



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
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Bakhita Centre for Research on
Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse
Applied Research, Education and Training

Horizons Summer School

3rd July-23rd August 2023

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HORIZONS
SUMMER SCHOOL

Learn | Connect | Grow

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We would like to thank all the people who have made Horizons possible: our partner referral organisations and their dedicated support workers; St Mary's University staff and departments; the numerous external organisations and practitioners that offered time, expertise and assistance of varying kinds; the people with lived experience for bringing real-life stories of encouragement to Horizons students; and the dedicated group of volunteers who supported the students in their journey.

Organisations and individuals are listed with gratitude in the list of acknowledgements at the end of this report.

Executive Summary

Horizons Summer School (Horizons) was conceptualised as an educational programme, the first of its kind in the UK, to address the challenges in accessing educational pathways for survivors of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT). An imaginative, innovative provision, Horizons recognises survivors' experiences, ambitions, and aspirations. It brings them into a higher education (HE) environment and a community of learning and possibilities.

Working closely with voluntary sector partners, the Bakhita Centre launched Horizons as a pilot in 2021. An Independent Evaluation of the pilot concluded that Horizons was a positive experience that developed students' transferable skills, improved life quality and mental health and expanded opportunities for the future. It increased students' interest in education as a tool for empowerment and as a path toward survivors' further education. All Horizons 2021 students stated that they would suggest the summer school to other survivors as a helpful programme for their recovery and integration. In total, twenty-three women have participated in the programme (9 in 2021 and 14 in 2023).

This is a report on Horizons 2023. This report confirms the benefit of Horizons for students, as identified in the evaluation of the pilot. It highlights the value of Horizons in relation to specific immediate outcomes in terms of acquisition of life skills and knowledge, pathways to other courses, opportunities for creativity and pathways to work.

It also demonstrates how the team responded to feedback from the first cohort, including extending the length of the programme so that students have more learning opportunities, and introducing a more comprehensive induction particularly focusing on accessing laptops and learning about St Mary's IT systems and learning platforms. An additional development to the programme discussed in the report included the development of new partnerships with external collaborators, resulting in an enriched and exciting curriculum for the students.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Horizons Summer School 2023. The evaluation was carried out by the Horizons Team with the purpose of:

- Reviewing the practical aspects of delivering Horizons to aid future delivery
- Recognising challenges and identifying successes
- Understanding how the programme has changed and developed since the pilot
- Capturing Students' voice to measure the effectiveness and benefit of Horizons on their lives.

Background to Horizons Summer School 2023

Designed and developed by the Bakhita Centre, Horizons is an educational programme developed in response to research identifying gaps in educational provision for people with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) during their reflection and recovery journey.

Engagement with tailored education has been identified as an important component of long-term support for survivors which is fundamental to their recovery and integration.¹ Tailored education programmes such as Horizons focus on each student's needs and aspirations, promoting wider participation and inclusivity. Taking place during the summer months, when most educational provision is closed, Horizons is an opportunity for survivors to explore new educational opportunities within a safe environment in which they can continue to maintain momentum in their learning journeys.

Now in its second year, Horizons offers a varied curriculum, with core classes in traditional subjects such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and Digital Skills, and additional topics including for instance creative arts and sport. Life Stories are part of the core sessions, delivered by people with lived experience who have moved on to further education or employment. These sessions have been particularly welcomed by students, demonstrating the possibility of accessing further opportunities for training and education. Horizons 2023 also saw the introduction of exciting new partnerships and collaborations, discussed further below under Extra-Curricular Activities.

This comprehensive programme utilises the physical and intellectual resources of St Mary's University for the benefit of participants, making it a truly unique initiative in the UK higher education landscape.

Referral process

The Bakhita Centre has long-standing partnerships with several specialist non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and supporting organisations in the field of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Referrals to Horizons are made by a number of these organisations. Some of these organisations had previous knowledge of Horizons as they were members

¹ Murphy, C. (2018) A game of chance? Long-term support for survivors of modern slavery. St Mary's University, Twickenham, The Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery. Available at: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/docs/2018-jun-a-game-of-chance.pdf>; see also the Modern Slavery Outcome Set (MS COS) Report, which identifies access to education as one of the core outcomes that should, as a minimum standard, be reported on in interventions for adult survivor recovery, healing, well-being and reintegration, the Report can be accessed here modernslaverypec.org/assets/downloads/MSCOS-Report-Final.pdf

of the Advisory Group that contributed to the development of the pilot in 2021.

Caseworkers from specialist charities, such as Bakhita House, Medaille Trust, Hestia, Migrants Organise and Rahab (please see appendix I for details on these organisations) identified potential candidates, obtained their consent and completed a referral form and a risk assessment highlighting candidates' vulnerabilities and stressors, which could affect their attendance and participation. The Horizons team then contacted candidates on a one-to-one basis to introduce the programme in more detail and gain a better understanding of the candidates' expectations of the programme.

Staff and volunteers

The Horizons team includes the Project Coordinator (PC) and the Course Navigator (CN), supported by Learning Support Volunteers (LSV) from St Mary's University (see Appendix II for roles and people involved in the delivery of HSS). Two volunteers provided learning support during the online classes. Eight volunteers contributed to the Human Nutrition sessions. They were recruited to assist students to carry out tasks both online and on campus. Two volunteers were engaged in assisting mainly during online classes. The Human Nutrition Department recruited a number of their students to assist during the Human Nutrition classes which gave them the opportunity to develop their professional skills. Volunteers were lecturers or students working on their MA and MSc (Human Trafficking, Education and Human Nutrition). A student from Horizons 2021 volunteered in an administrative role to support Horizons Coordinator.

