co-facilitate SFG groups with Project Workers from Barnardo's Nurture Service over the session 2016-17. Information about the SFG programme was provided to parents/carers and children who had experienced change and loss, along with

informed consent forms relating to the proposed study (Appendices 1-3). The consent form offered parents/carers and children assurance of anonymity and confidentiality in relation to reporting of the data, and reinforced their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without question or impact on the child's participation in the SFG group (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). All of the children and their parents/carers gave their consent to participate in the study.

Over the eight month time span of the study, Companions facilitated at least one SFG group in each of the six primary schools. Groups, which varied between four and eight children, met over eight weekly sessions lasting approximately fifty minutes. The children also attended a 'Celebration' session at the end of the programme and were given the option of inviting family members, friends and school staff to join in their celebration. Programme fidelity was monitored by the Trainers through regular contact with the Companions. Following the implementation and evaluation of the programme, Companions were awarded a certificate of Full Accreditation.

### ***2.3 Assessment instruments***

The researchers worked collaboratively with five other SFG National Trainers and school staff to devise the quantitative and qualitative assessment instruments.

#### ***Quantitative data collection***

The quantitative assessment instruments were in the format of short pre- and post-intervention statements (Appendices 4–9). The questionnaires were devised in order to measure perceptual changes in relation to health and wellbeing over the duration of the eight week programme. The children's questionnaire comprised of eight self-rating statements corresponding to the CFE Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes (Scottish Government, 2009). Children were asked to respond to each statement on a scale of one to three ('no', 'maybe' or 'yes'). The matched questionnaires for the teachers and parents/carers rated their views of the children's health and wellbeing. The adults were asked to respond to each statement on a five-point ratings scale (ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). The questionnaires also gave all the participants the opportunity to record written comments. Obtaining triangulated quantitative data in relation to children's health and

wellbeing from three different sources increases the reliability and validity of the findings (Denscombe, 2008).

Prior to the start of the SFG programme, the pre-intervention questionnaire was completed by all of the children within the sample (N = 37) and all of their class teachers (N = 39). However, only some of the parents/carers returned completed forms for their children (N = 24). The post-intervention questionnaires were completed at the end of the programme by all of the children (N = 37) and their teachers (N = 39). There were fewer returned post-intervention questionnaires from parents/carers (N = 15).

### **Qualitative data collection**

The qualitative assessment instruments consisted of semi-structured interview schedules which were structured into themes to reflect the aims of the study and to encourage the participants to focus their responses (Appendices 10-12). This would also assist in the data reduction as part of the analysis process (Robson, 2002). The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researchers with a smaller sample comprising of three different group types:

- three focus groups of children from three of the primary schools (N = 18)
- three focus groups of Companions from three of the primary schools (N = 6)
- one focus group of parents/carers from one primary school (N = 7)

Each of the interviews took place within a school setting following completion of the SFG programme, with the aim of accessing the views of the participants in relation to the impact of the programme on children's health and wellbeing and learning. Semi-structured interviews are viewed as an insightful method which allows the researcher a degree of flexibility when asking questions (Gratton and Jones, 2004) and encourages participants to talk openly about their views. Furthermore, the use of open-ended questions allows the researcher to probe into the participants' responses to obtain rich qualitative data.

Written notes were taken during the interviews by one researcher, whilst the other researcher asked the questions. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to focus on the participants and create a more relaxed atmosphere (Tashakori and Teddlie, 2003), and to observe any non-verbal communicative aspects of the interview (Mishler, 1986). The interviews took twenty

minutes and the same procedure was used with each group of participants. Following each group interview, the data was typed up by the researchers.

## **2.4 Data Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis was employed to reduce the large amounts of raw data, collated over a period of five months from the interviews and questionnaires, to more manageable units of data (Robson, 2002) whilst ensuring the quality of the data was preserved (Cohen et al., 2011). All the text data was read and re-read extensively by both researchers to ensure familiarity of content and to identify any themes. This allowed the information to be analysed more effectively and efficiently by the researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). An open coding method was used (Saldana, 2009) to assign representative codes with descriptive labels to sections of text data, and each highlighted with a different colour in order to construct coherent categories relating to particular themes which reflect the research questions. Through deductive analysis, the coded text data from the different sources was grouped into “more conceptual themes” and analysed using the constant comparison method (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996, p.92). This allowed the researchers, through a final analysis, to identify connections within and between the themes and ensure that the “richness of the data was retained” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.567). The results of the thematic analysis will be summarised under the main aims of the study, reflecting the key points within the themes in relation to the research questions, and will be provided in detail in the Appendices.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Analysis of quantitative data

The quantitative data from each of the statements on the questionnaires are presented in relation to the emerging themes and linked to Research Question 1. Data gathered from the six primary schools were aggregated and analysed within the groupings of children, parents/carers and teachers. The fidelity of the programme and research methodology enabled the data to be collated and analysed in this way. Pre- and post-intervention rating scores were subjected to paired t-tests to determine whether the differences in the scores were statistically significant. The percentage changes between the pre-post scores for each statement are represented in graphs below and include changes in the 'yes' scores for the children and combined 'agree'/'strongly agree' scores for teachers and parents/carers (Appendices 13-15). Written comments recorded on the questionnaires have also been selected to provide further evidence of the impact of the Seasons for Growth programme (Appendices 16-20).

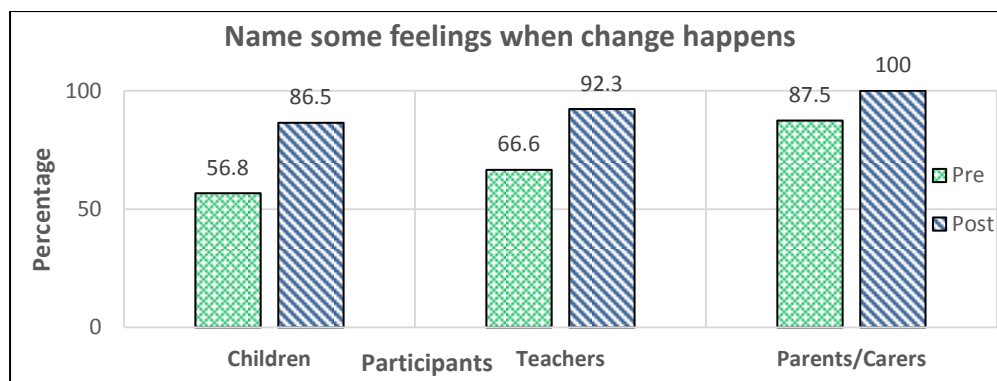
#### ***Research Question 1***

Is there an improvement in the pre- and post-intervention rating scores in relation to the health and wellbeing of children who have experienced change and loss and attended a Seasons for Growth group?

#### **Theme: Impact on health and wellbeing and learning**

##### ***Statement: 'I can name some feelings I have when change happens'***

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre-post-intervention rating scores recorded by the children on the questionnaires ( $p < 0.001$ ). Prior to the start of the programme, 56.8% of the children self-reported that they could name some feelings when change happens, and following completion of the programme this number increased to 86.5%. This significant change was also reflected in the scores recorded by the teachers and parents/carers ( $p < 0.001$ ).

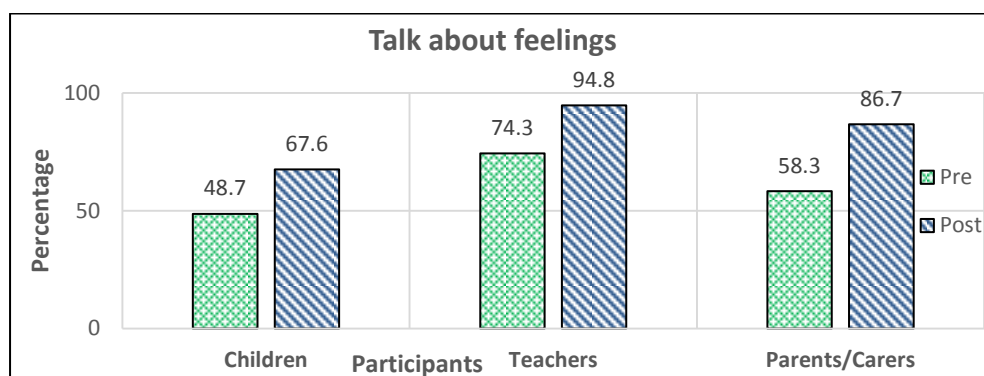


**Figure 1. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<b>Teacher:</b> "Tends to let her emotions build up and doesn't know how to verbalise them"	<b>Teacher:</b> "She can articulate how she is feeling"

**Statement: 'I can talk about my feelings'**

Results indicate that 48.7% of the children gave a positive response at the start of the programme and this increased to 67.6%. Responses from teachers and parent/carers reflected similar increases ( $p < 0.005$ ) as shown in the table below.



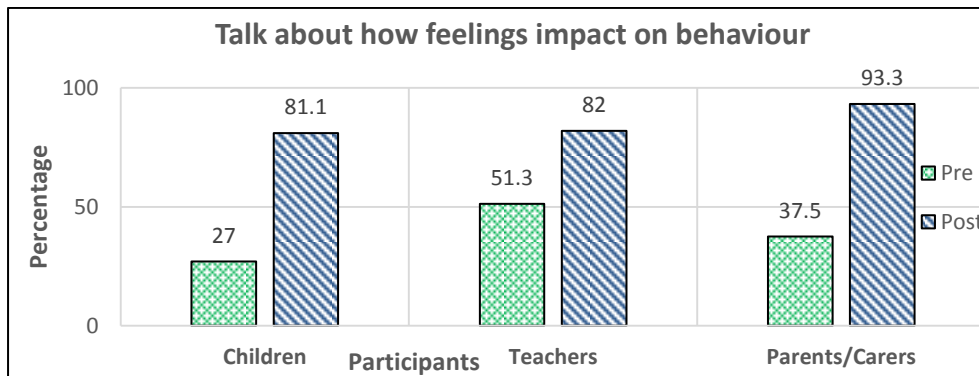
**Figure 2. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<b>Teacher:</b> "He's quite uncommunicative when asked to describe his feelings..." <b>Parent/Carer:</b> "My child doesn't like to show they are upset and tries to hold it back"	<b>Teacher:</b> "Can talk about his feelings, but is more comfortable in a very small group..." <b>Parent/Carer:</b> "I see a big difference in my child at home"



**Statement: 'I can talk about how my feelings can make me behave'**

Significant gains were made in this area. Children's pre-post scores rose from 27% to 81.1% ( $p < 0.001$ ), similar to views of teachers and parents/carers ( $p < 0.005$  and  $p < 0.001$  respectively).

