

The Mosaic Project – Multi-Cultural Family Base

Introduction

This practice story describes the work and learning from the Mosaic Project, a therapeutic group work service for young people aged 12–17 from diverse or racialised communities in Edinburgh.

This is delivered in partnership between Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB) and The Junction – Young People’s Health & Wellbeing.

The project supports young people experiencing stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. It was developed in response to feedback from young people who felt mainstream services did not meet their cultural needs.

“Young people told us they didn’t feel understood. Mosaic was created to change that – to offer a space where they could be themselves, feel safe, and be supported.”

MCFB team member

The challenge

Mental health care in the UK has historically been noted to not meet the needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

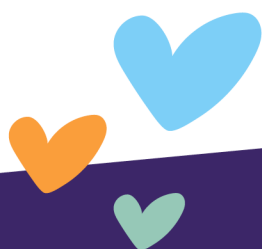
Young people from racialised communities often report feeling misunderstood, needing to over-explain their experiences, or feeling unable to speak openly about racism in majority-white settings. This can reinforce feelings of hopelessness and mistrust in services.

The Mosaic Project had strong relationships with diverse communities but lacked specialist youth mental health expertise. To ensure cultural safety and effective youth support, a partnership was formed with The Junction, combining trusted community engagement with youth mental health knowledge.

What they did

When a young person is identified for support, staff in this partnership work closely with the family to build trust and understand their cultural context.

Language and terminology are adapted to align with each family’s understanding of mental health, which is often shaped by faith, culture, and lived experience.



Families' understanding of good mental health may also be through the lens of social and spiritual wellbeing, and this will impact the terminology they use. In some families 'mental health' is a term used when an individual is very unwell, and who may need inpatient treatment.

For these families, discussing self-harm and suicidal ideation can be especially frightening. In circumstances like these, the team will describe the specific issues, often highlighting sources of stress rather than explicitly using the word 'suicide' directly when speaking with people as practice has shown that to do so may result in disengagement.

Barriers to engagement were also considered by the project such as:

- ♥ **Travel** - Despite free bus travel, many young people feel unsafe travelling alone due to past experiences of racism. To overcome this staff accompany them via public transport, on foot, or in personal vehicles when possible
- ♥ **Engagement** - Activities and discussions are co-created with young people, allowing space to explore identity, racism, and cultural pride. Adjustments are made for religious observances, such as providing space and time for prayer and Iftar during Ramadan

What they have learned

On reflecting on this work, The Mosaic Project has highlighted the principles of Time, Space, Compassion outlined below as being key:

Accessible

Mosaic was designed to be accessible to young people from all backgrounds. Trust-building with families, culturally sensitive activities, and supported travel are key. The venue at The Junction is physically accessible and youth-friendly. Adjustments during religious periods ensure inclusivity without compromising participation.

Relationship

Support is not time-limited. Young people can attend as long as needed, with age being the only restriction. Staff understand that trust takes time, especially for those with negative past experiences. Some participants attend for over a year before feeling safe enough to open up.

Connections

Peer connections are often the first experience of feeling truly understood. Mosaic also facilitates connections with other services. Many participants have gone on to access counselling or support from The Junction independently—something they previously felt unable to do.

The impact



From evaluation exercises young people report increased confidence, self-advocacy, and improved mental health. Families have noted they feel more equipped to support their children and understand their needs. From feedback gathered across staff at both agencies it was highlighted that valuable insights into culturally responsive youth mental health support have been gained.

“I didn’t think I could talk to anyone about how I felt. Mosaic helped me realise I could.”

Young person supported by Mosaic

Reflections from members of the Youth Advisory Group on Fife’s practice

What they liked:

Members shared that the case study showed the importance of creating a safe space for young people.

What they found interesting:

Members discussed the language on mental health in different communities and the importance of staff taking time and making the effort to understand there might be different right ways of doing things.

More information

More information on the Mosaic Project [can be found here](#).

