



Amies London Project Report

September 2023 - July 2024

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Amies London is a multi-arts programme of sessions for female survivors of human trafficking. The Amies London group meet weekly to make friends, learn new skills and get creative together. They sing, dance, perform, share stories and laugh a lot. The drama-based workshops help to empower the women to rediscover their confidence and aspirations, leading to engagement in education, training and employment. Movement and mindfulness allow participants the opportunity to reconnect with their bodies, to feel embedded in the here-and-now and to improve their sense of belonging.

In the creative sessions, facilitators utilise a wide range of drama and music-based methods, including physical and vocal exercises, games, ball games, storytelling, song-writing, group singing, chorus work, role-play and physical theatre. They also complete visual arts activities.

The participants face many struggles: housing insecurity, long waits for documentation, financial insecurity, loneliness, poor mental and physical health, difficulty sleeping, PTSD and other trauma-related disorders and conditions. It is observed that the greatest need is the increased ability of the participants to see themselves in a different way, to form connections with others and to be noticed by others in a positive way. Whilst there is a lot of development of expressive storytelling and physical theatre skills during the sessions, many of the skills are developed before they even enter the space: in the communal sharing of food, in the laughter during warm up games, in the cheers of support when the participants physically present themselves to the group in the middle of the circle through posing and dancing, and in the visible changes in confidence as participants announce their name to the group.

Overview

The following report examines the impact of the project on this year's participants, using a mixture of self reported data from the participants, session reports from the Project Director, as well as interviews and observations from the sessions, using the Pan project objectives to measure the success of the project which are:

- Improved confidence
- Improved communication/expression skills
- Increased engagement in creative activities

A baseline assessment is taken of each individual participant early in the project, and then is followed with regular intervals across the project. Participants are regularly invited to participate in group feedback and evaluation activities such as shared reflections and games, as well as being invited for 1-1 interviews to share their experiences of the project.

Key Words

Throughout the project, through interviews and reflective discussions with the project participants, the following key words and themes have emerged as the most prevalent, and give a snapshot towards the impact of the projects on the participants:



Amies London 2023-24

Attendance

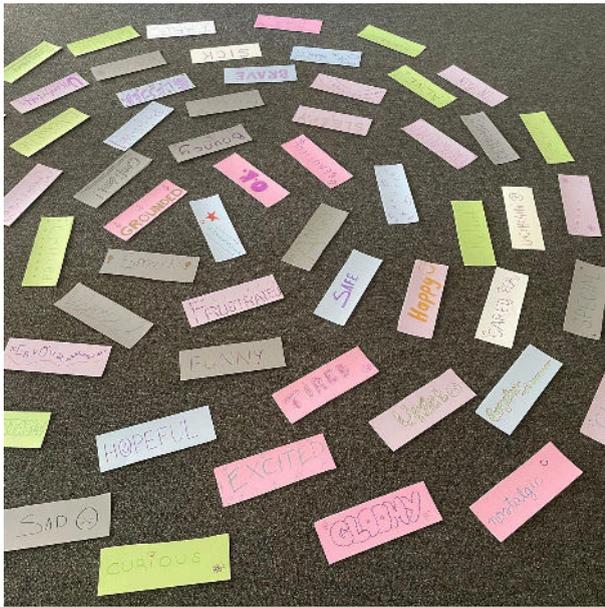
From September 2023 - July 2024 there have been **34 Amies London sessions** across London, amounting to **68 hours of session time and 826 participant hours**. Of **23 total participants**, there were 19 active participants. All participants identify as women, and are referred to the projects by professional services supporting them as survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery.

	Amies London 2023-24
Black	70%
Asian	21%
Other	9%

Amies London consistently welcomes 10-15 participants each week. During the period in question, attendance became more sporadic due to participants being moved out of London, college commitments, family commitments and unknown personal reasons. The group has operated rolling recruitment through the year, allowing new members to join each term when space becomes available.