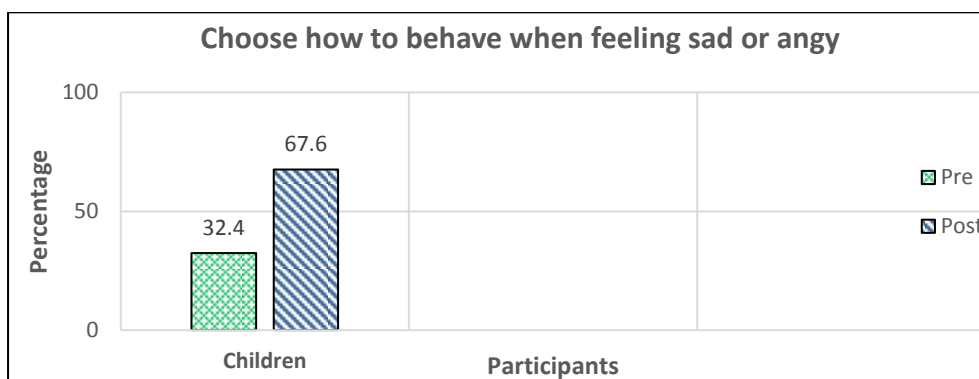


**Figure 3. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<b>Teacher:</b> "He struggles to control his behaviour...rarely discusses how he feels and seems to see it as a weakness of character"	<b>Teacher:</b> "He has made progress and is better at expressing and managing emotions and feelings with others"

**Statement: 'I can choose how to behave when I feel sad or angry'**

This statement was presented only to the children and showed significant gains in relation to choosing how they behave, with pre-post increases from 32.4% to 67.6% ( $p < 0.005$ ).

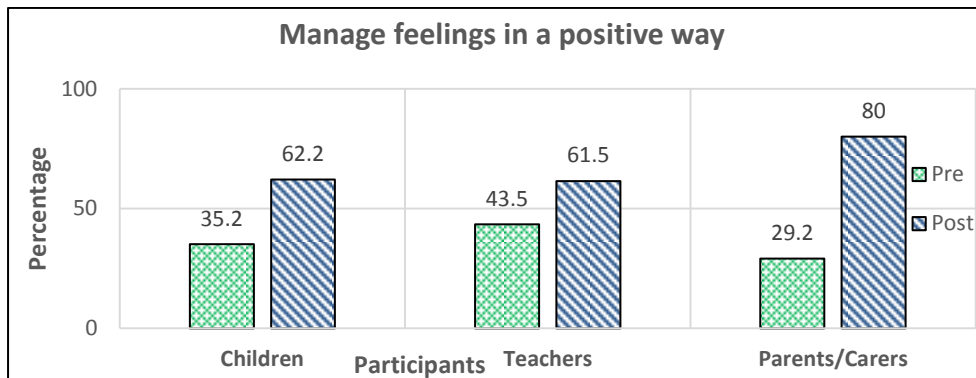


**Figure 4. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Post-intervention comment
<b>Children:</b> "I know how to deal with my feelings now"

**Statement: 'I can manage my feelings'**

Children reported significant pre-post improvements, from 35.2% to 62.2% ( $p < 0.01$ ). Gains in this area were also recorded by teachers ( $p < 0.01$ ) and parents/carers ( $p < 0.001$ ).

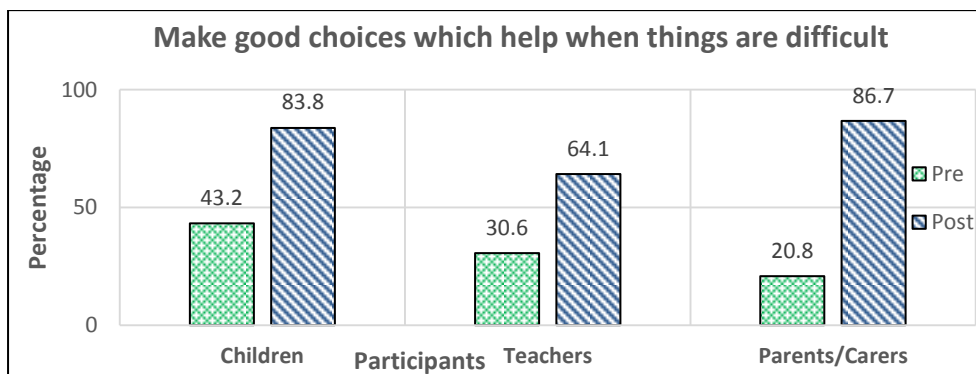


**Figure 5. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<i>Parent/Carer: "My child can sometimes talk, describe or manage their feelings but not on a regular or consistent basis"</i>	<i>Parent/Carer: "These classes have made some positive changes to my child and how they deal with things"</i>

**Statement: 'I can make good choices which will help me when things are difficult'**

Significant gains in children's ability to make choices were recorded from 43.2% to 83.8% ( $p < 0.001$ ), which was also reflected in responses from teachers and parents/carers ( $p < 0.001$ ).

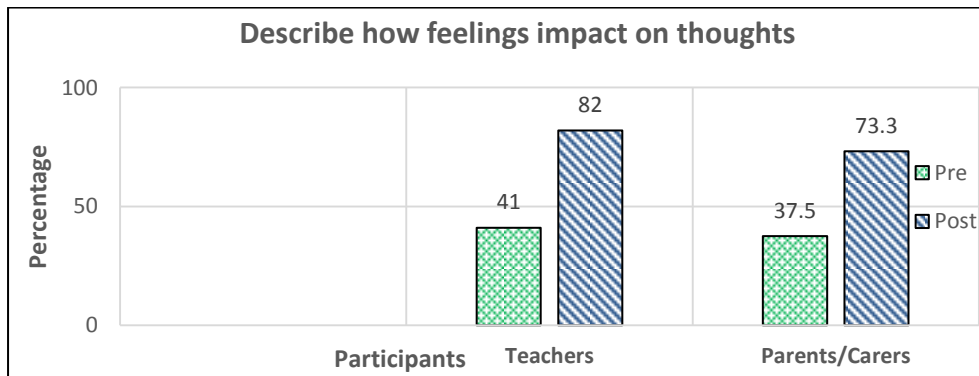


**Figure 6. Pre- and post- intervention percentage scores**

Post-intervention comments
<i>Teacher: "Much more aware and focused on choices"</i>

**Statement: 'I can describe how my feelings make me think'**

This statement was presented only to the teachers and parents/carers. Significant pre-post gains from 41% to 82% ( $p < 0.001$ ) were recorded by the teachers and similarly by the parents/carers from 37.5% to 73.3% ( $p < 0.005$ ).



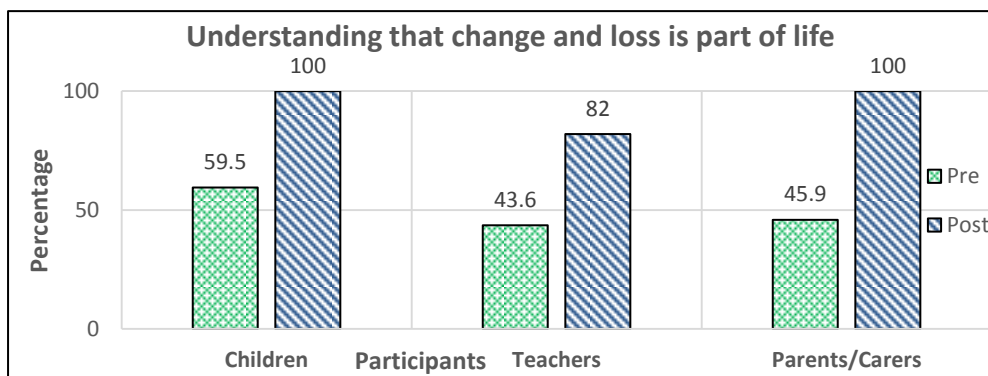
**Figure 7. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<i>Parent/Carer: It's difficult to have an insight into my child's thoughts and feelings"</i>	<i>Parent/Carer: "My child has really enjoyed Seasons for Growth and it has helped my child emotionally and behaviour has improved"</i>

**Theme: Understanding about change and loss**

**Statement: 'I can understand about change and loss'**

There was a significant improvement between pre- and post-intervention rating scores in relation to children's understanding about change and loss from 59.5% to 100% ( $p < 0.001$ ). This was also reflected in both the teacher and parent/carer questionnaires ( $p < 0.001$ ).



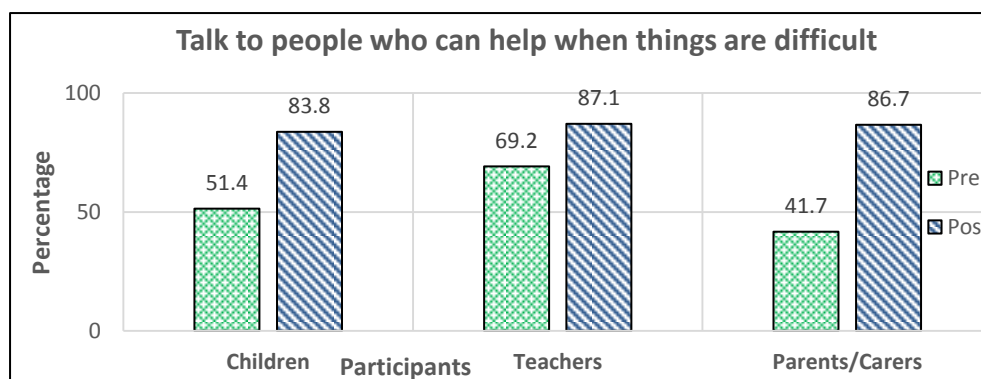
**Figure 8. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<p><b>Teacher:</b> “Not sure how this pupil is going to react in the group”</p> <p><b>Parent/Carer:</b> “My child has struggled with understanding death”</p>	<p><b>Teacher:</b> “She has totally embraced this group and is more self-aware and accepting of change as natural”</p> <p><b>Parent/Carer:</b> “My child is talking more about death as being part of nature and is more accepting”</p>

## Theme: Importance of relationships and connectedness

### *Statement: ‘I can talk to people who can help me when things are difficult’*

Prior to the start of the programme, 51.4% of the children reported that they could talk to people when things became difficult and this increased significantly to 83.8% post-intervention ( $p < 0.001$ ). Similar improvements were recorded by the teachers ( $p < 0.005$ ) and the parents/carers ( $p < 0.001$ ).



**Figure 9. Pre- and post-intervention percentage scores**

Pre-intervention comments	Post-intervention comments
<p><b>Teacher:</b> “One child said, ‘friendship is like a flower – hard to keep alive, easy to die off...’ I think this sums up her feelings at the moment”</p> <p><b>Parent/Carer:</b> “My child has problems sleeping sometimes since the passing of their grandfather”</p>	<p><b>Teacher:</b> “Far more relaxed and willing to share and accept support”</p> <p><b>Parent/Carer:</b> “My child looks forward to the group each week and knows there are people to talk to for support and there are other children who feel the same”</p> <p><b>Children:</b> “It was good to talk and open up”</p>

### **3.2 Analysis of qualitative data**

A summary of the key points from an analysis of the qualitative findings are presented in relation to the emerging themes and linked to Research Question 2. Overall, analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the groups of children, Companions and parents/carers indicated that the SFG programme was viewed as having positive outcomes for the children's health and wellbeing and learning (Appendices 21-23).

