

Making Positive Changes Evaluation Report

18 February - 03 April 2019



About Positive Changes (Scotland) CIC

Positive Changes (Scotland) CIC is a social enterprise supporting women who have touched the Scottish criminal justice system towards fulfilling employment through the making and selling of high-end chocolates branded: Grace Chocolates changing lives and complimented by an effective training programme: Making Positive Changes.

About Making Positive Changes Programme

Making Positive Changes was delivered twice weekly over a seven-week period from the 18 February to 3 April 2019. During the programme, the women gained practical work experience by making high end chocolates and engaging in personal development activities. By the end of the programme, every woman achieved their Food Hygiene certificate, gained CPR training, wrote their Personal Development Plan, and completed a CV template.

Report Written by **Jennifer Faichney**

Foreword

This is the second Making Positive Changes programme we have run since the organisation began in September 2017. Again, I have been humbled by the willingness of the women to stretch beyond their comfort zone as they quest to bring about positive changes in their lives. We've made a few changes in this programme having learned lessons and listened to the women's feedback in the first programme. Gone are yoga classes, the session on Universal Credit and budgeting. In their place was more time for CV writing, Personal Development Plans and for gaining skills on making chocolates, team working and planning. We worked in partnership with new organisations this time too e.g. Smart Works Edinburgh and the women's feedback suggests these sessions will continue in future programmes. Planning is already underway for our next programme beginning in the autumn.

This programme would not have been possible without the support of many: funders, supporters, referrers, organisations who provide their time and gifts willingly, volunteers, staff and, of course, the women themselves. My gratitude goes to each and every one of you, thank you.

A stylized, cursive signature of the name 'Joyce' in a purple color.

Joyce Murray

Founder and Director

Positive Changes (Scotland) CIC

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Aims of Making Positive Changes

To provide an asset-based environment which values and builds upon the skills, knowledge and potential the women already possess as they continue their journey towards fulfilling employment.

To provide an atmosphere of support and encouragement to help build their confidence and self-esteem as they realise their worth.

To provide a positive learning environment that supports the women as they develop their problem-solving skills through positive self-reflection.

To facilitate expanding and building a network of support on which the women can rely.

Outcomes of Making Positive Changes

The women are better equipped to make informed choices as they search for employment.

The women are better resourced to enter the workforce.

To lower barriers to employment faced by the women when entering the job market.

Values of Making Positive Changes

Making Positive Changes is tailored to meet the needs of the women with a strong emphasis placed upon establishing a positive and supportive learning environment which focuses on relationship building and the requirements of each woman.

By creating a positive learning environment, the women are able to exercise positive self-reflection as a means of problem solving.

By providing an asset-based environment which values each woman's potential, they can continue building upon skills and knowledge they already possess.

All language used is inclusive, respectful, and positive.

We operate within a holistic, person-centred environment.

We work in partnership with other organisations to meet our aims, achieve programme outcomes and utilise the wealth of assets already existing in our communities.

Making Positive Changes Programme Structure

The programme was delivered twice weekly over seven weeks. For one day each week, the women would be engaged in chocolate making and on the other day, they participated in personal development activities.



Purpose of the Report

To provide insight into the Making Positive Changes Programme and its impact on the female participants.

To give a voice to all women involved by highlighting their achievements and the positive progress they have all made.

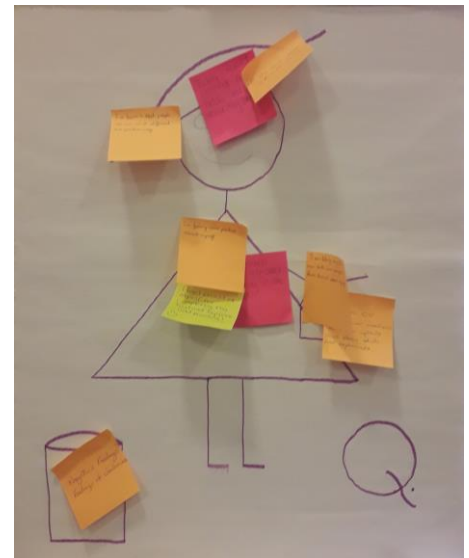
To promote the Making Positive Changes Programme to all women who have been touched by the Scottish criminal justice system to make positive changes in their own lives.