Recruitment into the group occurs through referral from safehouses, key workers, case workers, professional services and other professionals. Occasionally a participant will bring a friend, but we ensure that this is followed by proper referral to ensure the group is the right fit for them, and that the correct caseworker information is obtained. Participants who completed this project will be invited to join the Amies Freedom Choir should they wish to still engage with the projects. Several members have already joined, with 3 more expected to move over in September.

Activity Summary



Every session starts with some meditation and mindfulness, followed by a check in, where participants are invited to select words from the circle, or use their own, to describe how they are feeling that day. This supports participants to feel more confident with their spoken English, as well as having the ability to speak confidently and candidly in front of a group. It also allows participants to voice their concerns and worries before entering the creative space.

Sessions include a lot of movement: stretching and mobility, coordination and balance as well as dance and movement games.

Movement exercises are adapted for participants with mobility aids, and adaptations are given for those who need it.

Even introducing yourself to the group can be a movement game - entering the circle as a model, or a wrestler to physically 'try on' confidence.



"I've been dancing when I was younger because I was a model. I love to dance. And it's good exercise for me. Each time I dance, I've got my phone in my pocket. It is showing me the steps I've done for the day. So it's good for my liver. It's good for my health. As for now, I need to exercise a lot. So I'm enjoying every bit of it"

" I like the exercise of Tuesday. Tuesday exercise. Because before, because I have pain in my hand. I can't even move the hand. It's kind of very stiff. But since I came here, I can move my hand, I can move my body. The first day, I can't even catch the ball. Yeah. I can't catch the ball the first time. Now I can do it. When I saw my physical therapist she was so happy for me. She said, yes, keep going to Amies."

The Amies Participants created a workshare in July 2024, attended by Pan staff, which included:

- Physical Theatre
- Storytelling
- An exhibition of paintings they had created which they presented to the audience.



These images were created by the participants creating strong images and then lying on the ground to draw around the shape. They then draw inside their outline the things they feel about themselves, and then on the outside draw the external factors and what they want to put out into the world. One of these depicts a bad home life since childhood, then a path towards positivity, where you see figures smiling and dancing, which she described as the Amies Friends, as well as nature and walks in the park with friends, which she enjoys.

Other paintings show hopes for the future, such as 'children', 'house', 'job'.

Many of the paintings included nature as something which brings hope and joy to their lives.



Amies London visited The Peacock Theatre to see *The Snowman*. Participants had to navigate to a new place and new people, but their timekeeping was fairly good and they enjoyed being in a new space. One participant was scared when the lights dimmed and held one of the facilitator's hands for the entire show. By the end however she said "I want to come back"

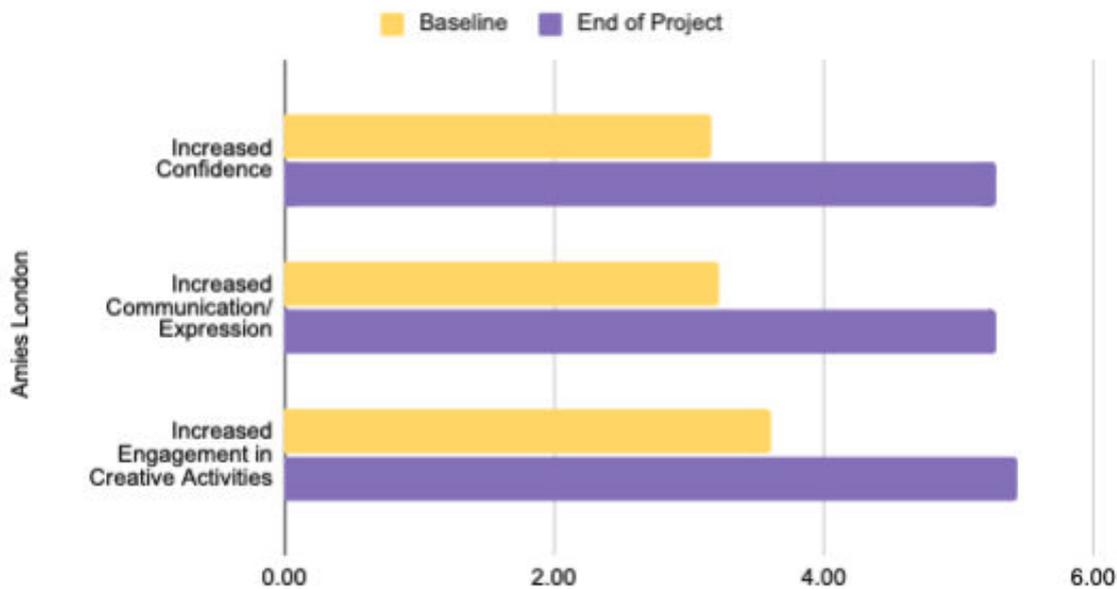
They were also invited to see the Workshare performed by the Choirs, which they very much enjoyed, especially as it was in their regular space.