#### ***Research Question 2***

In what way is the Seasons for Growth programme viewed as impacting on children's health and wellbeing and learning?

#### **Theme: Structure of the programme**

##### ***Children's views***

All 18 children stated that attending a SFG group had made a positive difference to them. In particular, the children valued the confidential nature of their small group discussions:

*"One of the rules was to keep information confidential. We all managed to do this"*

##### ***Companion's views***

Companions also highlighted the importance of the small group setting which enabled the children to share their personal stories of loss and change, as reflected by:

*"Small group enabled them to share their feelings and ideas without feeling they were being judged: that fits with nurture and Health and Wellbeing"*

The journal was viewed as a valuable resource and the creative activities supported the engagement of the children:

*"Having their own journal was valued by all children"*

*"They engaged well with the activities"*

In addition, Companions acknowledged the important role that their own professional supportive network plays in the successful implementation of the programme:

*"Having the support of the Depute Head Teacher made a significant difference for organising each session..."*

### ***Parent's/carer's views***

The parents/carers recognised the key role played by the Companions and the importance of creating opportunities for children to explore their feelings within a safe learning environment:

*"Meeting every week with the same adults was good for the children"*

## **Theme: Impact on health and wellbeing and learning**

### ***Children's views***

The children described how they had learned to express their feelings within the group and had developed more confidence in using a wider language for their feelings:

*"I learned to be confident and tell people how I'm feeling"*

*"Seasons for Growth helped me control my feelings a bit better"*

The children were also able to describe a wide range of coping strategies learned as part of the programme including talking to others; relaxation techniques (e.g. listening to music, reading and breathing deeply); and recreation activities (e.g. walking and playing sports). The positive impact of these learned coping strategies on the children's ability to manage difficult feelings was evident across school and home settings:

*"Writing your feelings down and letting them go is a release"*

*"To feel better you can go for a walk and get some fresh air to take your mind off it"*

Positive gains were expressed by the children in relation to their levels of self-esteem and confidence, and this was also recognised by school staff, family and friends. Evidence of an increase in empathy was reflected by some of the children who had gained a better understanding of how other people may feel when experiencing grief:

*"I can understand how other people feel if they have lost someone"*

*"I'm able to cope with change because of Seasons"*

*"I'm more confident in class"*

The children also associated their experience of SFG with improvements in aspects of their learning in school and at home. Children described how they could focus more and listen without being distracted by their own thoughts. In addition, a few children attributed feeling less worried with better sleep patterns:

*“Seasons for Growth helped me sleep better. Before Seasons for Growth I could be up all night worried”*

*“I am able to get on with my work faster because worries are no longer inside me and I’m happier”*

*“I can do homework a lot faster because my worries are not there and I am listening more in class”*

### **Companion’s views**

Companions attributed the SFG programme with tangible developments in the children’s language for feelings, self-confidence and empathy. For some of the children, developing a wider emotional vocabulary was also viewed as a coping strategy for managing their feelings when situations became challenging:

*“One child is responding to discussion using the language for feelings which he learned in the group”*

*“Children came up with strategies for different situations and use them now in the playground”*

*“The impact of Seasons for Growth on the children’s learning, health and wellbeing and confidence has been significant – they can speak out more and offer their ideas – and the trust they have built up with each other and the Companions has been very noticeable”*

Companions highlighted some of the important aspects of learning, particularly children’s increased ability to talk, listen and learn from each other. There was also some evidence that these skills were being observed within settings out with the group including the playground and classroom. Finally, one Companion described the nature of the SFG programme as impacting holistically on all areas of the children’s health and wellbeing:

*“All aspects of health and wellbeing are promoted through Seasons: cognitive problem-solving and thinking of alternative strategies; emotional language for feelings; social sense of belonging, friendships and connections; physical dancing to Fischy music”*

### **Parent’s/carer’s views**

Similarly, parents/carers described the observable changes in their children’s willingness to share their feelings at home and their ability to make positive choices in response to situations:

*“My child is talking about their feelings more and saying that it’s ok to be sad and happy”*

*“Thinks more about choices to make and behaving in a different way in different situations”*

The impact of the SFG programme on their children’s self-esteem and capacity to learn was also highlighted:

*“Not worrying as much now”*

*“Will try to do homework now”*

*“She says she can concentrate better now”*

## **Theme: Importance of relationships and connectedness**

### ***Children’s views***

The children spoke positively of the relationships made within their groups and the importance of feeling that their views were recognised and valued by the Companions and their peers:

*“I feel like people listened to me in the group”*

*“Being in a group was good and making new friends”*

The children also acknowledged feeling safe and supported by people they trusted within their group which also impacted on their relationships with family members:

*“We all trust each other in the group”*

*“Seasons for Growth helped me not to build anything up inside anymore. I told my mum about my feelings and now feel better. I no longer have a sore tummy”*

### ***Companion’s views***

Companions reflected on the connections made within and beyond the group which included new peer friendships and greater trust between the children and Companions:

*“Children enjoyed the closeness of the group, being together”*

*“All children could identify someone they would talk to including the Companions”*

The importance of recognition and being listened to in a non-judgemental way was also viewed as being a significant aspect of the SFG group:



*“Showing respect when they tell their story and being given the emotional space to tell their story”*

*“Being positive and knowing that they will not be judged enabled the children to share their life experiences”*

### **Parent’s/carer’s views**

Similarly, the importance of the relationships formed within the group was viewed by the parents/carers as having a significant impact on the children’s health and wellbeing:

*“She talked about new friendships in the group”*

*“My child is much happier and more settled since attending the group”*

Some parents/carers also attributed their children’s participation in the SFG programme with positive changes in relationships within the home:

*“Getting on better with family members since attending the group”*

*“More time with family and less time in their room”*

## **Theme: Understanding about change and loss**

### **Children’s views**

The children highlighted the importance of developing an understanding about change and loss. Through group discussions, they recognised that other members of the group had similar experiences which led to a ‘normalising’ of their feelings:

*“That change and loss is just a part of life”*

*“I can see that I’m not the only person who has lost someone and that other people have had changes in their family”*

The children viewed the SFG programme positively and highlighted improvements in their self-confidence, ability to express their feelings and identify coping strategies:

*“Seasons for Growth can help to build your confidence”*

*“It helps you feel a lot less stressed and manage your feelings much better”*

Finally, all the children were keen to promote the SFG programme within their schools:

*“I would definitely tell someone else to join a Seasons for Growth group”*

### **Companion's views**

Similarly, Companions commented on the importance of children developing an understanding about change and loss, and the positive impact of sharing similar experiences within the group:

*"Understanding they are not to blame and change happens as a natural part of life"*

*"Realising they are not the only ones experiencing loss"*

Companions also acknowledged the wider impact of the SFG programme within their schools, with particular reference to raising awareness about change and loss:

*"Teachers became more empathic towards children as they understood that they had experienced some significant loss"*

There was a general consensus amongst Companions that the SFG programme impacted positively on the children's health and wellbeing and learning, and were aware of the need for an evidence-based programme which could be accessed by all children. Companions were also committed to promoting the programme within their schools and across the authority:

*"There are a number of children who would like to attend the group. This reflects the demographics of our local context and the significant need for a programme like Seasons for Growth"*

*"I feel that it is definitely time well spent"*

### **Parent's/carer's views**

Parents/carers highlighted the difference that SFG had made to their children's understanding about change and loss:

*"He is talking about his feelings and how change has affected him – more aware that change happens and is part of life"*

*"Learning that change happens to everyone's family"*

Parents/carers made positive comments about the impact of SFG and were very supportive of the programme. Some parents/carers expressed an interest in attending an Adult's SFG group as a way of supporting their children:

*"I would like to attend an adult version of Seasons to be able to help my older child"*

*"I hope my other child will choose to go to the group"*

## 4. Discussion and Limitations

The overall aim of this study was to explore the views of children, parents/carers and professionals in relation to the efficacy of the SFG programme on the health and wellbeing and learning of children who have experienced loss and change. Specifically, the study investigated whether there were improvements in the pre-post intervention ratings scores in relation to the children's health and wellbeing, and explored the way in which the programme was viewed as impacting on health and wellbeing and learning. The aims of the study are relevant and significant for the context of Scottish schools as research highlights that many children and young people are affected by loss and trauma and that these experiences can impact negatively on their learning (Dyregrov, 2004).

The findings of this study provide evidence that the SFG programme was viewed positively by children, parents/carers and professionals. Analysis of the quantitative data collated from the questionnaires completed by children, parents/carers and teachers, indicated that statistically significant gains were made in a number of areas relating to health and wellbeing and learning. Specifically, significant pre-post improvements were recorded in relation to children's ability to: "name some feelings when change happens"; "talk about their feelings and how feelings make them behave"; "manage their feelings"; "choose how to behave when they feel sad or angry"; "make good choices and talk to people when things are difficult"; and "understand about change and loss". These improvements were also evidenced by the qualitative comments recorded on the questionnaires, which highlighted the children's increased awareness of and ability to express their views, thoughts and feelings more confidently. When compared to the Health and Wellbeing curriculum delivered within Scottish schools (Scottish Government, 2009), these aspects of learning correspond with outcomes such as: "I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them"; "I know that we all experience a variety of thoughts and emotions that affect how we feel and behave and I am learning ways of managing them"; "I understand that there are people I can talk to and that there are a number of ways in which I can gain access to practical and emotional support to help me and others in a range of circumstances"; and "I am learning skills and strategies which will support me in challenging times, particularly in relation to change and loss". These findings

suggest that the educational approach of the SFG programme can contribute to the promotion of children's 'mental and emotional wellbeing' and can provide a structure which supports learning across a number of areas of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum.

Analysis of the qualitative data, collated from the focus group discussions, indicates a number of emerging themes which provides consistent evidence supporting the quantitative findings in relation to the development of children's knowledge, understanding and skills. The children, parents/carers and Companions all recognised the positive impact of the SFG programme on the children's health and wellbeing and learning. The children's views reflected outcomes such as an increased awareness and understanding in relation to their own emotions and ability to express their feelings using a wider vocabulary. These improvements in emotional literacy were also highlighted by the Companions and parents/carers, particularly the development of the children's emotional vocabulary and increased confidence and willingness to share their feelings within school and at home. Research has shown that enabling children to express their thoughts and feelings can be viewed as an effective coping strategy which can help to reduce levels of stress and worry (Riley, 2012). The peer-led group discussions also contributed to children learning alternative ways of thinking and behaving along with skills and strategies aimed at managing emotions and making positive choices in difficult situations. The children attributed their use of coping strategies, such as choosing to participate in recreational activities, with feeling less worried and anxious in school and being able to concentrate more in class. A few children also highlighted an improvement in their sleep pattern and parents/carers recognised that their children were spending more time learning at home. These findings highlight the key role which interventions aimed at supporting grief, loss and change can have on supporting children to develop coping strategies and manage their thoughts and feelings. This is of particular importance as research shows that developing coping abilities can mediate against the negative impact that significant change and loss can have on children's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing (Jones et al., 2013).