To gain learning and insight on material presented to ensure future programmes are best able to prepare the women for employment.

Data Collection

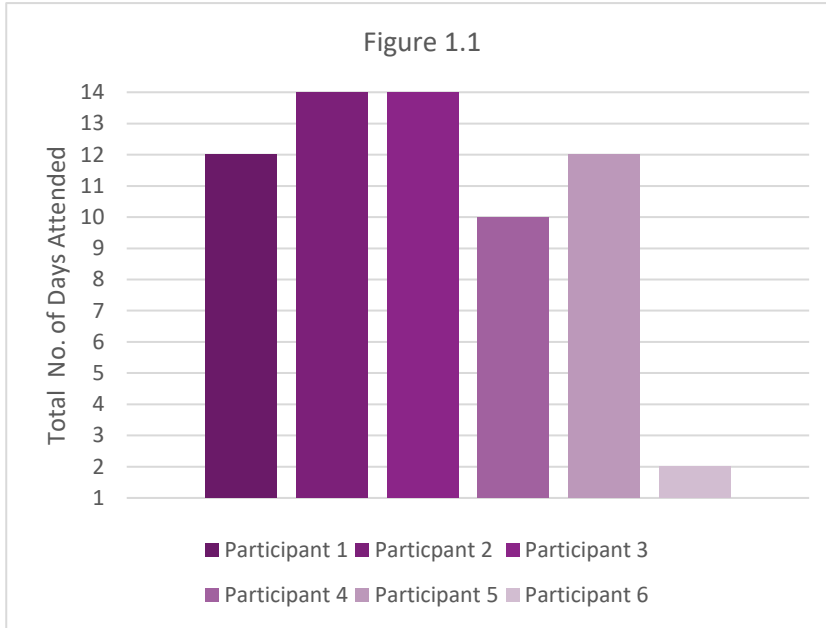
Research methods continued to build upon previous methods used and as a result, provided valuable feedback. Research data was gathered in five ways:

1. A daily attendance sheet to track participation in the programme.
2. A survey delivered on week one and week seven to compare progress.
3. Daily feedback using Bertha as a survey tool on key subject areas:
 - HEAD (what they have learned)
 - HEART (how they feel)
 - HANDBAG (what they are taking away)
 - BIN (what they want to leave behind)
4. Two interviews conducted with each woman for detailed feedback.
 - First interview conducted on week two with four women
 - Second interview conducted on week six with all five women
5. Observation of their participation in the personal development activities.
6. Each woman also kept a journal capturing her learning and reflections after each day's activity.



Drawing of Bertha with Feedback

Programme Participation



Six women began the programme with five finishing.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the total number of days attended by each of the women. Participants two and three have an attendance rate of 100%, whilst participant one and five have an attendance rate of 85.7%, and participant four has an attendance rate of 71.4%. Participant six has an attendance rate of 14.3% having only attended the first week. The last three weeks of the programme witnessed 100% attendance.

Expectations and Goals

When asked about their expectations prior to starting the programme, the majority of women responded that they had little expectations and were unsure of what to expect. One woman responded that she did not have a lot of previous information about the course but wanted to meet new people and gain confidence. One of them had previously worked with Joyce and knew a little about the programme already. She explained that she was new to the criminal justice system and was really positive about the programme, gaining new skills and excited about improving her prospects. One woman explained that this programme was different to other courses she had been on. When asked if their expectations had changed by the second week, one woman said she was enjoying the course, meeting new people, and she was feeling more confident and positive for her future because, "I have faith in myself. I can do it." Another woman commented how helpful, friendly, and positive people are towards her. One woman said her expectations were unchanged because she had missed a couple of days. Lastly, one woman explained how she was feeling positive about moving forward and she knows that "nothing is impossible."

"I have faith in myself. I can do it."

At week six, when asked if the programme had surprised them in any way, one woman said, "it was the best course I've ever tried." Another explained that the programme had exceeded her expectations. She looked forward to coming every week and it was nice to get out of the house and meet new people. One woman said the programme, "boosted my confidence" and "I can move forward with my past." Another woman said, "I didn't think I was going to stick it out." Lastly, one of the women explained that she had met new friends and was sad to leave.

"Nothing is impossible."

