


Exploring the impact of the **Seasons for Growth** programme on children and young people's health and wellbeing and learning

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.



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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.

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 attainment and achievement. Future research could explore the longer-term impact of the SFG programme on health and wellbeing and learning.