The curriculum structure of the programme emerged as another theme which was viewed as contributing to the positive outcomes for the children in relation to their self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging. Engaging in activities such as group discussion, art, music and journal-writing was viewed as providing alternative ways for recognising, expressing and

communicating their feelings. This supports findings of other studies involving the SFG programme (Riley, 2012; Newell and Moss, 2011) which suggests that participating in creative activities and using verbal and non-verbal communication can enable some children to share their most intense feelings. The confidential and respectful nature of the small group discussions was also recognised as being a significant factor in enabling children to share their personal experiences of change and loss.

The third dominant theme to emerge was in relation to the importance of relationships and connectedness. The impact on children's social wellbeing was strongly evidenced through comments from the different focus groups. The children acknowledged the importance of being listened to and having their views recognised, and also reported feeling less isolated and more confident in being able to identify people they could talk to within school and at home. The sustainability of this connectedness was evident beyond the setting of the group as observed by school staff in classrooms and playgrounds. Significantly, parents/carers highlighted the impact of the supportive relationships on aspects of their children's health and wellbeing including feeling happier and more settled. Strengthening the children's supportive network and helping to build their capacity for coping with change and loss was considered by the Companions to be successful outcomes of participating in the programme. Through the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills, the children were able to recognise the factors they could influence, such as being able to choose how they respond in challenging situations, which enhanced their sense of agency. Previous research involving the SFG programme suggests that recognising the complex relationship between children's vulnerability and agency in managing their grief is central to providing the most appropriate and effective support (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010). The nature of interventions such as the SFG programme can socially and emotionally empower children and young people (Ribbens-McCarthy, 2007) through creating a supportive network and developing individual resources which help them to adapt when change and loss is experienced. Furthermore, it has been suggested that delivering the SFG programme within the context of a school setting can also be beneficial as it provides familiarity and continuity of support which goes beyond the programme (Riley, 2012).

The final theme to emerge from the qualitative data was in relation to children's understanding about change and loss. The children highlighted the importance of learning that they are not the only ones experiencing significant change and loss and that other people share similar grief reactions. The analogy and imagery of the 'changing seasons' was also viewed as a helpful way of developing an understanding about the natural cycle of change and loss which is an important part of life. Companions reported that the children were more empathic towards each other as the sessions progressed and personal stories of loss were shared within the group. There was also evidence of the wider impact of the programme across the schools within this study, as staff became more aware of the significant impact that loss can have on children's health and wellbeing and learning.

Overall, children, parents/carers and Companions were very positive about the impact of the SFG programme on children's health and wellbeing and learning, and there was a general consensus that the programme should be accessed by all children and young people across the authority. The successful implementation of interventions such as the SFG programme requires collegiate support from senior management to enable Companions to have the time to plan and debrief in relation to each session, and continued access to support from SFG Trainers.

A limiting factor of this study is the relatively small sample size comprising of children, parents/carers, teachers and Companions from six primary schools identified as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Although the sampling method was chosen to gather data relating to the aims of the study, it is context-specific. Therefore, caution must be taken when interpreting the results and making generalisations about the impact of the SFG programme on children and young people's health and wellbeing and learning.

## 5. Conclusion

The study showed that through the experience of participating in the SFG programme, the aims of improving children's health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to emotional and social wellbeing, were achieved. Improvements in aspects of the children's learning were also evidenced through the development of skills and strategies which helped them to express their thoughts and feelings more confidently and adapt to change and loss experiences. Children also developed an understanding that change and loss is part of life and that people can experience this in different ways. Finally, by the end of the eight-week programme, children were able to identify a supportive network of peers and adults. Central to the learning process was the role of the Companions who promoted the children's competency and agency, and recognised them as being active in developing their own wellbeing.

The Companions attributed their increased confidence in facilitating the programme to the quality of the initial training delivered by the Educational Psychologists in their role as SFG Trainers, which helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of how grief experiences can impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing and learning. They also highlighted the importance of the ongoing support which was available throughout the programme from their own senior management team and the Educational Psychologists.

Research indicates that there is an increasing need to deepen our understanding about how children and young people experience the challenges which can arise from significant loss and grief, and to identify the most appropriate ways to support them and build their resilience and agency (Hill et al., 2007). Educational programmes such as SFG have been shown to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people and contribute to aspects of their learning as evidenced by the Health and Wellbeing curriculum outcomes. The SFG programme can provide opportunities for children and young people to share their thoughts and feelings in relation to grief, learn how to manage their feelings and recognise that others experience similar feelings, and develop new ways of thinking and responding to the challenges that loss, change and grief can bring.

## **6. Future research**

Within Inverclyde Council, the SFG programme has been shown to be sustainable as the principles of the programme have become embedded within the cultures of many of the schools. With an increase in the number of trained Accredited Companions from education and partner agencies, it is envisaged that there will be capacity to facilitate the programme across the local community context of Inverclyde Council. An area for further research could involve exploring the longer-term impact of the SFG programme on outcomes for children and young people's health and wellbeing and learning including the sustainability of the skills and strategies gained whilst participating in a SFG group.

The SFG programme has also been developed to include an Adult's programme which aims to strengthen the wellbeing of adults who have experienced significant loss. This programme has recently been co-facilitated by Educational Psychologists and Project Workers from Barnardo's Nurture Service and could be an area for future research.



## References

- Baumeister, R.F. and Leary, M.R. (1995) The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation, *Psychological Bulletin*, 117 (3) 497-529.
- Bentley, H., O'Hagan, O., Raff, A. and Bhatti, I. (2016) NSPCC: How safe are our children? Retrieved August, 2017 from: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources>
- Bradshaw, J. and Richardson, D. (2009) An index of child wellbeing in Europe, *Child Indicators Research*, (2) 3 319-351.
- Brooks, F. (2013) Chapter 7: Life stage: School Years. In: Professor Dame S.C. Davies (ed.), *Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2012: Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays*, London: DH.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2011) *Research Methods and Education* (7th eds.), Routledge Falmer: London.
- Cooper, D. C. and Schindler, P. S. (2001) *Business Research Methods* (7th ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denscombe, M. (2008) Communities of practice: a research paradigm for the mixed methods approach, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 2 (3) 270-283.
- Dornbusch, S.M., Erickson, K.G., Laird, J. and Wong, C.A. (2001) The relation of family and school attachment and adolescent deviance in diverse groups and communities, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 16 (4) 396-422.
- Dyregrov, A. (2004) Educational consequences of loss and trauma, *Educational and Child Psychology*, 21 (3) 77-84.
- Dyregrov, A. (1998) *Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Fattore, T., Mason, J. and Watson, E. (2007) Children's conceptualisation(s) of their wellbeing, *Social Indicators Research*, 80 5-29.
- Graham, A. (1996) *Seasons for Growth: Primary School Series*, The Mary MacKillop Foundation, North Sydney.
- Graham, A. (2004) Life is like the seasons: responding to change, loss and grief through a peer-based education program, *Childhood Education*, 80 317.
- Gratton, C. and Jones, I. (2004) *Research Methods for Sports Studies*, Routledge: London.
- Green, H., McGinnty, A., Meltzer, H., Ford, T. and Goodman, R. (2005) Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain. Retrieved December, 2015 from: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_health/summaryreport.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/summaryreport.pdf).
- Gutman, L.M. and Vorhaus, J. (2012) The impact of pupil behaviour and wellbeing on educational outcomes, Department of Education: London.
- Holland, J. (1993) Childhood bereavement in Humberside, *Educational Research* 35 (3) 289-297.
- Jones, E., Gutman, L. and Platt, L. (2013) *Family stressors and children's outcomes*, London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre.
- Learning and Teaching Scotland (2006) Focusing on inclusion and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004: A Paper for professional Reflection, Scottish Executive.
- Leech, N.L. and Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2009) A typology of mixed methods research designs, *Quantity and Quality*, 43 (2) 265-275.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- McMillan, D.W. and Chavis, D.M. (1986) Sense of community: A definition and theory, *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14 6-23.

- Maslow, A. (1962) *Towards a psychology of being*, Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.
- Millings, A., Buck, R., Montgomery, A., Spears, M. and Stallard, P. (2012) School connectedness, peer attachment and self-esteem as predictors of adolescent depression, *Journal of Adolescence*, 35 (4) 1061-1067.
- Mishler, E. G. (1986) *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Newell, S. and Moss, A. (2011) *Supporting children and young people through change, loss and grief: an evaluation of the Seasons for Growth program*, Southern Cross University, Australia.
- Percy-Smith, B. and Thomas, N. (2009) Conclusion: emerging themes and new directions. In: B. Percy-Smith and N. Thomas (eds.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London.
- Pidgeon, N. and Henwood, K. (1996) Grounded theory: practical implementation. In: J.T.E. Richardson (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and Social Sciences*, 493-498, Leicester: BPS Books.
- Rees, G., Bradshaw, J. and Goswami, H. (2010) *Developing an index of children's subjective wellbeing in England*, London: The Children's Society.
- Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P.S., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R.E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L.H. and Udry, J.R. (1997) Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278 (10) 823-832.
- Ribbens McCarthy, J. and Jessop, J. (2005) *Young People, Bereavement and Loss: Disruptive transitions?* London: National Children's Bureau.
- Riley, A. (2012) Exploring the effects of the 'Seasons for Growth' intervention for pupils experiencing change and loss, *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29 (3) 38-53.
- Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research* (2nd eds.), Oxford: Blackwell.

Saldana, J. (2009) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, London: Sage.

Sawyer, M., Arney, F., Baghurst, P., Clark, J., Graetz, B., Kosky, R., Nurcombe, B., Patton, B., Prior, G., Raphael, B., Whaites, L. and Zubrick, S.R. (2000) *The Mental Health of Young People in Australia*, Ausinfo, Canberra.

Scottish Government (2016) *Mental health in Scotland: A 10 year vision*, Edinburgh

Scottish Government (2014) Getting it right for every child. Retrieved December, 2015 from: [http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/getting\\_itright](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/getting_itright)

Scottish Government (2009) *Curriculum for excellence: health and wellbeing: experiences and outcomes*, Glasgow Learning and Teaching Scotland.

Suhrcke, M. and Pan Nieves, C.D. (2011) The impact of health and health behaviours on educational outcomes in high-income countries: a review of the evidence, World Health Organisation.

Tashakori, A. and Teddlie, T. (2003) *Handbook of Mixed Methods Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Teddlie, T. and Tashakori, A. (2009) *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Theis, J. (2009) Children as active citizens: An agenda for children's civil rights and civic engagement. In: B. Percy-Smith and N. Thomas (eds.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London.