“I can move forward with my past.”

At week two, the women were asked about their goals. One woman explained that she was excited about making chocolates and gaining experience for her CV. Two women mentioned already accomplishing goals by achieving their Food Hygiene certificate. One woman wanted to feel more confident and more positive about getting a job. Another

woman explained that she wanted to get a job, gain more knowledge and that she had received information on where to access support with reading and writing. One woman explained that she had applied for college and wants to continue working with the organisation in the future. She said that Joyce has had a big impact and influence on her and has inspired her to help others. She discussed how inspirational Joyce is, how she does not judge her, she asks for her input, she gives her a chance and provides a safe environment to help her become independent. She wants to take everything that she will learn from the programme to make good choices.

At week six, the women were reminded of their goals and asked if they had accomplished any of them. Three women mentioned achieving their Food Hygiene and CPR certificates. Three women mentioned learning to make the chocolates. One woman mentioned that she feels more confident. She expanded by discussing how she approached Apex Scotland and attended a job fair which was a huge positive step for her to make. She felt working on her CV was “daunting”, but she has more information now than she did before starting the programme. One woman explained that she will keep in contact with Joyce and knows she is welcome back anytime. She has achieved most of her goals and knows what she wants to do moving forward. She explained that volunteering on a Friday helped her decide on a path, and she has now set herself up for the next few years. One woman explained she never thought she could do it and it has “motivated me”. Another woman accomplished her goal by just turning up and staying sober to be able to attend the programme.

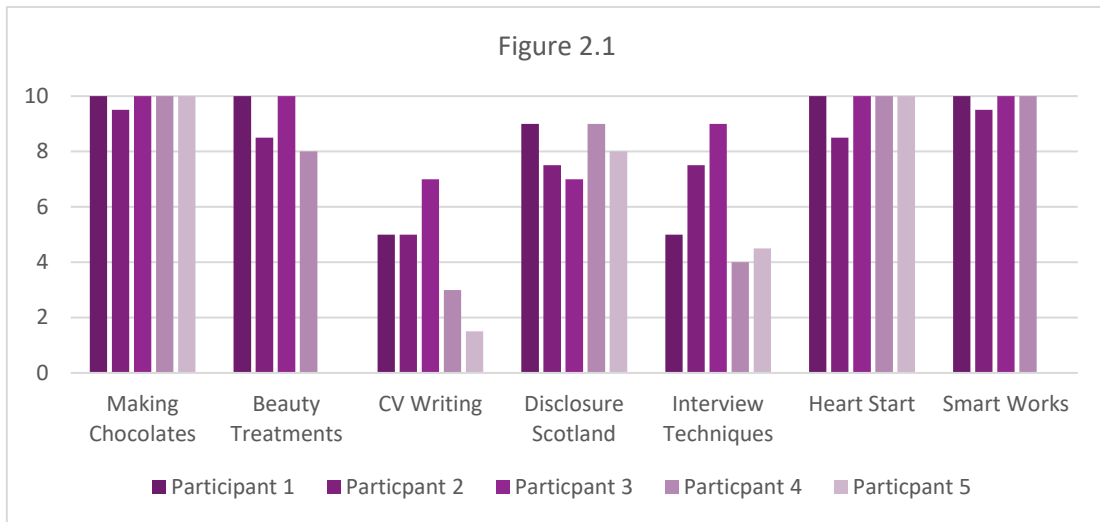
At week two, the women were asked if they hoped to learn anything about themselves. One woman was hopeful that her confidence would improve, especially for interviews as they always made her nervous. She also hoped to learn how to work with others. Another woman wanted to improve her confidence and self-worth. One woman wanted to become more positive. She wants to get rid of negativity and stop being so hard on herself. She understands that it is a learning process and believes, “I can do it!” Another woman wanted to become more outgoing and to be brought out of her shell. She explained that Joyce makes her feel comfortable and safe.

At week six, the women were asked what they had learned about themselves and if they had surprised themselves in any way. One woman felt more open and that she could talk better than when she first arrived. Another woman had surprised herself in a big way as she had been offered a place in college, which the reality of had not set in for her yet. She had not been in education or employment for fourteen years and has now realised her past has not limited her future. One woman said she had learned to believe in herself and the programme had brought out a lot of knowledge that she already possessed but was no longer at the forefront of her mind. One woman said that the programme, “opened my eyes that there’s more out there.” Another woman said that by completing the programme she has learned that, “I can do things if I put my head to it, stick to it and achieve what I want to achieve.”