Delivery of the Programme

The Horizons programme adopts a mixed delivery, two days online and one day on campus. Most students did not own a personal computer or laptop. St Mary's University lent laptops to the students and provided access to Microsoft Office Packages and platforms, such as Zoom, for the duration of the summer school. To enable online participation, students were provided with dongles and internet data, as Wi-Fi connection was not always available at students' accommodation and the cost to them would have been prohibitive.

Students' profiles

Horizons received 16 referrals in 2023. Two students withdrew due to personal circumstances. Horizons is offered to female participants due to funding and capacity restrictions. Additionally, students from the first cohort reported that there were advantages to a whole female group as they 'experienced supportive relationships with one another, which offered emotional wellbeing and decreased anxiety levels'.²

Country of origin

The final cohort for 2023 included 14 students, representing 11 different nationalities. Twelve students started as scheduled, and two were referred to the programme in mid-July and joined the course at this later date.

All but one of the students were in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Most students had a Positive Conclusive Grounds decision but were waiting on their asylum application outcome. One had a 5-year Leave to Remain status.

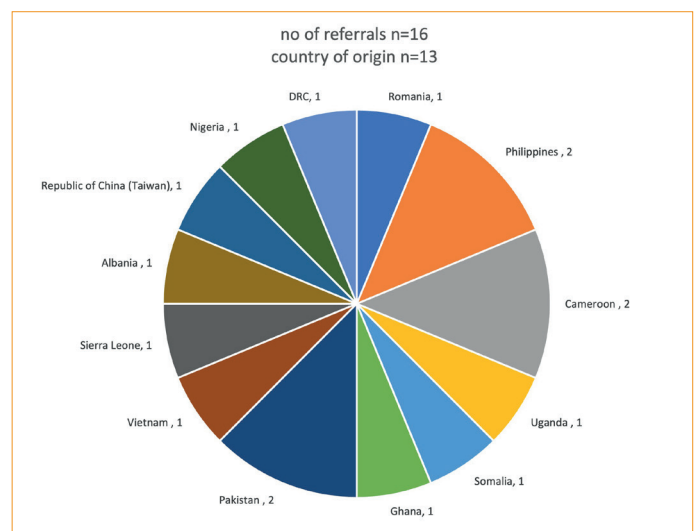


Figure 1: Number of students by nationality

Age groups

Students ages ranged from 24 to 54. The table in Fig 1 shows that five students were in the 24-34 age group; five in the 35-44 age group, and four in the 45-54 age group.

2 The Evaluation report can be downloaded here <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/docs/hss-evaluation-report-21-260-oct21-proof-3-final.pdf>

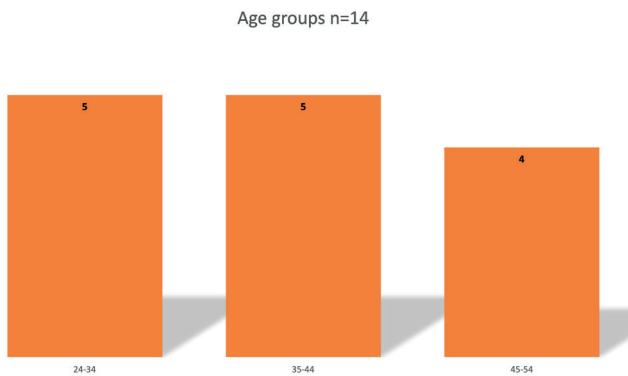


Figure 2: Number of students by age group

Students' expectations and aspirations from attending Horizons

Students were encouraged to discuss their expectations and what they hoped to gain from attending the summer school in their one-to-one initial conversation with the Course Navigator and Project Coordinator and again when completing the 'My initial thoughts' (See appendix III) form on induction day. The chart below illustrates their responses



Figure 3: Students' expectations from attending Horizons

The expectation for most students attending Horizons was that it would provide the opportunity to gain new skills in a new environment (n=12), where they could meet people and make friends (n=6). Another expectation they identified was of gaining skills that could lead to future employment (n=9) or facilitate progression into further education (n=5). There was an expectation that Horizons would contribute to building confidence (n=6). Candidates aspired to be associated with and receive a certificate from a University (n=4).

Expectations to learn new skills for most students was also the desire to improve their English and digital skills. The Project Coordinator and Course Navigator's assessment of a student's ESOL level was based on a simplified version

of ESOL Skills for Life (SfL)³ qualifications considering the student's speaking and comprehension skills, and on a scale that included Entry level, Level 1 and level 2. All learners had L1 in ESOL which was a requirement for the course which was conducted in English. The tables below provide an example of the range of ESL and Digital skills level and that often occurred within the same student. For ESL for instance the same student, P5 in the table below was proficient (L2) in speaking and listening and Entry level 1 in reading and writing. Whereas Student P2 had a Level 2 proficiency in speaking / listening and reading and Level 1 in writing. Student P12 was at Entry level in reading and writing.

Student P5	ESOL level	Student P2	ESOL level	Student P12	ESOL level
Speaking	L2	Speaking	L2	Speaking	Level 1
Writing	Entry level 1	Writing	L1	Writing	Entry level 1
Reading	Entry level 1	Reading	L2	Reading	Entry level 2

A few students had had previous formal education and had a higher ESOL proficiency.

The chart below shows that most students had little or no Digital skills. Most student scored high on communication (*Some Knowledge* bar in the chart below), i.e. emails and social media, for which they used mainly their phone. However, the majority had none or very limited knowledge of using a computer / laptop and Microsoft packages.