Outcomes

Observational Monitoring

Amies London 2023-24



2023-24	of participants
Confidence increased	10
Confidence sustained	
Communication increased	10
Communication sustained	
Engagement increased	10
Engagement sustained	

Analysis of Observational Monitoring Data

Overall, many participants showed positive growth across all categories from Baseline to End of project. Participants who attended more sessions tended to show higher growth rates, though this can vary individually based on their personal circumstances, as well as any specific incidents this year which may have boosted development (eg through performing, creative activities, volunteering, community action such as supporting other participants)

The team reflects this cohort has been the most cohesive they have seen in several years, with participants supporting each other socially as well as in the rehearsal space. The environment has encouraged great freedom of expression physically and emotionally, and all participants have grown in confidence. They listen to each other well and often help one another and the team to set up and

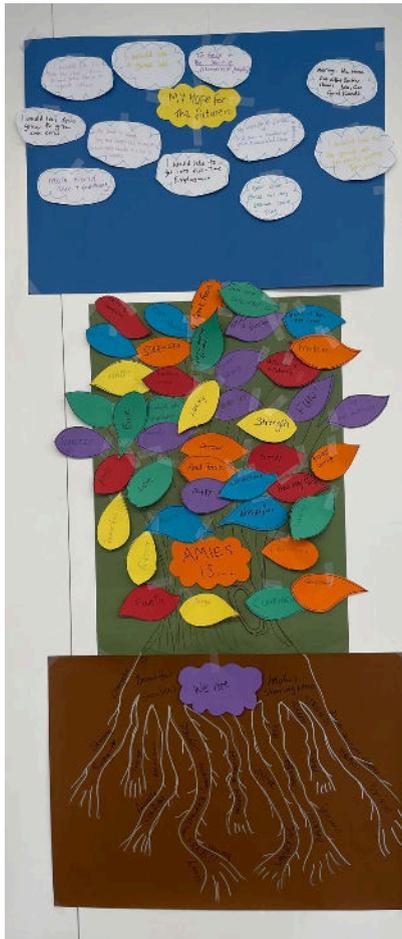
clean the space, and this has led to very little tension in the group, which allows the space to be more open and caring.

Time and space to share in the circle each week has developed participants' relationships, fostering empathy and support, as well as a lot of eloquence to express their thoughts and feelings, This was especially evident in the workshare when many of the participants presented their work in front of the office team (who are mostly strangers to them), as well as giving direct reflections at the end of the sharing session in response to prompts from the Pan team.

The team reflect: *"It always amazes me when we ask them to do something. They usually say no at first, 90% of them even, but then we encourage them and we do this. Then they are motivated to do more, and then we see them express themselves on their own and finding the way to do their own thing and bring something of themselves to the session. They surprise themselves with how much they can do and then it inspires them to do more."* This was especially evident when they were creating their paintings, as many of them weren't confident and were very reluctant to do it.

It's noticed that there is increased expression through movement -at the beginning of the project, many don't even want to stand. Physically they look very closed. Now they welcome movement. Even those who find it difficult to stand are happy to jump up for the movement exercises and get involved. Some participants especially excel in the physical theatre exercises, showing a variety of expressive facial expressions, as well as beautiful and thoughtful movements created with partners. Working in chorus has supported some participants to push themselves more with their physical movements, as well as increase understanding for those with less English language skill.