“I can do things if I put my head to it, stick to it and achieve what I want to achieve.”

Rating Programme Activities

Over the course of the programme, the women participated in a series of activities to improve their employability and personal development. The women rated each of the activities, on a scale of 1-10 as illustrated in figure 2.1 and provided detailed feedback about their participation in these activities.



Feedback for Each Activity

The following section aims to provide detailed feedback for each activity by taking into consideration their interview responses and comments from Bertha.

Chocolate Making

When asked what they liked most about the programme, three women mentioned making the chocolates as their “fave bit!”

The women learned a lot when making the chocolates and by learning this new knowledge and gaining new skills, they felt more positive about themselves and working with the other women. When asked about their expectations making the chocolates, one woman stated that she felt, “comfortable asking for help if out of comfort zone.” One woman discussed how she loved learning the entire process of making chocolates, from gathering the ingredients to packaging and quality control. Her experience of making the chocolates became the reason for her to pursue a college course in bakery. Another explained that making the chocolates was not easy, but she improved and learned a lot of different things.

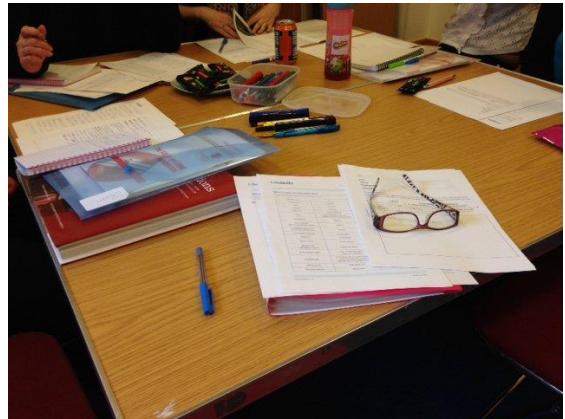
When discussing goals achieved, two women mentioned achieving their Food Hygiene certificate, with one woman stating that she felt more confident having accomplished this goal. One of the women said, “I feel proud of myself for completing my Food Hygiene and passing!”



CV Writing

Writing a CV proved a difficult and overwhelming experience for all of the women. Some women had been out of employment for a long time or had no experience to put on their CV. As a result, emphasis was placed on their skills and what they had to offer to employers. Identifying their skills soon became a collaborated effort with all of the women helping one another. This method worked well because often others recognise skills and strengths that we ourselves fail to recognise.

Feedback from Bertha stated, “I’ve learnt that people see me in a different but positive way,” “today I learned lots of new skills and qualities about myself,” “I am taking away the new skills and strengths I have learned about myself,” “I’m feeling more positive about myself,” “I felt much more confident speaking in the group,” and “work on CV content over weekend to better update and show skills and experiences.” Even though it was a difficult task, through positive self-reflection and group collaboration, the women felt more positive about themselves when realising their potential and employability.



Disclosure Scotland

Representatives from Disclosure Scotland discussed the ‘Scotland Works For You’ initiative with the women to remove misconceptions about the disclosure process, to help them learn more about Disclosure Scotland and how they encourage employers to recruit individuals with criminal convictions. They highlighted their goals of breaking down barriers to employment and giving people the confidence to secure employment because “having a conviction doesn’t make you unemployable.” This was a highly informative event with feedback from Bertha highlighting knowledge gained and the understanding that “disclosure may not necessarily stop me getting a fairly decent job.”

Interview Techniques with Barclays

A representative from Barclays delivered a session in interview techniques, providing each woman with a worksheet to consider their responses to interview questions. Feedback from Bertha stated, “I really enjoyed the interview skills but I still was a bit stuck trying to write about myself,” and “learned a lot of good information on interview techniques.”

Heart Start with Trossachs Search and Rescue

Each woman received a certificate from participating in the Heart Start course with Trossachs Search and Rescue. This activity was received very well, and all the women enjoyed the lesson. When asked about goals they achieved, two women listed the certificate as an accomplished goal and one explained that they didn’t expect to receive CPR training. Feedback from Bertha was positive, and all five women wrote what they had learned from the activity and that “it was really good and interesting.”