Young Minds (2014) Attachment, behaviour and learning. Retrieved August, 2016 from: [http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training\\_services/young\\_minds\\_in\\_schools/wellbeing/attachment](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/young_minds_in_schools/wellbeing/attachment)

Weare, K. (2015) *What works in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and responding to mental health problems in schools?* National Children's Bureau, London.

Winston's Wish (2012) Retrieved June, 2017 from: <http://www.winstonswish.org.uk>

World Health Organisation (2006) Retrieved March, 2016 from:

<http://www.who.int/whr/2006/>

Worden, W. (1996) Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies, Guildford Press, New York.

## Appendix 1

### Seasons for Growth Evaluation

#### Parent/Carer Information



Seasons for Growth is a grief and loss education programme that aims to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people who are dealing with major life changes including death, separation, divorce and other significant losses. Through group work, the 8 week programme helps children to explore the impact of change and loss on everyday life and to learn ways to respond to these changes.

We would like to invite you and your child to take part in a school-based evaluation which involves completing a short questionnaire before the group programme begins and shortly after it has ended. The aim of the evaluation is to gather comments from children, young people, parents, carers, companions and teachers to find out if participating in Seasons for Growth can help improve children's health and wellbeing.

Attached are consent forms for you and your child to complete and return to the school office. The information gathered for this evaluation will be kept confidential and may be included in the final evaluation report but will not reveal the identity of your child.

Thank you

*K. McPherson*

*A. Montgomery*

Karen McPherson

Andrea Montgomery

Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service

Seasons for Growth National Trainers

## Appendix 2

### Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service

#### Parental/Carer Consent form Data Protection Act 1998



<b>Young person's name:</b>	<b>Date of birth:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Telephone number(s):</b>
<b>Post Code:</b>	
<b>School:</b>	

*Please tick*

I confirm that I have read and understand the attached information sheet relating to my child taking part in the evaluation of the Seasons for Growth programme and filling in a short questionnaire at the beginning and end of the programme.	
I understand that the information collected for this evaluation will be kept confidential and may be included in the final evaluation report but will not reveal the identity of my child.	
I understand that taking part in this evaluation is a choice and that my child can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	

I Consent

☐

I do not Consent

☐

<b>Signature of Parent/Carer:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## Appendix 3

### Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service

#### Young Person's Consent form Data Protection Act 1998



<b>Young person's name:</b>	<b>Date of birth:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Telephone number(s):</b>
<b>Post Code:</b>	
<b>School:</b>	

**I agree** to take part in the evaluation of the Seasons for Growth programme.

**I understand** that any information collected will kept confidential and anonymous.

<b>Young person:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
----------------------	--------------



## Appendix 4

### Seasons for Growth

























#### Health and Wellbeing Pupil Questionnaire (pre-intervention)



Name:

Date:

Please colour in the picture you think describes you just now:

		No	Maybe	Yes
1.	I can understand that change is part of life			
2.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens			
3.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry)			
4.	I can talk about how my feelings can make me behave			
5.	I can choose how to behave when I feel sad or angry			
6.	I can manage my feelings			
7.	I can talk to people who can help me when things are difficult			
8.	I can make good choices which will help me when things are difficult			

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 5

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Teacher Questionnaire

(pre-intervention)



Name of Pupil:

Date:

The questionnaire is based on a few of the health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes. Please complete the questionnaire for the pupil, indicating the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following:

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens (HWB 01a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry) (HWB 01a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	I can describe how my feelings can make me think (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	I can describe how my feelings can make me behave (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	I can manage my thoughts and feelings in a positive way (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	I can identify and talk to people who can help me in difficult times (HWB 03a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	I can understand that change and loss is part of life (HWB 07a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	I can make good choices which will help me in difficult times (HWB 07a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments or observations

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 6

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Parent/Carer Questionnaire (pre-intervention)



Name of Child:

Date:

Please complete the questionnaire for your child, indicating the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following:

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	My child can name some feelings they have when change happens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	My child can talk about their feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	My child can describe how their feelings can make them think	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	My child can describe how their feelings can make them behave	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	My child can manage their thoughts and feelings in a positive way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	My child can identify and talk to people who can help them in difficult times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	My child can understand that change and loss is part of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	My child can make good choices which will help them in difficult times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 7

### Seasons for Growth

























#### Health and Wellbeing Pupil Questionnaire (post-intervention)



Name:

Date:

Please colour in the picture you think describes you just now:

		No	Maybe	Yes
1.	I can understand that change is part of life			
2.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens			
3.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry)			
4.	I can talk about how my feelings can make me behave			
5.	I can choose how to behave when I feel sad or angry			
6.	I can manage my feelings			
7.	I can talk to people who can help me when things are difficult			
8.	I can make good choices which will help me when things are difficult			

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 8

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Teacher Questionnaire

(post-intervention)



Name of Pupil:

Date:

The questionnaire is based on a few of the health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes. Please complete the questionnaire for the pupil, indicating the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following:

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens (HWB 01a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry) (HWB 01a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	I can describe how my feelings can make me think (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	I can describe how my feelings can make me behave (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	I can manage my thoughts and feelings in a positive way (HWB 02a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	I can identify and talk to people who can help me in difficult times (HWB 03a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	I can understand that change and loss is part of life (HWB 07a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	I can make good choices which will help me in difficult times (HWB 07a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments or observations

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 9

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Parent/Carer Questionnaire (post-intervention)



Name of Child:

Date:

Please complete the questionnaire for your child, indicating the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following:

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	My child can name some feelings they have when change happens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	My child can talk about their feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	My child can describe how their feelings can make them think	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	My child can describe how their feelings can make them behave	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	My child can manage their thoughts and feelings in a positive way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	My child can identify and talk to people who can help them in difficult times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	My child can understand that change and loss is part of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	My child can make good choices which will help them in difficult times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

## Appendix 10



### Children and Young Person Focus Group

1. Has attending the Seasons for Growth group made a difference to you?
  - a. How do you know?
  - b. How do other people know?
  - c. How did it make a difference to you in the classroom, playground, at home?
2. What, if anything have you learned from attending the Seasons for Growth group?
3. Has attending the Seasons for Growth group helped with your learning in school? In what way?
4. Can you name some things you would do to help you manage your feelings?
5. Can you name someone you would go to for help?

## Appendix 11



### Companion Focus Group

1. What aspects of Seasons for Growth do you think children enjoyed most?
2. In what ways has attending a Seasons for Growth group made a difference to the children:
  - a. In the classroom?
  - b. Playground?
  - c. At home?
3. What do you think are the most significant aspects of learning for children who have attended the Seasons for Growth group?
4. What aspects of the Seasons for Growth programme are important in promoting children's wellbeing?
5. What factors influenced your confidence to effectively facilitate a Seasons for Growth group?



## Appendix 12



### Parent/Carer Focus Group

1. In what way do you think attending the Seasons for Growth group was helpful to your child?
2. What aspects of the Seasons for Growth programme were important in supporting your child?
3. Has your child's attendance at the Seasons for Growth group had any impact on things at home? In what way?
4. How has the Seasons for Growth programme helped your child's learning at home and in school?
5. What else would you have found helpful in supporting your child during the Seasons for Growth group?

## Appendix 13

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Pupil Questionnaire

(percentage change pre- and post-totals)



		(pre n = 37)			(post n = 37)			
		Pre- No %	Pre- Maybe %	Pre- Yes %		Post No %	Post Maybe %	Post Yes %
1.	I can understand that change is part of life	16.2	24.3	59.5		0	0	100
2.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens	16.2	27	56.8		0	13.5	86.5
3.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry)	24.3	27	48.7		13.5	18.9	67.6
4.	I can talk about how my feelings can make me behave	32.4	40.6	27		2.7	16.2	81.1
5.	I can choose how to behave when I feel sad or angry	18.9	48.7	32.4		8.1	24.3	67.6
6.	I can manage my feelings	21.6	43.2	35.2		8.1	29.7	62.2
7.	I can talk to people who can help me when things are difficult	18.9	29.7	51.4		2.7	13.5	83.8
8.	I can make good choices which will help me when things are difficult	5.4	51.4	43.2		0	16.2	83.8

## Appendix 14

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Teacher Questionnaire



(pre N = 39)							(post N = 39)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens (HWB 01a)	0	12.8	20.6	53.8	12.8	0	2.6	5.1	56.4	35.9
2.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry) (HWB 01a)	2.6	15.4	7.7	56.3	18.0	2.6	0	2.6	58.9	35.9
3.	I can describe how my feelings can make me think (HWB 02a)	2.6	30.8	25.6	33.3	7.7	2.6	5.1	10.3	48.7	33.3
4.	I can describe how my feelings can make me behave (HWB 02a)	5.1	15.4	28.2	38.5	12.8	2.6	2.6	12.8	53.8	28.2
5.	I can manage my thoughts and feelings in a positive way (HWB 02a)	7.7	28.2	20.6	40.9	2.6	0	15.4	23.1	46.1	15.4
6.	I can identify and talk to people who can help me in difficult times (HWB 03a)	5.1	15.4	10.3	51.2	18.0	2.6	0	10.3	48.7	38.4
7.	I can understand that change and loss is part of life (HWB 07a)	0	20.6	35.8	38.5	5.1	0	0	18.0	51.3	30.7
8.	I can make good choices which will help me in difficult times (HWB 07a)	10.3	20.6	38.5	25.5	5.1	2.6	7.7	25.6	48.7	15.4

## Appendix 15

### Seasons for Growth



### Health and Wellbeing Parent/Carer Questionnaire

(pre N = 24)

(post N = 15)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
		%	%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%	%
1.	I can name some feelings I have when change happens (HWB 01a)	4.2	0	8.3	75	12.5		0	0	0	40	60
2.	I can talk about my feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry) (HWB 01a)	4.2	20.8	16.7	45.8	12.5		0	0	13.3	40	46.7
3.	I can describe how my feelings can make me think (HWB 02a)	0	20.8	41.7	29.2	8.3		0	0	26.7	40	33.3
4.	I can describe how my feelings can make me behave (HWB 02a)	8.3	16.7	37.5	20.8	16.7		0	0	6.7	60	33.3
5.	I can manage my thoughts and feelings in a positive way (HWB 02a)	8.3	33.3	29.2	25	4.2		0	6.7	13.3	53.3	26.7
6.	I can identify and talk to people who can help me in difficult times (HWB 03a)	4.2	24.9	29.2	29.2	12.5		0	0	13.3	26.7	60
7.	I can understand that change and loss is part of life (HWB 07a)	0	20.8	33.3	29.2	16.7		0	0	0	40	60
8.	I can make good choices which will help me in difficult times (HWB 07a)	0	25	54.2	12.5	8.3		0	0	13.3	66.7	20

## Appendix 16

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Pupil Questionnaire



post-evaluation written comments (n = 37)

Evaluative comments recorded on post-its by the children after each session regarding their thoughts about the Seasons for Growth group

Theme: Structure of the programme

"I liked that we talked about seasons and we had a laugh"

"It was epic because I ate biscuits"

"Epicness. The hot chocolate was epic"

"I like the ice lollies"

Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning

"I love me and today"

"Today I felt happy"

"It was fun and positive, hilarious"

"I'm happy"

"We shared each other's pain"

"Loved it"

"I know how to deal with my feelings now"

"Good because we could share our feelings"

"Amazing"

"Fabulous"

"I chose a happy choice, I like pigs"

Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

"I like that we shared our stories about our lost ones"

"Today I felt comforted"

"Hearing about everybody"

"Interacting with everyone"

"Talking around the circle"

"I liked in the first day that the teachers are funny"

"I feel proud of everyone for sharing their stories"

"Was good to talk and open up"

"I feel people trust you more"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

"I found it positive and helpful"

"I found it enjoyable and helpful"

"Fun and cool"

"It was swag"

## Appendix 17

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Teacher Questionnaire



pre-evaluation written comments (n = 39)

Evaluative comments recorded on the Health and Wellbeing questionnaire by the teachers of the children attending Seasons for Growth groups. Comments have been grouped under themes.

Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning

"Has trouble controlling his anger and frustration and can often get upset with no real cause"

"Quiet in discussions so often doesn't share thoughts and opinions"

"Tends to let her emotions build up and doesn't know how to verbalise this"

"He's quite uncommunicative when asked to describe his feelings. Says 'I don't know' "

"Very quiet but able to voice her thoughts when asked"

"Child participates well during PATHS and is confident in sharing how he feels"

"Child shares how she feels confidently during PATHS"

"PATHS aids child's ability to talk about her feelings"

"Sometimes struggles to control his frustration and can lash out"

"No matter the topic or lesson, when we discuss our feelings she always refers back to feeling sad because of her loss. It's difficult to get her to express happy, warm feelings she might have"

"She is a very quiet, shy girl and has never mentioned that her parent has passed away"

"He has never mentioned the loss of his grandad"

"He struggles to control his behaviour / excitement but I believe he understands his thoughts and feelings and how these impact on him. However, he rarely discusses how he feels and seems to see it as a weakness of character"

"He is a gentle boy who very rarely displays any negative emotion"

"He comes from a safe, loving home and is a very gentle, even-tempered boy"

"He is ruled by emotion and change and often he will display or announce the feeling opposite to the emotion he is experiencing"

"He is a happy and enthusiastic child who engages in class discussion and individual work. He can regress to immature behaviour in certain situations like PE and drama"

"Seems quite immature regarding self-awareness"

"The pupil has been struggling lately"

Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

"During a discussion on 'friendship', children were asked to make up a quote. One child said, "friendship is like a flower - hard to keep alive, easy to die off...." I think this sums up her feelings at the moment"

"He has only recently started to talk to me about home and family"

"He will talk about his feelings with his friends and teacher but will also make up stories perhaps for attention"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

"Change is constant and difficulties arising all the time for the child"

"Lots of change in the child's life – angry and scared"

"Not sure how this pupil is going to react in the group – parental request to participate in the Seasons for Growth programme"



## Appendix 18

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Teacher Questionnaire



post-evaluation written comments (n = 18)

Evaluative comments recorded on the Health and Wellbeing questionnaire by the teachers of the children attending Seasons for Growth groups. Comments have been grouped under themes.

#### Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning

"Can discuss more about his feelings but still struggles with expressing how he feels and his reaction when something upsets or annoys him"

"She seems to 'know' herself very well and can articulate how she is feeling. She is also quite insightful but tends to be sometimes happy to stay below the radar. Has lots of potential in terms of academia"

"Can talk about his feelings, but he is more comfortable in a very small group or one to one basis. At times, he finds it very difficult to manage his anger when he feels frustrated"

"Since starting Seasons for Growth, she is a bit more positive, and isn't so upset about her parent as often as she was before"

"She has been positively glowing after the Seasons sessions. For the first time she has told me that her parent passed away"

"He has made progress and is better at expressing and managing emotions and feelings with others"

"Seems more accepting of the fact that she is in control of managing her feelings"

"Much more aware and focused on choices"

#### Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

"Struggles when his own teacher is not in the classroom. Quite often rejects support when offered"

"He is a very quiet child in class and can be a bit guarded when speaking to adults"

"More willing to talk about happier times and the importance of talking"

"Far more relaxed and willing to share and accept support"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

"He understands how he feels and can identify adults who can help him – hopefully this knowledge will help him to cope better"

"She has totally embraced this group and is more self-aware and accepting of change as natural"

"Although I see improvement and progress, I think additional support is necessary"

## Appendix 19

### Seasons for Growth

#### Health and Wellbeing Parent/Carer Questionnaire



pre-evaluation written comments (n = 24)

Evaluative comments recorded on the Health and Wellbeing questionnaire by the parents/carers of the children attending Seasons for Growth groups. Comments have been grouped under themes.

#### Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning

"My child has been going through a difficult time due to domestic abuse at home. I feel my child finds it hard to talk about this with myself"

"My child doesn't like to show they are upset and tries to hold it back. But I feel we have to encourage my child that it's ok to be upset. My child also has a lot of anger built up lately"

"It's difficult to have an insight into my child's thoughts and feelings"

"My child can sometimes talk, describe or manage their feelings but not on a regular or consistent basis. This can make my child angry, frustrated and misunderstood"

"My child has become very closed as a person since losing their Grandad"

#### Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

"My child's behaviour's changed often lashing out and feeling angry. My child gets emotional at bed time saying that someone else is going to die in the family and what will happen to them"

"It depends how my child is feeling. My child has problems sleeping sometimes since the passing of their grandparent"

#### Theme: Understanding about change and loss

"My child has struggled with understanding death – family passing away"

"My child is sometimes positive with their feelings but can also be mixed up which can also turn to anger. Sleep can be very disturbed which we feel is due to their other parent not being there and not understanding"

"My child's thoughts and feelings don't manifest in a positive way with regards to their other parent. There is usually sadness, upset and confusion followed by questions. I try to be positive with my child"

"My child doesn't fully understand that death is final"

## Seasons for Growth

### Health and Wellbeing Parent/Carer Questionnaire (post-totals)

post-evaluation written comments (n = 15)

Evaluative comments recorded on the Health and Wellbeing questionnaire by the parents/carers of the children attending Seasons for Growth groups. Comments have been grouped under themes.

#### Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning

"These classes have made some positive changes to my child and how they deal with things"

"My child has really enjoyed Seasons for Growth and it has helped my child emotionally and behaviour has improved"

"I see a big difference in my child at home"

"My child has enjoyed the group"

#### Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

"We are arguing less at home and my child is telling me about their feelings. My child is not as angry towards me I think"

"My child looks forward to the group each week and knows there are people to talk to for support and there are other children who feel the same"

"My child can talk about life before their parent died but in a happier way now"

"My child is talking to their brother more but still not opening up to me"

#### Theme: Understanding about change and loss

"My child is talking more about the other parent leaving – not so angry"

"My child is talking more about death as being part of nature and is more accepting"

## Thematic Data Analysis

### Children and Young People Focus Groups (N = 18, 3 Focus Groups)

Theme: **Structure of the programme**

Sub-themes:

- **Setting**
- **Group size**
- **Opportunities to talk / Confidentiality**
- **Programme content / Seasons metaphor**
- **Journal**
- **Role of the Companion / Organisation**
- **Training and implementation**
- **Programme information for parents/carers**
- **Engagement with programme activities**

Has attending the Seasons for Growth group made a difference to you?

**Yes” said by all 18 children**

Ways in which attending the Seasons for Growth group made a difference to the children

- **Confidentiality**

**“One of the rules was to keep information confidential. We all managed to do this”**

- **Training and implementation**

**“Trainers have done a good job in training our Companions”**

**“The trainers did a great job teaching the Companions to support us”**

- **Engagement with programme activities**

**“I’ve been adding to my journal at home”**

Theme: **Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning**

Sub-themes:

- **Language for feelings**
- **Choice of strategies**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Confidence**
- **Empathy**
- **Learning in school and at home**
- **Recognition and pupil voice**

Areas of development for children attending the Seasons for Growth group

- **Language for feelings**

**"Made me not angry about the people who have been talking about my parent"**

**"That it is ok to be angry"**

**"When my parent died I didn't want to talk to anyone about it, now I can express my feelings"**

**"We can talk to people about it now"**

**"If I am embarrassed about something I can say it now"**

**"I learned to be confident and tell people how I'm feeling"**

**"I can handle my emotions a lot better"**

**"SFG helped me control my feelings a bit better"**

**"My temper is not as bad as it was when people are cheeky to me"**

**"Made a difference to the way I react to things people say"**

**"Helped me take the right path"**

- **Choices of strategies (things you would do to help you manage your feelings)**

**"Might have got upset and cried a bit before. Now I handle it. I say to them I've already got a good family"**

**"I will use the kind things that was said about us in the group from the 'Coat Hanger' activity to look back on what we did here if I get upset" [at home]**

**"I can think about ways to handle things instead of getting angry"**

**"In my house, when angry I would have punched people. Now I am much more calm and able to talk to people"**

**"In my house and in school I would punch the wall or ground. Now because of Seasons for Growth I don't do this"**

**"I learned that I can rely on other people"**

**"Talk to someone I trust"/"Talk"**

"When I'm in class you never got your own time. Now because Seasons I ask, 'Can I have my own time' and I get this and it helps"

"Take deep breaths"

"Go and be by yourself and calm down"/"Have your own time"

"Go upstairs, relax and listen to music"

"I sit in a dark room – it helps a bit"

"I have different things I can do now when I feel angry"

"Maybe if someone is making you angry, walk away"

"When I was getting stressed outside everyone kept talking at once and I shouted very loud. I just had to let this out. I had a chest pain"

"To feel better you can go for a walk and get some fresh air to take your mind off it"

"Go for a walk which makes me feel better"

"Go out and play with your friends"/"Go out and play in the sunshine"

"Take part in athletics"/"Play sports"

"Go swimming with friends"

"Sometimes I will punch a pillow to get rid of my anger"

"You can write down how you feel, put it on a balloon and let it go. You could do this at the New Year to let old feelings go and start the New Year fresh"

"Write down your thoughts if they are bad and let them go"

"Writing your feelings down and letting them go is a release"

"Every time it is my parent's birthday I send lanterns up with wee messages"

"Squeeze my teddy bear"

"Listen to music"

"You can read a book. I like reading happy books"

"Watch TV, your favourite show"/"Watch something funny – it cheers me up"

"Sometimes I watch TV shows and hug a pillow"

"Have a family game night like Monopoly or Frustration"

- Self-esteem

"Made me feel happy"/"I'm feeling happier"

"I'm happier in my home now because of Seasons for Growth. I'm able to cope with change because of Seasons"

"Before Seasons for Growth I would feel depressed and wanted to cry. I feel much happier now"

"The teacher will say that I look a lot happier now. Before SFG I would feel sad and look sad"

"Makes me feel stronger and better"

"Positive things"

"I feel better now, I'm not as hurt"