Participant Reflections on the Project



The participants created a 'tree', answering the prompts:

"Amies is" (the leaves of the tree):

Fun, Energy, Confidence, Supportive, Friendship, Lucky, Powerful, Positive, Wonderful, Caring, Happy, Love, Happy, Wonderful, Frees my Mind, Amies Loving, Kind People, Energy, Great, Success, Friendly, Strength, Is Joy and Happiness, Fun, Joy, Lucky, Comfortable Shoulder, Base, Excited, Happy, Grateful Place, Sweet Family, Amies is Friendly, Freedom, Hope, Strength, Amies is Meeting Friends, Amies is a Blessing, Amies is Real Good Times, Amies is Laughter, Love Shower, Great Food, Love and Supported

"We are" (the roots):

Energetic, Beautiful, Socialised, Strong, Rising, Loving, Resilient, Friendly, Confident, Funny, Free!!, Caring, Expressive, Shining, Joyful, Freedom of Speech, Creative, Supportive, Powerful, Generous, Purposeful, Free, Helpful, Sharing Ideas, Happy, Proud, Strong, Peaceful, Shining, Proud of our Name

And "My Hope for the Future is..." (the sky)

"I would like to use the skills I have gained from Amies to support others."

"I would like a good life."

"To help and be loving [to homeless people]."

"Marriage, nice house, visit different countries (travel), job, car, good friends."

"I would like Amies group to grow and excel."

"For God to bring joy and happiness to my life, with good health & a lot of success."

"My hope for the future is still being a member of this beautiful Amies."

"I would like to be good at speaking/writing English."

"More world, love and community."

"I would like to get into full time employment."

"Dear God, please all my dreams come true."

Participants show with their words the clear and tangible benefits of the project on their wellbeing and sense of community. They also see themselves in a positive way, and demonstrate clearly that they have hopes and dreams for the future.

Outcome: Improved Confidence (participant self-reflection)

"I'm really surprised (after performing at the workshare) because I'm a really shy person, but since when I start Amies group, that shy person, I don't know where they are now! I didn't feel nervous at all. I'm very proud. All the team push us to be inventive. At the end of the day, we are all the same and we have to be each other's shoulder. Another thing is if we can't express ourselves in English maybe, we shouldn't be scared to try, use our own languages and be all together, as friends here."

(Past member from 2022-23) "I think I would say the dancing activities making me very very confident. You know, when I came here two years, I can't remember exactly, two years or three years ago. So I couldn't even perform- I was a bit shy. So later on, time to time, so I became good and I felt very confident in dancing. I've been improving my personality, not to fear, and bring my skills up."

"I almost dropped out of the group because of my health. To be honest my hand was really kind of stiff, so when we started to play with the ball and throwing it to each other, I can't hold the ball, I'd drop the ball and I'd feel bad, but they would say "no no it's ok, keep going'. So every week before I go to college on Tuesday I say, I have to go to Amies because I love it here. With the exercise we do, I feel different now. With the ball game, you showed me no discrimination, I feel accepted by the group here. Everyone coming here, we love each other - I really appreciate it."

"The project was not long enough for me, for someone who takes time to do thing, I'm just starting to get it. I'm a very shy person. I worry am I doing the right thing. Now I'm just getting used to the people - it was so difficult for me with my eyesight and I'm so shy and not confident, but honestly this group has put me somewhere where now I feel the confidence. I put my phone on silent in my pocket, counting all the steps, The dancing any, everything we do is good therapy - it's the reason why we are doing it. For Me, it stimulates my mind, I can put aside whatever I'm thinking - whatever stress I'm going through and I focus on the group session. It has helped me a lot. Thank you to everyone - keep up the good work. Not only for me, but for whoever comes to the group. I'm so grateful."