Smart Works

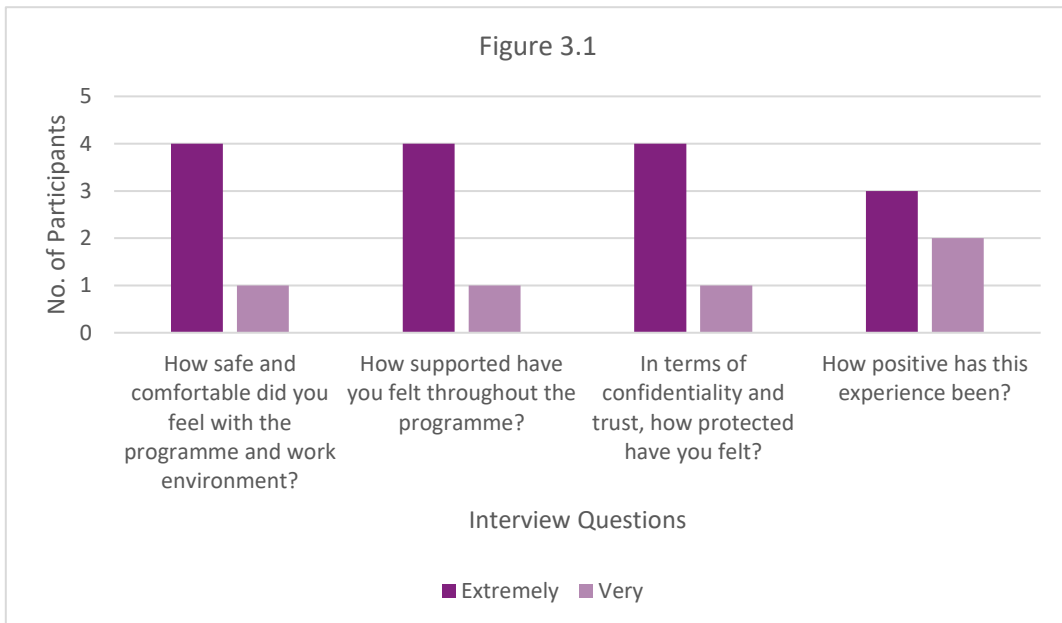
Smart Works is an organisation that provide unemployed women with the opportunity to receive a full outfit for a job interview and to receive interview training. The Smart Works team were friendly, warm and committed to creating a positive environment and wonderful experience for all of the women. It is no surprise that Smart Works became one of the highest rated activities as it was a positive experience for everyone and the women went home with multiple outfits for interview and personal use.

Meeting Programme Aims and Values



In evaluating feedback from Bertha, on the first three weeks, feelings of negativity and anxiety were placed into the bin. After those first weeks, negative feelings no longer appeared in Bertha’s bin. On week four, one woman had a difficult day and expressed those feelings in her feedback. Every week positive feelings were conveyed and placed on Bertha’s heart. The content of the programme and the knowledge the women were gaining was often placed either on Bertha’s head as knowledge gained or in her handbag as what the women wanted to take with them.

Figure 3.1 illustrates that the programme has met its aims.



Working with Others

A large component of the success of this programme is the relationships established between each woman. When asked about their experience working with Joyce, they all mentioned that it had been a good experience. When asked about their experience working the other participants, they all mentioned that it had been a good experience as all of them connected with one another over their shared experiences. When providing feedback to Bertha, one woman stated, “I am taking away new friends and new skills since starting the course.”

Personal Development

Figure 4.1 illustrates their responses when asked questions about how the programme has helped their personal development in terms of developing skills and setting goals. The feedback from all of the women is positive. All of the women stated that the programme has helped them a great deal with evaluating their strengths and weaknesses and providing the motivation to achieve their goals. This programme has helped them gain new skills and experiences and identify their achievements.