"Seasons for Growth helped me sleep much better. Before Seasons for Growth I could be up all night worried"



"I had nightmares before attending Seasons for Growth. I don't anymore"

"I used to get nightmares because my granda died. Now I get good dreams"

"I used to be so scared of stuff but now I'm not"

"I'm going to be a big cousin soon. This would have worried me before but I'm not worried about this change now"

"How to remember – they are still watching over you"

"I was personally inspired and said to someone else to join a Seasons group"

- Confidence

"More confident" / "I'm feeling more confident" / "Yes, it makes you more confident" /

"I'm more confident in class"

"I'm more resilient now because of Seasons for Growth"

"If it wasn't for Seasons, I wouldn't be sitting here feeling confident with my identity now"

- Empathy

"I can help someone with a similar story even if it isn't similar I can still help them with ways to solve it"

"I can understand how other people feel if they have lost someone"

- Learning in school and at home

"I am focused on my work and getting my work done" / "Helps me focus more"

"I listen a bit better" / "I am better at listening now" / "I'm better at listening now"

"I'm answering out a bit more in class"

"I can solve problems"

"That I am working faster" / "I am able to get on with my work faster because worries are no longer inside me and I'm happier"

"The teacher has said that I am more organised and always ready to learn now"

"I think of words for my family that I have used in my writing. It has helped make my writing better"

"Maybe that we've been a bit more outgoing with each other"

"I play games more" [in the playground]

"I can do homework a lot faster because my worries are not there and I am listening more in class"

"Now I will do my homework to let my nanna see. Even though my nanna is dead, she is still in my heart"

"When I get stressed I can normally handle it now"

"I am more able to do what I want to do"

"I know how to deal with loss now"

- People children would go to for help

"Each other - we trust each other in the group"/"Other members of the group"

"During school I would talk to our Companions"/"Our Companions"/"Companions – we got to know them well"

"Before the group I couldn't have spoken to teachers about feelings. Now all members of the group will speak about their feelings. Taking part in the group makes you feel happier and you can talk about your feelings"

"Family, friends, best friend, someone in the group"

"Mum/dad, teacher"/"Go to my aunt"/"I've got my nan and aunties. My auntie is trustworthy and wouldn't tell a soul"/"Granda, uncle, aunt"/"Mum and gran"

Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

Sub-themes:

- Friendships with peers
- Relationships with adults
- Feeling valued
- Sharing stories
- Feeling safe
- Trust
- Motivated to attend the group
- Supported

The difference that attending the Seasons for Growth group made to the children

- Friendships with peers

"Being in a group was good and making new friends"

"The group is like family – they won't say bad stuff about you"

"Now we can talk to each other"

- Relationships with adults

"It's good to talk to a teacher about it. If you're dead shy it's good to get it out"

"It helped me talk about personal feelings to my parents"

- Feeling valued

They [Companions] seem interested"

"I feel like people listened to me in the group"

- Sharing stories

"We've all been doing really well in sharing"

- Feeling safe

"My best friend, when I was younger I would talk to her a lot. She sees a big difference in how I handle things, so now we don't need to talk as much about what was worrying me. I am still sad but not as fussed about it"

- Trust

"As a group we are happy, we trust each other"/"We trust each other enough to share our private stories"/"We all trust each other in the group. Our motto was 'everything that is said in the group, stays here'"

"Before Seasons for Growth I would only share my thoughts with someone who I trusted. I now trust everyone in my group"

- Supported

"When I'm playing football or basketball, a lot of people help me – they stick up for me and say just back off"

"I showed my journal to my mum, she said it was a really good idea to help us out"

"At home I can talk and say what and why things are bothering me"

"I've been able to tell my story to loads of different people"

"If you keep it to yourself, you can get a sore tummy. This is what I had and went to the doctor. Seasons for Growth helped me to not build anything up inside anymore. I told my mum about my feelings and now feel better. I no longer have a sore tummy"

"I got to tell people I was near to death as a boy and I never shared that before"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

Sub-themes:

- Understanding about change and loss
- How others are affected by change and loss
- Adult's understanding of the impact of change and loss on children
- How Seasons of Growth can support children

The importance of understanding about change and loss through Seasons for Growth

- Understanding about change and loss

"That change and loss is just a part of life" / "Change happens" / "Nothing stays the same"

"Change isn't always a bad thing"

"Sometimes you think it is you who has made changes and bad things happen but it's really not"

"It is ok to feel angry or sad"

"Everything inside, you can finally let it go"

"You can feel sad and worried if it's all inside. The worry goes away when you talk about it to someone you trust"

- How others are affected by change and loss

"Hurt and talking – others have been through the same pain"

"I can see that I'm not the only person who has lost someone and that other people have had changes in their family" / "I used to think it was just me and my little sister that were worried and were sad"

"We shared the same feelings in the group like worried, depressed, confused, sad, scared, happy"

"Not all stories are the same, some are similar, some different" / "Learned everyone else has a different story"

- Children's views about the Seasons for Growth programme

"Seasons for Growth can help you with your confidence" / "Seasons for Growth can help to build your confidence"

"It can help you with your feelings" / "It can help you deal with your thoughts and emotions"

"It helps you get over what you're scared off and worried about"

"It helps you feel a lot less stressed and manage your feelings much better"

"It helps not only with the passing of someone you love but in remembering them as well"

**"It also helped because Companions have their own stories which they share"**

**"Seasons for Growth can help you with your past"**

**"Seasons for Growth is fun, although some parts are hard"**

**"Seasons for Growth is amazing"**

**"It is brilliant"**

**"I would rate Seasons for Growth 20 out of 10"**

**"I would definitely tell someone else to join a Seasons for Growth group"**

## Thematic Data Analysis

### Companion Focus Groups (N = 6, 3 Focus Groups)

Theme: **Structure of the programme**

Sub-themes:

- **Setting**
- **Group size**
- **Opportunities to talk / Confidentiality**
- **Programme content / Seasons metaphor**
- **Journal**
- **Role of the Companion / Organisation**
- **Training and implementation**
- **Programme information for parents/carers**
- **Engagement with programme activities**

Aspects of Seasons for Growth the children enjoyed most?

- **Setting**

**"Used the nurture room which was a warm environment and had cuddle cushions"**

**"Informal setting and relaxed setting helped"**

- **Group size**

**"Being in a small group of 6 pupils" / "Smaller group (8 pupils from P5-7) gave them the opportunity to talk about something they found difficult in a safe environment" / "Being part of a group with peers"**

**"Small group enabled them to share their feelings and ideas without feeling they were being judged: that fits with nurture and Health and Wellbeing"**

**"Because we knew the children we could strategically place them in the group to ensure they had someone to talk to and we could meet their needs (e.g. helping them to write in their journals, listen to others)"**

- Opportunities to talk / Confidentiality

"Children liked the opportunities to talk and be heard, knowing it is confidential – a lot of children don't want to talk"

"Some children got a chance to speak about their feelings which they felt they couldn't do at home"

- Programme content / Seasons metaphor

"Personalised programme"

- Journal

"Having their own journal was valued by all children"

- Role of the Companion / Organisation

"Emphasising that Companions are not in the role of teachers made it more informal within the group – not being a classroom environment helped"

"Companions have to be organised and prepared to do their best for the children, choosing the activities which suit the needs of the children"

"Companions need to use their skills to bring the conversation back at times"

"Preparation is key – may tweak some activities next time"/"Knowing the material and having resources ready"/"Being organised is really important and being able to adjust activities relating to the group"/"Planning and being organised" /"I put the session plan up on powerpoint so the children and Companions can see what we will be doing each session"

"Being motivated to organise and facilitate a group and recognising the importance of the programme – we enjoyed doing the activities with the children"/"High motivation of the Companions"

"Meeting after school works best for the Companions and children as they are not missing anything in class"

"Group met during the day before lunch and helped prepare the room"

"Next time we would extend the group time during winter so the children can tell their story and complete their journal which was important to them"

"Time goes so quickly during the sessions. "I would possibly do 3 sessions for each season. Initial check-in, content then check-out"/"Often the group would go over the hour"/"We would consider longer for the groups to allow for a settling in time"

"Knowing that Seasons for Growth has been evaluated and is an effective programme"

"Being able to evaluate how the session went and recognising what I need to change for next time" /"Time to debrief and plan each session was built in and an important aspect of the success of the group" /"Thinking and reflecting on what is going well and what



needs to change" / "Being able to evaluate and debrief after each session" / "Planning each session together"

- Confidentiality

"Confidentiality – what happens in the room stays in the room – the children trusted each other" / "The children stuck to the confidentiality agreement"

"The guidelines and confidentiality helped the children relax into the sessions"

- Training and implementation

"Training was excellent" / "Training was excellent and really useful"

"How to implement the programme was discussed at the training so we had a plan"

"Support from the other Companion and Trainers" / "Having a co-Companion is essential"

"The Head teacher was very supportive" / "Support from the Head Teacher and the acknowledgment of its importance" / "Having the support of the Depute Head Teacher made a significant difference for organising each session and ensuring the children arrived at the group on time"

"Class teachers have been very supportive in returning the questionnaires as they knew it was important"

- Programme information for parents/carers

"Although the Depute Head Teacher checked with parents to make sure they understood the purpose of the group, someone declined as they thought it was a gardening group and their child had no interest in flowers"

- Engagement with programme activities

"Activities such as body and naming feelings, balloons – "incredible"

"The balloon was a good activity for the children to share their stories. One pupil made a positive change in her behaviour by going in for another pupil every morning" / "Others wrote on the balloon "I like being here"

"Making the bunting and putting their ideas on it was a favourite activity"

"Enjoyed the music and would use it earlier in the sessions next time even in the background – they even managed to learn some of the words to the songs" / "They enjoyed bringing their own music to the group but too old for Fischy music"

"The story of Badger's Parting Gifts was poignant and the story sack" / "Particularly enjoyed Badger's Parting Gifts"

"They engaged well with the activities" / "Change of group dynamics through activities" / "Getting to make their choice of biscuits for snack"

Theme: **Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning**

Sub-themes:

- **Language for feelings**
- **Choice of strategies**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Confidence**
- **Empathy**
- **Learning in school and at home**
- **Recognition and pupil voice**

Areas of development for children attending the Seasons for Growth group

- **Language for feelings**

**"Children using words such as 'heartbroken' which was a big thing"**

**"One child is responding to discussion using the language for feelings which he learned in the group"**

**"Vocabulary developed and they could say what is a negative feeling"**

**"Emotional vocabulary developed – feelings connected to behaviour, finding out they have different choices"**

**"Knowing that there are people to talk to when they are in 'Winter' – family, friends, Companions, adults in school"**

**"Sharing how they feel"**

- **Choice of strategies (things they would do to help manage their feelings)**

**"One child would be angry or upset in the past and is now using a different strategy to make them feel better. When asked what he needed by a senior member of staff, the child replied: "I want to cuddle my teddy". The child would not have shared this before attending the Seasons group"**