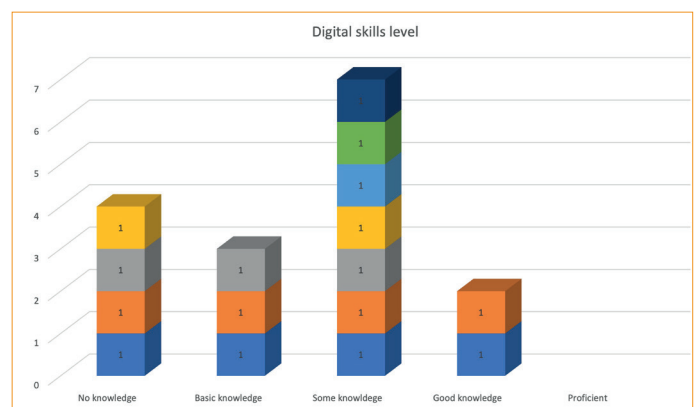


Figure 4: Digital skills levels for 16 students at Initial assessment

This assessment was based on averaging the score on different aspects of IT knowledge, e.g., identifying;

3 ESOL Skills for Life qualifications are made up of 3 units. Speaking, Listening; Reading; Writing. ESOL Skills for Life qualifications can be obtained at: ENTRY levels 1, 2, 3 and Levels 1 and 2. Entry levels are for beginners, levels 1 and 2 are for more confident users.

accessing; communicating; navigating; recording, editing and creating; organising, storing and retrieving; hardware and software. Four students had no IT knowledge before starting the course, three had only basic level knowledge, only two had good knowledge of Microsoft packages or had used them before. The higher bar in the chart (n=7) refers to students whose knowledge of IT centred around use of emails and navigating the Internet.

Attendance

Students are still undergoing their NRM journeys and healing process, which are not linear and require students to dip in and out of education for various reasons such as poor physical health, emotional/mental health challenges, inability to sleep, last minute medical, legal and/or Home Office appointments.

Despite these challenges, attendance was high (78% overall) and there were no notable distinctions in attendance between online and on-campus sessions. Whilst all students were expected to attend all classes and sessions, the programme offered them the flexibility to focus on those they found more attuned to their interests or experiment with new areas of interests.

Curriculum

In 2023, Horizons offered classes in the following subjects:

ESL
Digital Skills
Creative Writing
Human Nutrition
Sport Science (Exercise for health)
Life skills – building confidence and positive self-acceptance
Public Legal Education
Life stories
Employability Skills
Drama
Career Pathways

One-off sessions included:

Floristry workshop – bouquet making
Macramé workshop ⁴
Workshop/Seminar on Students' wellbeing
Workshop on apprenticeships and work pathways in catering

Extra-curricular activities

Introduction to Horticulture – 3-day course in partnership with Kew Gardens

Conference – Building Bridges – Migrant Help

Poetic workshops – organised by RaPal (organisation supporting adult literacy)

Programme Development from 2021-2023

In response to the feedback from Horizons pilot evaluation, several significant improvements were implemented in Horizons 2023.

- A longer pre-entry phase was introduced before the official start to benefit the induction process (focusing on IT set up and resolving IT problems), enabling students to be better prepared for the online learning process.
- The duration of the summer school was extended from six to eight weeks, for a more comprehensive and immersive learning experience.
- The curriculum was enriched by incorporating external activities and opportunities, enhancing the overall educational journey. These external enriching activities not only added value to the curriculum but also provided students with valuable networking/employment opportunities, fostering a holistic and engaging learning environment.

In addition to the changes and improvements initiated in response to the evaluation, students in the 2023 cohort had more options to develop a collegial bond and work collectively through new initiatives and collaborations including:

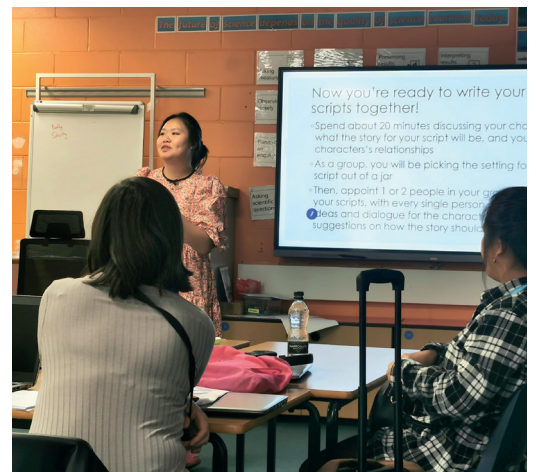
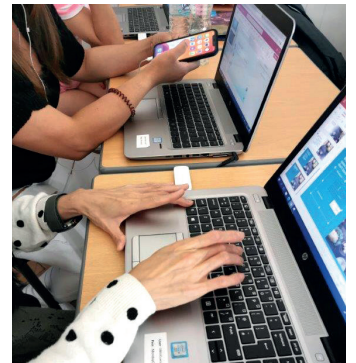
- engaging in group work during the Drama sessions;
- leading on the last Human Nutrition session, in which they had the opportunity to work together to showcase their cooking skills and introduce the tutor and fellow students to a dish from their country of origin;
- working together on a film script for the last Creative writing session
- working in groups on Power Point presentations on a chosen subject of interest to the group.
- attending a conference on the current status of asylum support, organised by Migrant Help, which provided an element of collective civic engagement.

⁴ Led by a practitioner with lived experience



Human Nutrition class showcasing a variety of dishes

As with Horizons 2021, classes were delivered over three days, two days online over Zoom and one day face-to-face on campus. For this cohort, the Digital skills sessions were used to teach students how to use Microsoft OneNote.⁵ They were encouraged to organise their work on the platform throughout the summer school in an attempt to develop understanding and skills of online collaboration. There was greater employment of breakout rooms during online sessions with this cohort, which improved students' online participation.