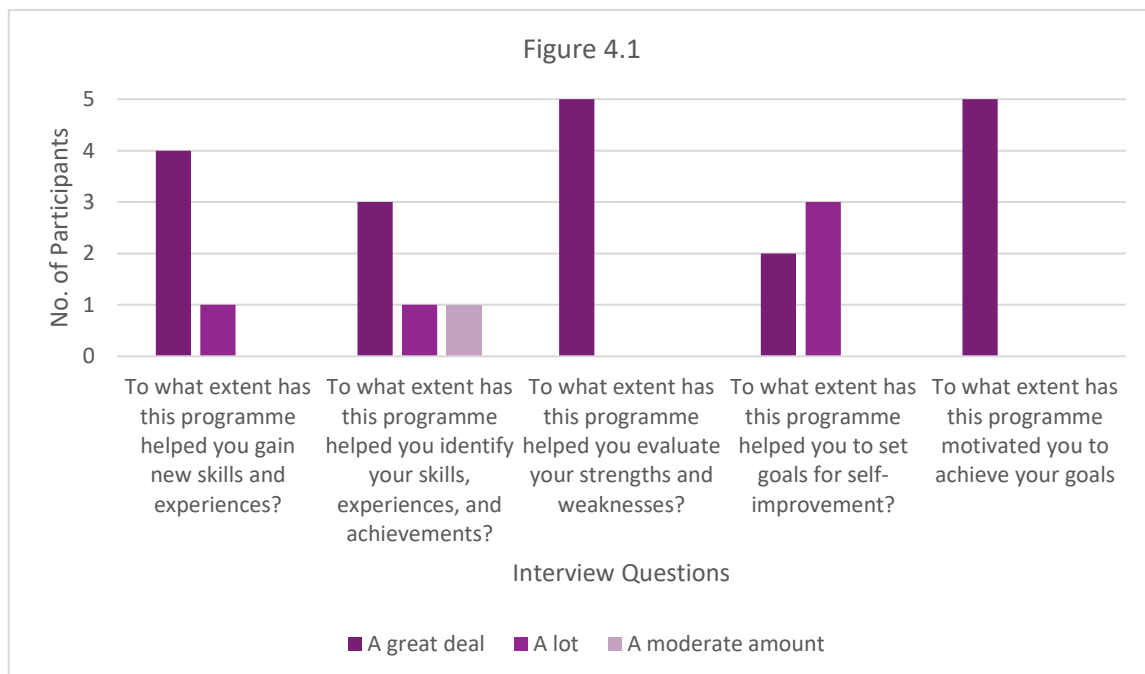
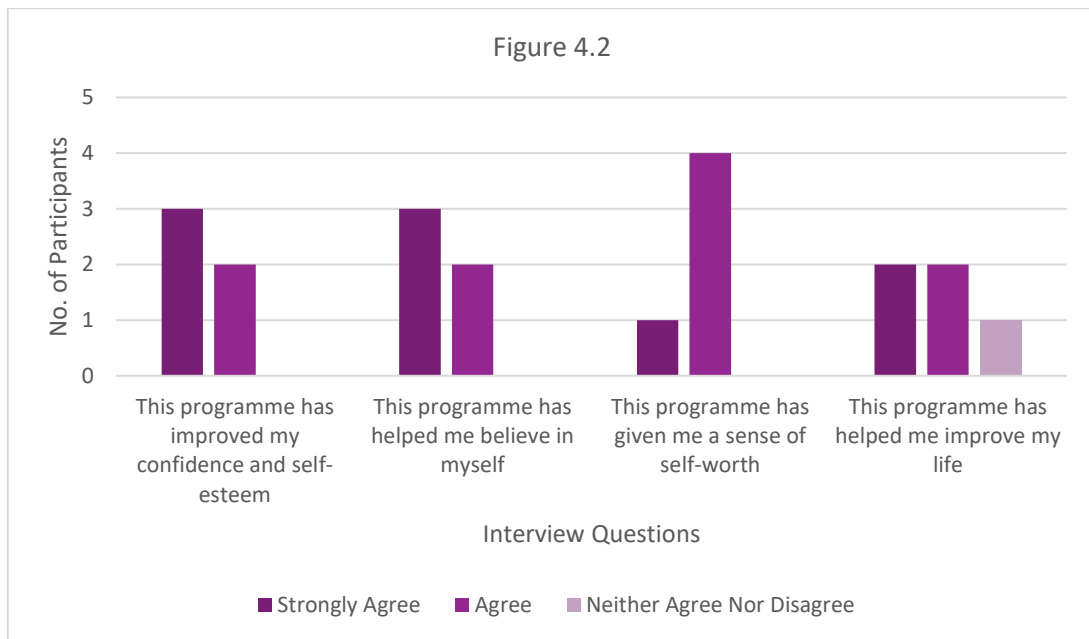