The Amies London project has significantly boosted participants' confidence through the variety of activities offered and by fostering a supportive community. Engaging in dance and performance has empowered once-shy individuals to overcome inhibitions and showcase newfound skills fearlessly. The inclusive environment encourages expressive freedom, regardless of language barriers, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support among members. Physical activities like ball games have not only enhanced physical well-being but also instilled a deep sense of acceptance and resilience in participants facing personal challenges, reinforcing their commitment and joy in being part of the group.

Outcome: Improved communication/expression skills (participant self-reflection)

"My thinking changing, confidence, speak English more. Like me changing, before time me very bad. Like this session join with Amies, me happy, my feeling okay."

"There are people here that can listen to our voice because there are some places like our voice is not being listened to, but when you're down, when your heart is broken, when you come here and you tell them your problem, you know, you have a shoulder to cry on. And they will give you a word of love, advice, you know, and it gives you that peace, like at the end of the tunnel, there's a light, you understand? If you're not happy when you come here, you'll be happy. If you're crying when you come here, you will laugh. If you don't have peace of mind when you come here, you know the peace is here. I'm happy to be here and I'm very, very grateful. And if in my heart, I'm honestly, I'm happy and I'm grateful."

"So now I'm talking in front of a lot of people. Before we would sit here and say (in the check in) , now they bring the words, and you have to stand and choose the words, what is your expression, and help you with, if you don't pronounce the word, you just pick and then say from the card. I use in other places now, but when I start this program, I was not speaking. I'm very confident . And now I'm very confident the way I'm talk, the way I'm speak because you know, everyone make mistake. If I make mistake in English is not my first language"

"For me I told my caseworker, why are you sending me here I am not a child. I don't like it. They are just playing with a ball, they're not doing anything. I need something more productive, but something told me to come again. Something told me just wait, be patient. So I kept coming. My mind was on something else, but I kept coming and I'm proud that I did. They teach us how to love each other. Even if I'm tired on Tuesday I just go and I know it will be ok. I have a story we all have a story when I hear people telling me about what they have gone through. I realise how strong we all are. By the end of everything, I love everyone, every one of us. We show love to each other. Here I have found a family people welcome me I feel loved like a sister. I love the dancing part, I didn't know I could do that! When we were drawing, I said - I cant; do it, I can't draw but I'm so proud of myself. What I think I've learned in myself is that there's no possibility that can't happen for me. They don't look down on us, they help us, they support us, any time we need anything they are there for us, they will help with letters - all of them are there offering support - thank you very much Amies."

Participants in the Amies London project have undergone remarkable transformations in their communication and expression skills. They've shared stories of newfound confidence in speaking English, feeling empowered to articulate their thoughts in front of others, and embracing their ability to express emotions and experiences freely. The project has not only enhanced their language abilities but also fostered a supportive environment where individuals feel heard and understood, ultimately creating a sense of belonging and personal growth. Many are using these skills outside sessions - in college or with professional services.

Outcome: Increased engagement in creative activities (participant self-reflection)

"I like the drama. I like drama. That give a lot of, for me, a lot of, for mind, go up my mind. And then improve my English also. Because we do it a lot of activity with, it's connected with drama on a Tuesday. The storytelling. Storytelling. And the actions of actually doing it. We make some action also with the poem . Yeah, I'm happy, very important."

"When I come, I really like the calm and quiet. Very open environment. So I said, okay, it's a good place for me, I should keep coming, so. Yeah, that's why I chose to come here. The first thing I remember, because that time I was really isolated, so I, first thing I remember was, I was being listened to, and my words had value. And when I left this session, I feel like new born baby, like nothing on my brain. So that's why, that's why I stuck with coming"

"Yeah I'm keeping busy, because I don't want to remember my body. So I just, you know, try to keep myself busy. So I'm just happy that I was accepted into this group. That's why I always say I'm not going to take advantage of it. All of them (the team), they are doing a great job. They just show us to love each other like we should, you know. Even if you have problem with anybody, when you come here, you just, you have no choice. You just have to love one another because we are all in the same struggle. So we should show love to others. You understand? Because they show love to us, then we should extend the love to one another. So I'm very grateful."