From top left to bottom right: Students attending classes in flower arranging, group work on PowerPoint presentations, human nutrition, students' wellbeing, and creative writing.

⁵ Microsoft OneNote Education, a widely used tool in higher education, provided each student with a personal workspace, a content library for all course materials, and a collaborative area for group projects.

Evaluation

This evaluation was undertaken to:

- capture the delivery of Horizons programme
- highlight the successes and challenges of the programme
- reveal its effectiveness and benefit to students
- communicate the findings to stakeholders.

Methodology

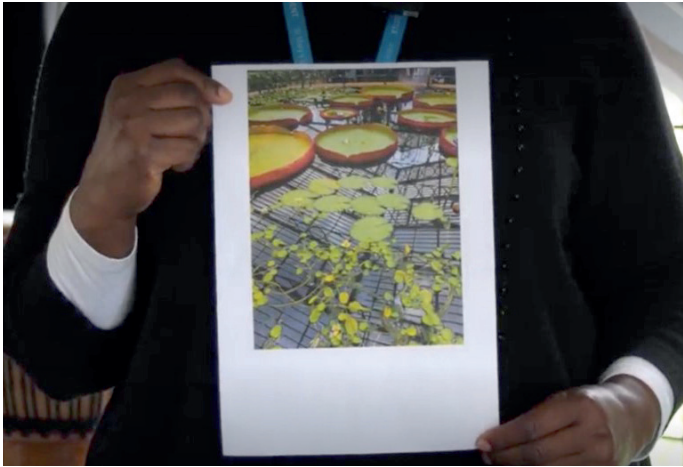
Evaluation tools

This evaluation used a mixed method approach and incorporated feedback from interviews, surveys, observations and one-to-one meetings with the Course Navigator and Project Coordinator. Participants included students, caseworkers, tutors, and volunteers. This enabled a broad and detailed analysis of the programme, whether it had fulfilled its aims and what benefits were evident to the students and others who supported them. See the table below for further details.

Method	Data Collection	Analysis
Initial pre-programme meetings	Initial pre-programme meetings were conducted with all 16 candidates	These provided information on candidates' demographics, educational/skills levels, expectations and needs
'My Initial Thoughts' form	All candidates completed the 'My Initial Thoughts' form on Induction Day (Appendix III)	Thematic analysis
Questionnaires (online, anonymous)	12 questionnaires were completed by three caseworkers, six tutors and four volunteers at the end of Horizons	Thematic Analysis
Students' Feedback	Coffee and Reflection sessions at the end of class Record of daily achievements One-to-one with CN and PC sessions	Thematic Analysis

Creative Interventions and Reflections

In addition to the collection methods listed in the table above, two extended Drama sessions took place in August. They provided space for the students to come together in a creative environment. The Drama Tutor used a range of media to develop group identity and enable each student to illustrate their educational and personal journey. Students were able to give expression to their thoughts and feelings through singing, dancing, playing percussion instruments, physical performances and describing photographs they had taken during the eight weeks of the summer school. In the example below one of the students illustrates her learning experience with a photograph she took during a visit to Kew Gardens.



On this picture you can see the flower growing on the free space. Freedom is important I really love this picture as it keeps me in touch all the rest of my life with St Mary's University and Kew Gardens. I really love this picture and when I see it makes me happy. I am very happy to be in this programme. This picture is one of the pictures I had on Horizons Summer School who remembered me who I am. I am some person who loves everyone, who loves to share, who loves to be free. Because for me I think everyone has freedom to learn, freedom to participate, freedom to everything. Then this picture is a picture that can keep me in contact all the rest of my life with St Mary's university and Kew Gardens. We see the flower, it moves it grows in a free place like a butterfly. Butterfly, different step of her life like we human beings. I am so happy to be here. I am proud of me. I am happy for everything I learnt. I thank all the staff.

Student P6

A short video recording of the second Drama session further documents students' perceptions of the benefit of attending Horizons and being part of St Mary's community.

The variety of reflection opportunities ensured that all students were able to contribute to the evaluation. Language, critical thinking skills and digital skills helpful for reflection were also supported during the programme. For example, in ESL, students were able to practise using the present perfect tense to discuss their experiences during the summer school. They were taught vocabulary for key areas of achievement. Digital skills classes helped students to add feedback to online collaborative documents. Life Skills sessions supported the students to take ownership of their feedback through the use of tools for assertive communication. Drama and Creative writing sessions provided students with the confidence to use their voice, and they were encouraged to engage in discussions and critical thinking during Coffee and Reflection sessions.

Evaluation Ethics

The reason for collecting and recording data was explained to the students during their initial pre-programme meeting and consent was obtained from each student to include anonymised details and comments in the evaluation.

Findings

The main themes identified in the data included:

- A New Identity: Building Confidence as a Student
- New Opportunities in a Supportive Environment
- Learning New Skills
- Confidence Building

Each of these themes is expanded on below with examples from the data.

A New Identity: Building Confidence as a Student

The overarching theme of recognising the possibility for constructing a new identity beyond that of a survivor was evident throughout the evaluation. It intersects with all other themes as outlined below. Engaging in education provides spaces for engaging with new learning experiences, new topics, in diverse environments, with new people, thus building networks and building confidence. The investment in education can be seen clearly as an investment that offers significant returns in the short-term, but that is part of a journey of transformation that builds social, cultural and human capital for individuals along the way.