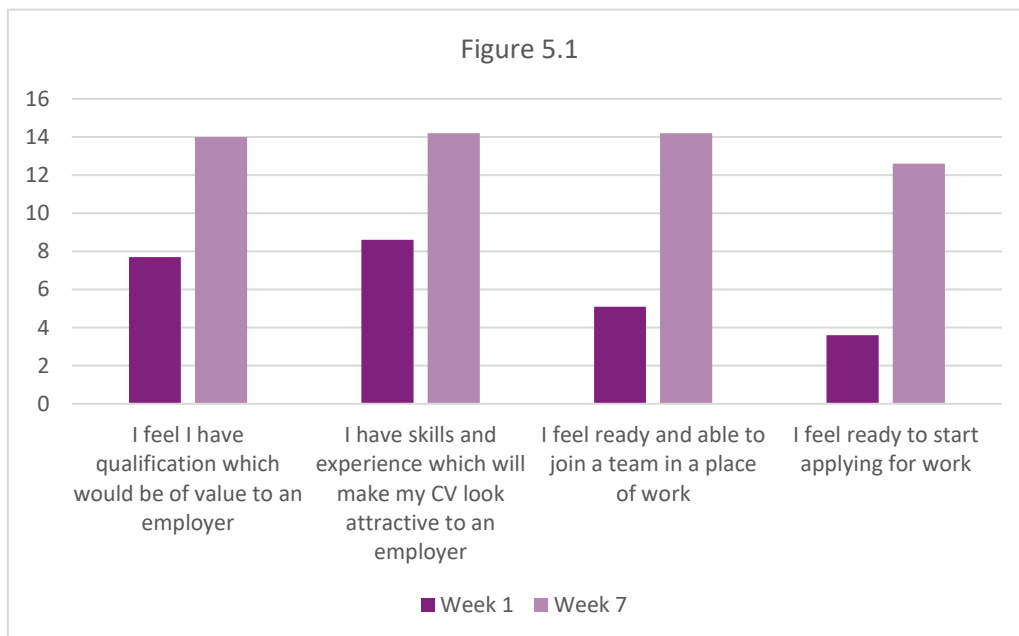
Figure 4.2 (on the next page) illustrates their responses when asked questions about how the programme has helped build their confidence and self-esteem. The feedback continues to be positive as all of the women agreed that the programme had improved their confidence, boosted their self-esteem and given them a sense of self-worth. This programme has helped these women believe in themselves again as they have all taken positive steps towards improving their lives.



Preparing for Employment

At the start and end of the programme, the women completed a survey to identify their attitude and readiness of searching for a job. This survey became a useful tool as it demonstrated the progress that each woman had made by attending the programme. The survey asked four questions regarding their qualifications, skills, experience, and readiness for work.

Figure 5.1 considers the average score of how they each rated their attitudes towards their employability. As demonstrated, the women made significant progress between the start and end of the programme.



Final Week

Feedback from Bertha for the last week conveyed how everyone was feeling about the programme's conclusion.

On Bertha's head, the women wrote the knowledge they had gained from the programme:

"Starting the course, I was very nervous and didn't think I would have made half the chocolates. I feel much more confident now."

"I have taken away so much including new skills, improved existing ones, and my self-esteem is way higher than before."

"I have learned new skills and have become more confident since the start."

On Bertha's heart, the women wrote about how they felt about the programme ending:

"I really am going to miss everyone at the course."

"I have enjoyed the course from start to finish."

"Everyone has been great."

"The course has been so much more than I expected or hoped for."

"I am going to miss everyone in the group."

On Bertha's handbag, one woman wrote what she was taking away from the programme:

"I am taking away new friends and new skills since starting the course."

On the final day, five women celebrated their success with a beautiful graduation tea for their supporters to witness their achievements and share in the celebration. It became an emotional day for all involved as hugs, flowers and kind words were shared.



Learning

The lessons learned and put into practice from the previous programme involve talking with referrers to ensure the women being referred are in the right place on their journey to make the most out of the programme.