"Like, it's really a positive part in my life. So, even if I'm tired, if I don't feel like coming out, I find myself here, but I don't know how. I'll be like, no, it's too early, I can't go out. But because I can see the difference, the change, I come here. Before I would just sit (with the group), looking. But now, it's like, I'm getting used to everyone. So, I'm revealing myself bit by bit, like, okay. This, this place that I am. I'm covered."

"I'm a difficult person because of the trauma I have faced, It's hard for me to trust people. But the welcome I have here, I feel very cared for. My therapy is getting better since I came here. I don't sleep the night before because I am so excited to see everyone. It's so loving, it's like family."

Participants of the Amies London project have deeply engaged in creative activities, finding meaning and joy through drama, storytelling, and games. These activities not only stimulate their minds but also enhance their English proficiency through immersive experiences. The project provides a nurturing environment where individuals feel valued and listened to, fostering personal growth, resilience and a sense of belonging. Participants express gratitude for the supportive community that encourages them to explore their creativity and build meaningful connections, helping them to move through personal challenges and grow.

Participant Case Study (2.5 years engagement)

When S first joined in 2022 she was very timid and not confident about speaking in English. Within the first few weeks she had a major panic attack outside the session due to seeing someone she thought was her former abusive husband who she is in hiding from. However, she returned to the session the following week, and the team supported her with the police report and her recovery from that. Her panic attacks are reducing and she has been a reliable and enthusiastic volunteer for the last year of the project. However, she still won't go downstairs alone.

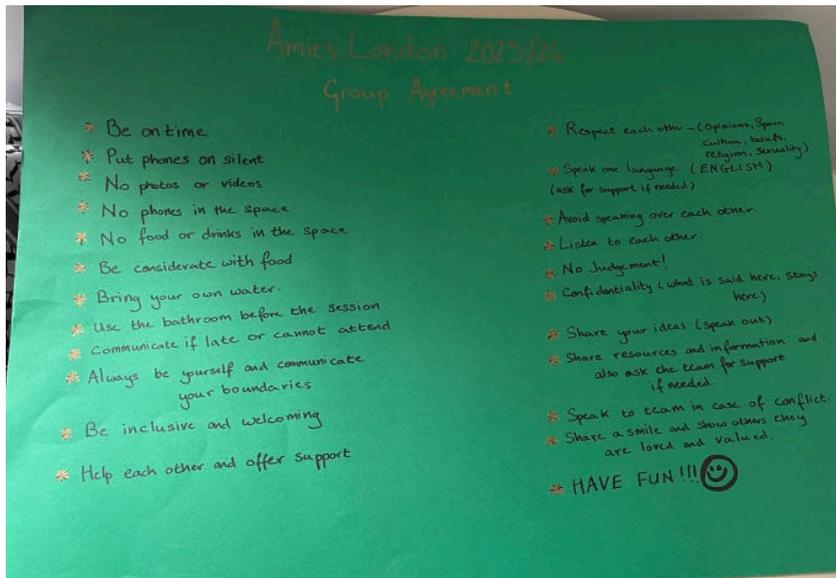
A keen baker who often brings food to share during sessions, she's completed a baking course, has completed a chef's course with Migrateful and now teaches people how to cook. She describes that she couldn't do that without the support of the Amies groups, giving confidence and also English language practice. She continues to attend college and is about to be a GCSE student. In November, she told us "I received an award for being student of the year in my ESOL college. I was so so happy, I said 'I'm going to wear it as a necklace' I polish it every morning. I was in the newspaper, but I asked them to remove my name, maybe I could have it next year but not now."

Recently she performed at the Amies London Workshare for Pan Team. She spoke about a painting she had made, and then led the group in a Storytelling performance, sharing a story she invented. Reflecting on that to the Pan Team, she said "I'm really surprised because I'm a really shy person, but since when I start Amies group, that shy person, I don't know where they are now! I didn't feel nervous at all. I'm very proud. All the team push us to be inventive. At the end of the day, we are all the same and we have to be each other's shoulder. Another thing, is if we can't express ourselves in English maybe, we shouldn't be scared to try, use our own languages and be all together, as friends here."