With only a couple of exceptions, being in a Higher Education environment was a new experience for Horizons' students. They were excited and proud about being St Mary's University students but they also had to adapt to an environment that can be daunting for people who have not been in education before.

Unlike conventional HE educational programmes Horizons does not exclusively focus on academic achievements. Rather, it aims at creating a supportive and empowering environment that boosts students' confidence and their ability to imagine a better future for themselves as a realistic goal. One of the student's Support Workers commented:

“ The students have greatly benefited from the summer school. They have had an opportunity to develop safe relationships with other students and the team at St Mary's and it is great to see how this improves their overall confidence, wellbeing and self-esteem. They each have dreams and aspirations for the future that previously may have felt out of reach. Horizons has helped them to believe that their dreams may become reality and they have taken another step towards these dreams.” *Support Worker*

Creating a supportive and inclusive environment is paramount to the programme, starting with the enrolment process. This process, far from being one of selection and/or exclusion, is a conversation with the student and an opportunity for them to meet the team, ask questions and contribute their thoughts. Prior to starting the programme each student met with a member of Horizons' team to discuss aspirations and expectations from attending the summer school. One of the students, reflecting on that first encounter said:

“ I remember I spoke to one of Horizons' team on the phone and I told her that I don't know how to manage myself, I didn't know how to start, but when I came here Horizons felt like I meet up with my mums. I felt that although my family is not here there are people to look after me, encouraging me ... you can do this ... and I'm looking forward to the future.”
Student P1

During the programme there were multiple opportunities to experience learning in a supportive environment as indicated in the following:

“ I thought that the biggest contributor to the success of the creative writing sessions was the relaxed atmosphere, which allowed the women to feel like they could express themselves without fear of embarrassment or awkwardness. On hindsight there were probably several factors for this, Horizons team helped to set the tone by being encouraging and in good spirits generally.”
Creative Writing Tutor

Learning Support Volunteers (LSV) are another important element in enabling the delivery of Horizons and the making of a supportive environment. One of the LSV who assisted during the Human Nutrition classes observed:

“ I think the programme provides participants with so many benefits. It helped create a community of people who can empathise well with the shared trauma of what they've been through, but are who also have different life experiences and do not want to be defined by a traumatic experience. I'm sure it's reassuring to them to also meet other people who are not survivors of trafficking but are interested in supporting them, especially in this political climate. I've found a lot of people are interested in sharing their cultures and learning about each other's, so this provided them a platform to do so. It also was very valuable in letting them dabble in different fields and try new subjects and skills, and to grow more confident in what they are already skilled at and get a better direction on what they could improve or might want to improve.” *LSV*

Building Networks and Confidence through Extra-Curricular Activities

Limited social networks, language barriers, uncertainty about immigration status and financial constraints often means that survivors don't venture far from the area they live in. Attending Horizons and taking advantage of the extra-curricular activities played a vital role in introducing students not only to new learning opportunities but also new environments and community networks.

The '*Introduction to Horticulture*' course delivered in partnership with Kew Gardens community programme introduced students to a unique green space in London they had never heard of or visited before. The course consisted of tours to specific areas of botanical interest, lectures about the history of the Gardens and its plants, talks by experienced staff and volunteers, and games and exercises to improve students' knowledge. Kew Gardens Community Horticultural Learning Coordinator saw the benefits for Horizons students attending the course as:

'Travelling independently, learning new things, experiencing different food, working collaboratively, being celebrated for who they are. Time in nature and enjoying a large outside space whilst learning about horticulture and botany'.

Speaking about the guided tours of the Gardens and talks from experts in Horticulture, students said:

“ It makes me curious about plants – they have magic powers.’ *Student P5*

“ I really enjoyed the tour in the tropical nursery. Robert (Kew's staff) was fabulous.’ *Student P6*

Kew Gardens deeply affected some of the students and generated positive feelings in them:

“ I felt it opened my heart when I came to Kew.’ *Student P7*

“ The glasshouses, the plant stories and thoughts it gave me, made me strong.’ *Student P6*

These quotes illustrate that the experience in Kew benefited students in several ways. They acquired knowledge of horticulture, learned about the gardens, and importantly, experienced positive feelings about the experience. By attending the Horticultural Course students were also given access to volunteering opportunities, by attending, in their own time, sessions in the Gardens' allotment and talks on specific areas of the Gardens on the first Sunday of every month. These sessions also had a positive effect and elicited positive feelings and memories of home.

“ Being in the allotment made me think of the food back home.’ *Student P8*

“ Coming to Kew was an experience that made me feel like it was home'. The plants in the Temperate House reminded me of my home in Cameroon.’ *Student P6*



(Above) HSS students in Kew Gardens allotment with Community Horticultural Learning Coordinator, Jane Rogers, and Kew volunteer, Chandrika Makwana



(Top left) dark opal basil from Africa, (right) HSS students listening to a talk by Kew volunteer, Anne Rendell, and (below) visiting an exhibition in Kew

Being in an environment that is not only new but also validates survivors' experiences can be empowering. Horizons 2023 cohort attended Building Bridges, the annual Migrant Help Conference on 11th August 2023 which provided a shared platform for a panel of survivors and asylum seekers and professionals in the field. During the Q&A session, two Horizons students felt empowered to take the microphone and speak of their own experience of the health support available to asylum seekers. One of the students reflecting on this later spoke about her fear of public speaking prior to Horizons. She surprised herself when she felt able to take the microphone at the Conference.