The learning for future programmes is to provide additional support for the women when writing their CV's, to provide more interview technique practice, and to allocate additional time to revisit their Personal Development Plans.

Recommendation

All five women recommend this programme to other women.

“Don’t be nervous. Turn up. Joyce and others will make you feel at ease. You will love it if you stick to it. Go along and enjoy it, even the hard times. Stick at it because it’s worth it at the end. It is good to meet people in similar circumstances and be able to support each other. Get in there and do it. It’s so worthwhile. It benefits everybody, and you only get out what you put in. Listen to everything and take everything in. It’s the unknown before you started, but be positive.”

Conclusion

Lastly, the women were asked to share some final comments about their experience. Two women explained how sad they were that the programme was ending as it had been a good and enjoyable experience for them. One woman commented how everybody involved has been helpful and supportive. She explained how great it was to meet other women in similar situations and realise she was not alone. Another woman explained that it had been a positive experience for her and she enjoyed meeting new people. She mentioned her desire to work with the organisation in the future and though she was apprehensive about starting the programme, “I’m glad I did it!”

Since starting the programme, two women are pursuing college courses and one woman has secured temporary work.

Acknowledgements

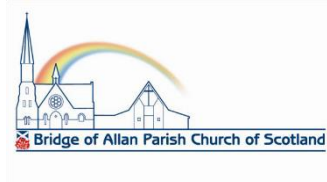
A grateful thank you is extended to our funders, MARS Goodness Knows for funding the programme and the University of Stirling and Santander Bank for funding the intern who evaluated the programme. Thanks also goes to our volunteers and supporters who gifted their time, talents and money to support the women and the organisation and to Bridge of Allan Parish Church for their continued support and encouragement. We are immensely grateful to everybody for their support, kindness and generosity towards Positive Changes and Making Positive Changes. Lastly, to all of the women who participated, thank you ladies and we wish you all the best for the future.

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Writer's Note

Like everyone else on the first day, I was filled with trepidation. I did not know these women or what to expect from them. But, as I sat alongside them and saw Joyce's passion as she shared her story, I knew that I was a part of something special and I was eager to get started.

This programme is so much more than just making chocolates and preparing women for employment or even breaking down barriers. Joyce has created the perfect environment for women to become confident and realise their self-worth. I have seen Joyce's relentless compassion and warmth for these women. Her empathy has had a profound impact on their lives and has shaped the outcomes of this programme. The environment is free from negativity and toxicity and because of this, women are supporting other women and are able to create positive relationships in a safe place. Their solidarity has enabled each of them to follow their own path together and it is a beautiful thing to witness.

I have learned so much from them and from Joyce. I have learned to accept a compliment, that I am capable of helping others, and most importantly, that I am not alone. Though I cannot relate directly to their experiences with the criminal justice system, I am able to relate to them on an emotional level as we have all experienced life's cruelties and having to overcome difficult obstacles. It has been a powerful experience to be able to connect with women who also battle negativity, anxiety, and self-doubt and they have inspired me to continue my own journey of positive self-growth.

I strongly believe that it does not matter what a person's circumstances are, the choices they make, their relationships, or their past, every single person deserves the chance to become the best version of themselves. Unfortunately, not everyone has the privilege to do so. It is hard to keep the past where it belongs as we think our past defines our future, so we stay in a fixed position. What actually defines us is our reaction to our past and how we move forward. By participating in this programme, these women are able to make positive choices, so they can move forward from their past which is a difficult thing to do. It can be difficult to break free from the burden of comparison to others and realise that there is no single path to success nor is there an imaginary race to success that we all believe we are on. It is okay to take one day at a time as there is no rush. We all have our own definition of success and happiness, and what is good for one person may not be good for another. I have learned these truths by listening to these women and how they plan to move forward.

What is remarkable about the Making Positive Changes Programme is that it gives women who have touched the Scottish criminal justice system the tools they need to become the best version of themselves, to help them realise their potential, and give them the motivation to move on from their past. It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to connect with these women, to listen to them, and to write this report. I have enjoyed every second of it, I am grateful to be a part of their journey, and I wish all of them the very best of luck with their future. I know that they each have it in them to succeed.

J. Faichney

Jennifer Faichney