**"They can verbalise the different choices now in the playground"**

**"Children came up with strategies for different situations and use them now in the playground"**

**"Learning to manage their emotions and putting into action alternative choices for their actions. Language for learning"**

**"One pupil is able to cope with some situations now"**

**"Choices over behaviour and being able to talk about alternative ways to manage the situation or their feelings" / "Lunchtimes can be challenging for one child but now calm enough to talk and recognise they can do something different"**

**"Some children need reminders to use their Seasons strategies"**

"Listening to each other's views and making helpful suggestions about alternative behaviours"

"Recognising what they have control over in their lives like their behaviour"

"Realising there are strategies like talking" / "Children can all identify people they can talk to: grandparents, parents, teddy bear, friends out with the group, Companions, support staff and their dog"

"Recognising that they can talk to people or listen to music when they are not feeling so good"

"The children had to put themselves in role play situations and think: "What am I going to do here?" They had to justify their choices but had now had the confidence to suggest solutions without worrying about getting it wrong"

- Self-esteem

"For one pupil, their self-esteem is growing" / "Some children had low self-esteem at the start of the group: "I don't have any patience" but as they experienced the seasons, they became more confident"

"Positive changes for most children"

"Positive comments from parents: "He is a different boy now" / "One parent mentioned she had seen a huge difference"

"Children are more resilient and able to adapt to their experiences of loss and change" /

"Children are more resilient now and will be able to manage when change happens again"

- Confidence

"Confidence developed throughout the sessions" / "Teachers noticing and commenting on the impact of the group on children's confidence" / "More confident in their general outlook and one pupil offered to help at an after school club for young children. This is pleasing for staff"

"More confident in sharing feelings and can manage their feelings better now"

"The impact of Seasons for Growth on the children's learning, health and wellbeing and confidence has been significant – they can speak out more and offer their ideas - and the trust they have built up with each other and the Companions has been very noticeable"

- Empathy

"Many children developed a greater sense of empathy" / "Children were empathic towards each other" / "Children were showing empathy towards each other and made connections to each other"

"Showing they care and understand each other and their loss"

Aspects of the Seasons for Growth programme which are important in promoting children's health and wellbeing and learning

- Learning in school and at home

"Being able to talk about things within the group helps them concentrate more on classwork"

"More focused in class"

"Learning from each other and listening to each other"

"One pupil moved up a group in his classwork and has made progress since attending Seasons for Growth"

"One child had made significant progress in class and the playground but then experienced another change and loss and this has made things difficult for them again. We say: "You may be in Winter right now...." and this helps"

"Playground assistants have noticed a difference in the playground for one pupil in particular – rather than becoming angry and upset, the pupil is more settled and uses alternative strategies"

"Interactions out with the group and more positive"

"Less anger and more able to cope in the playground when situations arise"

"Children's health and wellbeing was promoted by attending the Seasons for Growth group" / "All aspects of health and wellbeing are promoted through Seasons: cognitive problem-solving and thinking of alternative strategies; emotional language for feelings; social sense of belonging, friendships and connections; physical dancing to Fischy music"

Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

Sub-themes:

- Friendships with peers
- Relationships with adults
- Feeling valued
- Sharing stories
- Feeling safe
- Trust
- Motivated to attend the group
- Supported

The difference that attending the Seasons for Growth group made to the children:  
Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

- Friendships with peers

"It's the relationships that were important"/ "Children took time to gel and get used to the idea of talking about their feelings and personal things but by week 2, friendships were made"/ "Friendships became stronger"

"The children were thoughtful and made affirmations to the whole group: "I want to thank everybody for being helpful and listening to me"

"In the classroom, two pupils have become friends again since attending Seasons for Growth – "We've been talking to each other"/ "Two of the children have been able to build a better relationship"/ "The children interacted with each other out with the group"

"Children enjoyed the closeness of the group, being together: "This is a place where it is just us". This allowed them to be themselves. We took away the teacher/pupil thing"

"Respect was on the charter and it was the top thing for the children – they were all very respectful of each other"

- Relationships with adults

"Companion experienced a bereavement...:"When I returned to school, the child walked up to me with open arms and hugged me, no words were said, no words were necessary – it meant a great deal to me and showed the power of the connection"

"Children now expressing that they would talk to their Companions if they were not having a good day"/ "All children could identify someone they would talk to including the Companions"

- Feeling valued

"Children made to feel valued and were asking about Seasons when the group wasn't on

"Is Seasons on today?"

"Enjoyed lots of aspects of the group – being on equal terms – right away it changes the relationship"

"Being positive and knowing that they will not be judged enabled the children to share their life experiences"/"Non-judgmental towards each other"

- Sharing stories

"Children were keen to tell their story in the first week: "So when do we get to tell our stories?"/"Children were keen to tell their story to the group"

"Some children spoke about a loss which was different from what their parents thought they would talk about"

"One pupil chose not to tell their story but listened to others"

"Hearing from each other and encouraging each other via sharing their stories. When the Companions shared their stories the children learned that it's ok to say their story"

"At the start, 2 children did not want to talk but then settled and became more confident and shared their story of loss"

"Being able to share their stories about being caught in the middle of conflicting parents"

"Showing respect when they tell their story and being given the emotional space to tell their story"

- Trust

"Trust is deeper in a Seasons for Growth group compared to other groups because of the relationships formed with other people. More empathy builds between the peer group"

"The look in their eyes in the playground which says 'I know I can trust you'. The group has been really good for forming relationships"

- Motivated to attend the group

"All the children wanted to come to the group each week"

"Children enjoyed attending every week"/"They didn't want to go home at the end of the group: "Is that the time already?"

"Teachers comment that the children enjoyed going to the group"

"Children have been asking if they can go Seasons again because it "feels good"

- Supported

"They were very supportive towards each other"/"Generally they are more supportive of each other – it's good to see how well they support each other"/"Peer support"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

Sub-themes:

- Understanding about change and loss
- How others are affected by change and loss
- Adult's understanding of the impact of change and loss on children
- How Seasons of Growth can support children

The importance of understanding about change and loss through Seasons for Growth

- Understanding about change and loss

"Knowing that nothing stays the same"

"That loss is not stagnant and you can get through it"

"Understanding they are not to blame and change happens as a natural part of life"

- How others are affected by change and loss

"Being part of a group where others have similar experiences of loss – aligned with each other" / "They had the same reasons for being there"

"It was really good for them to know it's not just me it has happened to" / "Realising they are not the only ones experiencing loss"

- Adult's understanding of the impact of change and loss on children

"Teachers became more empathic towards the children as they understood that they had experienced some significant loss"

"Class teachers saw the benefit and realised that the children want to attend the group"

"Through the group, Companions became aware of a lot of issues that children experience which the school has no knowledge of"

Factors that influenced Companion's confidence to facilitate a Seasons for Growth group

- How Seasons of Growth can support children

"Knowing the children is helpful because you have some insight into their strengths and needs" / "Knowing the children"

"Own teaching and experience of being a parent helped"

"Own understanding of loss and grief"

**“There are a number of children who would like to attend the group and ask: “When can I come to Seasons?” This reflects the demographics of our local context and the significant need for a programme like Seasons for Growth”**

**“I feel that it is definitely time well spent”**



## Thematic Data Analysis

### Parent/Carer Focus Groups (N = 7, 1 Focus Group)

Theme: **Structure of the programme**

Sub-themes:

- **Setting**
- **Group size**
- **Opportunities to talk / Confidentiality**
- **Programme content / Seasons metaphor**
- **Journal**
- **Role of the Companion / Organisation**
- **Training and implementation**
- **Programme information for parents/carers**
- **Engagement with programme activities**

Aspects of Seasons for Growth the children enjoyed most

- **Group size**

**"The small group helped them to trust each other"**

- **Opportunities to talk / Confidentiality**

**"Having a chance to talk about their feelings"**

- **Journal**

**"Journal was important for my child" / "I was impressed with the journal"**

- **Role of the Companion / Organisation**

**"Meeting every week with the same adults was good for the children" / "Meeting every week with the same people and watching the seasons display change"**

- Programme information for parents/carers

"More information about Seasons"/"Knowing what each week was focusing on so we could talk about it at home"

"I appreciated attending the Celebration and meeting the Companions to talk about the group because my child did not want to share what happened in the group"

- Engagement with programme activities

"They enjoyed the activities like the bunting"

"Talking about how to make a memory box and that memories are helpful when you feel sad"

**Theme: Impact on Health and Wellbeing and Learning**

**Sub-themes:**

- **Language for feelings**
- **Choice of strategies**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Confidence**
- **Empathy**
- **Learning in school and at home**
- **Recognition and pupil voice**

**Areas of development for children attending the Seasons for Growth group: Impact within the home**

- **Language for feelings**

**"My child is talking about their feelings more and saying that it's ok to be sad and happy"**

- **Choice of strategies (things they would do to help manage their feelings)**

**"My child opened up more at home"**

**"My child is talking more instead of going to her room and crying"**

**"Speaking more at home about feelings"**

**"Thinks more about choices to make and behaving in a different way in different situations"**

- **Self-esteem**

**"I feel my child is able to deal with change now and all the loss that happened – we just say change happens"**

**"More calm at home and definitely a lot happier"**

**"Talks about happy thoughts, sad thoughts"**

**"Not as angry"**

- **Learning in school and at home**

**"More focused at home"**

**"Colouring pictures has improved because she is able to concentrate better"**

**"Not worrying as much now"**

**"Concentrating more" / "She says she can concentrate better now"**

**"Reading and doing homework now"**

**"Will try to do homework now" / "He is making more effort with homework"**

Theme: Importance of Relationships and Connectedness

Sub-themes:

- Friendships with peers
- Relationships with adults
- Feeling valued
- Sharing stories
- Feeling safe
- Trust
- Motivated to attend the group
- Supported

The difference that attending the Seasons for Growth group made to the children

- Friendships with peers

"She talked about new friendships in the group"

- Relationships with adults

"Helped my daughter in some ways because she talks to me and has a better understanding that her feelings can affect others"

"More time with family and less time in their room"

"Getting on better with family members since attending the group"

- Motivated to attend the group

"Wants the group to continue because they enjoyed it so much"

"My child is much happier and more settled since attending the group"

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

Sub-themes:

- Understanding about change and loss
- How others are affected by change and loss
- Adult's understanding of the impact of change and loss on children
- How Seasons of Growth can support children

The importance of understanding about change and loss through Seasons for Growth

- Understanding about change and loss

"Helped quite a lot – he is asking a lot of questions about a family member's illness to try to understand what is happening"

"He is talking about his feelings and how change has affected him – more aware that change happens and is part of life"

"Learning that change happens to everyone's family"

- Adult's understanding of the impact of change and loss on children

"I would like to attend an adult version of Seasons to be able to help my older child"

- How Seasons of Growth can support children

"Attended the adult Seasons for Growth group and thought it was brilliant, really got a lot out of it and would recommend it to everyone"

"I hope my other child will choose to go to the group"