Another environment that contributed to a sense of wellbeing was the Library at St Mary's:

“ Today I enjoy my time in the library and I find my peace there.” **Student P3**



Horizons students at the Building Bridges Conference by Migrant Help, 11th August 2023

Other activities such as poetry workshops delivered in partnership with RaPal⁶ provided the opportunity to meet new communities of interest. Participants could apply for a bursary to attend additional poetic workshops with the Writing Room.⁷

One of Horizons students was awarded the bursary and is currently attending the workshops. She recently commented:

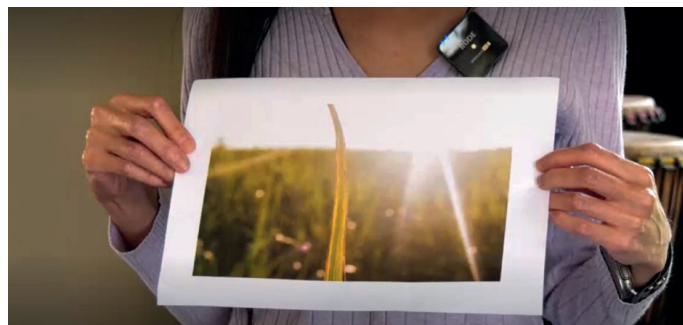
“ The class with Sita (the Writing Tutor) was delightful.’ *Student P9*

Being in new environments improved students’ sense of self. All students reported an improvement in their emotional and physical wellbeing.

The students chose photographs to represent their recovery journeys. They illustrate the sense of freedom and gratitude they have gained by being part of this programme of learning and discovery.



“ I choose this picture because I like the colours, it’s colourful like it relates to my life. We have a colourful life in this world and I like the bird because he can do whatever he wants. He has freedom to go everywhere and the bird can sing. As a bird, same with me, I have freedom unlike before, like I was in the prison. I have freedom.’ *Student P14*



“ When I look at this picture, first it’s the light that catches my eyes. When I look into details, I feel the grace. It’s telling me that I am focused, and I am unique. I see it over times, I find the message is thank God, I am blessed and I have time to wake up in the morning every day. So this picture, eventually gives me a message of blessing.’ *Student P3*

6 Research and Practice in Adult Literacies (RaPAL) is the only UK-wide organisation that focuses on the role of literacies in adult life. <https://www.rapal.org.uk>

7 Online creative writing and community of developing writers <https://writingroom.org.uk>

Learning New Skills

Academic Skills

Learning new skills led to different outcomes for each student. For instance, for one of the students it meant becoming familiar with a laptop and its functions and feeling empowered to move forward:

“ I am old fashioned. I came not knowing keys, what the keyboards are. I couldn't even type my name. I didn't know most of the terminology in the computer or laptop but now I know I can search something. I can go forward. Now I have an idea. I appreciate all what I've gained within this period I've been at St Mary's University.' *Student P2*

For others the Sports Science and Human Nutrition classes introduced them to theories underpinning exercise and nutrition as well as recipes and exercises that they could practice at home and bring into their daily routine.

“ I have learned to have a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally. Including proper food and healthy diet, good exercise, meditation and self-care.' *Student P3*

“ I have really benefitted from the exercise and now try to do some stretching every day.' *Student P4*

The ESOL classes were also important in developing their English language skills:

“ I have improved my word vocabulary and better understanding of words by the help of using dictionary application and websites recommended by our teachers.' *Student P3*

The students learned new communication skills through group work, participating in lectures and tackling topics such as understanding other people's viewpoints in the Life Skills classes.

“ I have developed my listening. I learnt the importance of taking care how I communicate with people.' *Student P4*

Each lesson was a chance to celebrate each individual student by encouraging them to realise their strengths and learn to express their needs. After one of the Life Skills workshops that focused on communication and assertiveness, one of the students described herself enthusiastically to the whole class via the chat box:

“ I am hard working, I have passion, I am friendly person, I AM strong, I am courage, I AM EXCITED.' *Student P12*

Another contributed that she 'was proud of the fact' that she could 'speak up for what I need for my well-being', and had 'learned four types of communication which is very important for my wellbeing' (StudentP4).

Creative Skills

Creative Writing, Drama, and Life Skills sessions provided opportunities for students to explore and practice ways of expressing their creativity throughout the programme. Students enjoyed taking part in these activities and commented on the positive benefit to their overall wellbeing.

“ I want to say thank you to Amandas (Creative Writing Tutor). She supported me to love Creative Writing. I'll never forget you. You are so kind.' *Student P6*

“ Creative writing is good, because it helps me improve my English especially taking a picture and describing it.' *Student P10*

“ I can't forget Sola (Drama Tutor). She made me feel proud, she improved my dancing. She improved my drumming and she improved my peace and happiness.' *Student P5*

Staff and tutors also noted the benefits of the programme especially in improved confidence:

“ It was a joy to see all of them progress in confidence, and in the way they really owned and took pride in what they wrote by the end of the summer school. I felt inspired by some of their ideas myself, and thought many of the women had such a unique way of seeing the world: I will always remember BB beautiful letter to a friend from her fantasy island, describing the pine trees that light up by moonlight. I wish there were a more systematic way of capturing those moments in class and showing it back to them so they're aware of how they created such beauty during their time in class.’
Creative Writing Tutor

“ Drama and music are powerful tools in a healing, exploratory and celebratory process. The positive feedback and enthusiasm during the workshops revealed creative voices that were channelled, shared and celebrated by students and tutor alike. Very empowering!’ *Drama Tutor*

Employment Skills

Although most students attending Horizons had limited or no options to take on paid employment whilst waiting for their immigration status to be resolved, gaining the necessary skills for future employment featured highly in the students' expectations for joining Horizons. The curriculum included sessions on developing employability skills and seminars on CV writing and career pathways delivered by St Mary's University (SMU) Career services and external practitioners such as Sophie Hayes Foundation.