"Sometime like when I'm upset, I don't recognize me at all, how far I come from. And, when I started, not being scared to speak, here, you know, when we talk in a group, whatever you say, even if you can't speak, you just give your expression, they understand what you mean, and someone is supporting, like, 'oh, you mean like this?' 'Oh, yes, I want to say like that'. So it's It really help you with the confidence and with speaking. when I start first coming, talking in front of a lot of people, before I was not even able to speak just in front of two people. So now I'm talking in front of a lot of people. Before we would sit here and say (in the check in) , now they bring the words, and you have to stand and choose the words, what is your expression, and help you with, if you don't.pronounce the word, you just pick and then say from the card. I use in other places now, but when I start this program, I was not speaking. I'm very confident . And now I'm very confident the way I'm talk, the way I'm speak because you know, everyone make mistake. If I make mistake in English is not my first language". "

This participant has recently joined the Amies Freedom Choir.

Participant Voice



Participants are given the opportunity to create their own group/agreement contract which is read by participants at the start of every session. New for this year were statements about it being a 'no judgement' space, and also about sharing resources with each other and asking for help when needed.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing - Additional Outcome

There is strong evidence that the movement aspects of the sessions are having a huge impact on both the physical and mental wellbeing of the participants. The welcoming atmosphere at the start of sessions is also having a significant impact on the way participants see themselves.

"I'm proud of the group leaders of this organisation, because it's not easy. All of us are not from the same country, we don't know each other, but they can hold all of us together... They just take us the way we are, I don't see that Adwoa would ever frown, they are never angry. Before we get her, we are hurting, every one of us, we learn how to stand with many people. Every time you arrive, people say 'hello, how are you! Can I get you a coffee?', they teach us how to do those things as a group."

Amies London Participant

Wider issues

Many of the participants describe at length the processes they are going through with the Home Office and describe the major issues that housing, money, immigration status and isolation are having on them. The team have attended more sector specific training this year to understand these issues better, and have expanded the signposting network in order to understand the wider sector.

"I have a story we all have a story when I hear people telling me about what they have gone through. I realise how strong we all are... I'll cry in my bedroom alone by myself, like, one day I'll see my family, I'll see my parents, I'll see my siblings, you know. It's, it's, the burden is too much. But I cannot help myself. There's nothing I can do now. So, for me, coming here is like, I'm lifting my every load, my burden, I'm lifting it. It's just, coming here. Lift everything. You know, that moment is, I find it's very, very positive in my life and very useful. So I can't miss it. That's why I said, even if I'm tired, I find myself here."

"My mental health sometime very bad, depression, eat, eat, medicine, depression, stress, and relax, sleep. No medicine, no good sleep. Like, sometime my past disturb, head in circles... but now changing 2023, 2024, like

one and a half year me too much depressed stress, like no go outside, no me speak English, no "hello, hi, say". Me confused and just cry, cry every day and very bad. But now, my feeling okay. Confidence, go GP, pharmacy, pick up medicine, go solicitor. Like, changing 2023 , 2024, and this session me join, and my feeling strong and happy. Thank you so much, Adwoa, Francesca, very nice helping. Sometime me talking, ""hello, hi, say".

In Summary and Suggestions

The main suggestions for developing and improving the group revolve around building upon the strong foundations outlined in this report, and adding to the offer.

We will try to complete another trip to take participants to see a show.

The academic year helped the transition somewhat for participants. Some who have been members for a little longer struggled somewhat. Having the workshare with the Pan Staff present on the last day may have reduced the amount of worry about the 'ending' as it felt like a celebration. Those who are not members of the Freedom Choir have been asked if they would like to join from September.

The group was very cohesive and that contributed to the project being so successful, the team will try to create this atmosphere once again.