“ It increased their understanding and knowledge about work in the UK and employability skills.’
Sophie Hayes Foundation practitioner

A session on CV writing and interview techniques was delivered as part of the Public Legal Education sessions in which there was a high level of engagement:

“ There were lots of great questions.’
Public Legal Education Tutor

St Mary's Catering Department delivered a session on apprenticeship routes and work placements.

“ I think the students had an opportunity to ask very specific questions about their career progression and get feedback. Students were able to reflect positively on their lives and the things that they've achieved and their values and skill-set.’
SMU Career Services

The students actively participated in these sessions and expressed their appreciation for the valuable advice provided. Commenting on one of the CV writing sessions that focused on how to provide information to account for gaps in employment history, one of the students said:

“ I had another career back home and I am trying to build a new one here. Everything you said has made things clear to me. It has been bothering me how I am going to do a CV as this is not something I thought I would have to do again. Thank you so much.’
Student P2

To encourage students to reflect on skills that are important in a social / work environment, in Digital Skills classes they were encouraged to track their progress on a daily online achievement diary. They were asked to focus on areas such as communication, digital skills, creativity, organisation and timekeeping, collaboration, personal development and confidence (adapted from Key 21st Century Skills Framework⁸).

Tracking progress using the online achievement diary proved to be a significant challenge for the students. It was set as an independent homework task and was an attempt to use a tool that would capture students' progress in a more systematic way. This cohort of students were not used to testing their digital skills and experimenting independently and didn't employ this tool to its full range. However, all had alternatives to provide feedback during their one-to-one meeting with the Course Navigator or Project Coordinator and during Coffee and Reflection sessions at the end of the day. Fig 5 below illustrates data collated from daily input on the online achievement diary by 10 students.

8 The 21st Century Skills Framework focuses on the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in work, life, and citizenship in today's world. The online achievement diary included Communication/Digital skills/Creativity/Organisation and Time keeping/Collaboration/Personal development/Confidence. Some of these key skills were identified in the 2021 HSS Evaluative Report as areas that students had developed.

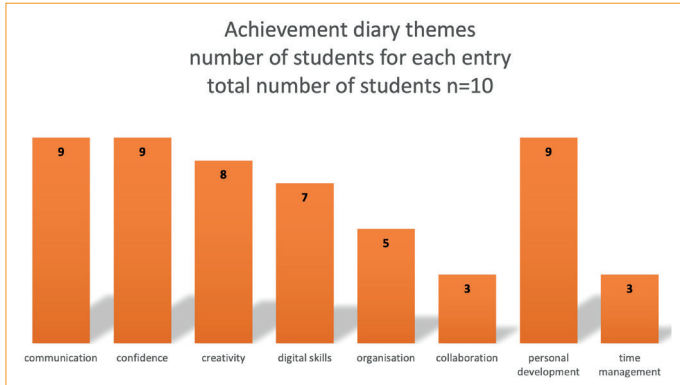


Fig 5 Results from online achievement diary

Of the ten students who used the online achievement diary, nine recorded an improvement in communication, confidence and personal development, eight in creativity, seven in digital skills, five in organisation, and three in collaboration and time management.

On the online diary, students' record of their progress included comments such as:

“ Having knowledge about digital skills and English helps me do things independently and confidently.’ **Student P8**

These reflections were confirmed by the supporting organisations' caseworkers, who referred students to Horizons:

“ She has particularly enjoyed the digital skills class. She has loved learning how to use Microsoft office and has since downloaded on her phone so she can develop her skills.’ **Hestia Caseworker**

Another caseworker shared

“ She was not very confident on the computer at the beginning, but thanks to her digital skills class, [her confidence] has developed.’ **Hestia Caseworker**

As noted above, as well as introducing students to academic subjects and improving their skills, the aim of Horizons was to create a supportive environment that would boost survivors' confidence and their ability to imagine a better future for themselves and feel they can achieve it.

Confidence-Building and Looking to the Future

Students' feedback in the Coffee and Reflection sessions at the end of class and in the one-to-one meetings with the Course Navigator and Project Coordinator show that Horizons helped them to change their perspective, build their confidence and encouraged them to look at future opportunities. During a reflection session one student wrote that she had:

“ ... developed a life-long career goal which I didn't believe would be possible.’ **Student P9**

Another student spoke of how she felt Horizons had empowered her:

“ I have found a great opportunity to learn and study. I have received a privilege to be accepted and regain life from being a victim of traumatic experiences and to be able to live with freedom and successful career.’ **Student P11**

Many of the students shared in their one-to-one meetings with the Course Navigator or Project Coordinator that attending Horizons had developed their confidence. One student who had very little confidence in her ability as a student prior to Horizons spoke of a new belief that she could learn.

“ Because my background, my education very low. So the time that they tell me that they have Horizons Summer School, I told them that I can't do it ... now I'm a graduate at St Mary's University and I know that I can do better.’ **Student P5**

As someone with limited literacy skills, this student worked on writing a poem to herself during the Creative Writing sessions and was delighted to recite it at the Graduation Day event.

Another student told her Support Worker:

“ Before the summer school I did not think I could study and learn things but now I know I can and will be starting an ESOL course in October.’ **Reported by a Support Worker on online feedback form**

There were also reflections on the value of tasks that enabled them to do something positive in groups. The drama workshops provided a particularly good opportunity for students to work in small groups and express their enthusiasm for group exercises. These provided a creative environment where they could learn how to collaborate and understand the benefits of collaborating on a task.

“ **Drama: It was fun! Every group and everyone’s participation created a great collaboration.’ Student P13**

There was also acknowledgement that developing group skills work would have a positive benefit beyond the Summer School:

“ **I have enjoyed the weekly classes, for example, collaborating with others. This is an important useful skill in a working space or environment.’ Student P6**



Being with other survivors helped the students to form connections and understand that they are not alone. In their reflections, many students highlighted the friendships they forged and the sense of belonging to a community.

“ **I have met some new friends, teachers and volunteers, that made the learning journey more exciting, memorable, beneficial, and fun.’ Student P3**



The Life Stories sessions provided further opportunities for inspiration and hope. The sessions were delivered by visiting speakers, themselves people with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking, who shared their experience of taking part in similar educational projects and their progress into further education, apprenticeship and work.

“ **I like the life stories. I feel built up and enriched by others.’ Student P12**

Showcasing presentation skills: a collaborative group project using PowerPoint

The positive effect on students' confidence also features in feedback provided by teachers and caseworkers upon the conclusion of the summer school. Caseworkers reported:

“ The biggest benefit is confidence, meeting other service-users and women from similar backgrounds, a sense of independence, such as traveling, public speaking, and English language.’
Caseworker

“ I feel that the primary benefit to them was a boost to their confidence - that they could write and express their creativity and truth in a way they felt most comfortable with [...] I think they realised that Creative Writing could be a good outlet for empowering themselves by imagining lives and possibilities beyond current realities.’
Creative Writing Tutor

Many of the students mentioned that higher education felt unattainable to them in the initial assessments prior to the programme. However, on completion, they felt proud of being associated with a university and having a student ID card. One of the students, commenting on a picture she had taken to illustrate her educational journey for one of the Drama sessions remarked:



“ This picture reminds me that to dream is possible and being a student of St Mary's, it gives me the privilege and opportunity to be a student and I am certified as a student because of the ID and the laptop. It developed my skills and also this helped me to grow, to dream bigger. I love St Mary's.’ *Student P4*

Horizons inspired some of the students to research future higher education options. One student shared:

“ I have gained some insights into the possible access to higher education for Asylum Seekers, which actually pulled me out from how I was assigned by my circumstances.’ *Student P7*

Another student began the application process for the Compass project at Birkbeck University – a scholarship designed for students from asylum-seeking backgrounds to access higher education courses.

“ Thanks to JJ (a person with lived experience who is currently working as well studying for her MA at SMU) as well as other participants at Summer School, I overcome self-sabotage, then I got a first positive sign as an encouragement from Birkbeck ... Things just started to transform and continue towards a positive and meaningful life.’ *Student P3*

A caseworker reported on the inspiration garnered through engagement in the programme:

“ More than anything, the school has given her time to think about what she wants to do. She has been inspired by visits from past students who are now studying MSc programmes and also the class discussion about the women in STEM.’⁹
Caseworker

Thus, there is ample evidence that all 14 students grew in confidence.

9 Discussion in ESL class on women and the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths.

After the summer school, students were invited to attend a meeting with previous alumni from 2021 who are assisting as an Advisory Group to academic research carried out by the Bakhita Centre. The Alumni Advisory Group has a two-fold purpose: serving as both a safe space for alumni to connect and a pivotal platform to shape research conducted by the Bakhita Centre. With a primary focus on education for survivors of MSHT, this group engages in reflective storytelling sessions. Here, alumni delve into their personal journeys, examining the obstacles they have faced and the milestones they have achieved on their educational pathways.

By sharing their narratives, alumni not only create a supportive environment for each other but also contribute invaluable insights that shape the research initiatives undertaken by the Bakhita Centre. These narratives serve as powerful testimonies, shedding light on the challenges survivors encounter in pursuing education post-trauma. Furthermore, they highlight the significance of milestones reached, inspiring hope and resilience within the survivor community.

Challenges

There were a number of challenges that had to be overcome in planning and running Horizons. They included equipment, travel distance and online learning.

Procedures and Equipment

Horizons 2023 was able to draw on the experience gained and resources created for the pilot in 2021, including knowledge about University policies and procedures, safeguarding training and referral processes. Thus, challenges were fewer and quicker to overcome. Support and teaching staff at St Mary's had more awareness of Horizons and its aims and this also contributed to resolving issues swiftly. For instance, St Mary's IT department stepped in promptly to lend Horizons laptops for the duration of Horizons as students didn't have personal ones and the programme could not meet the cost of purchasing 14 laptops independently.

Travel distance

As with the cohort in 2021 the main challenges were constituted by the distance that students had to travel to attend classes on campus. which made them tired and left little or no time before and after class for socialisation and making full use of St Mary's University's facilities. Most students lived at least 20 miles away from campus and had to travel through London and outside of Greater London on public transport. There were days that travel was disrupted due to transport strikes. One student shared that she felt

'burnt out' due to a mixture of pre-existing sleep issues and long days travelling and then studying. Additionally, it was especially hard to access classes if the study clashed with an important health or legal appointment in a different area of London.

Tutors were alerted to this by the Horizons team and agreed to start classes later which helped decrease students' anxiety. A later start to class, during off peak hours, also helped Horizons contain travel costs within the projected budget.

Online learning

As noted above for Horizons 2023 there was greater employment of breakout rooms during online sessions which improved students' online participation. One of the LSVs noted:

“ I was positively surprised at how well the zoom classes worked. I think that enough support was put in place to enable the students to participate online. In particular I found that the practice of putting people who were struggling in a break-out room 1 to 1 or 1 to 2 with a tutor worked very well. I also found that the pace of the lectures was appropriate and took into account the possible technical difficulties.” LSV

In one of the Coffee and Reflection sessions, when referring to challenges logging into online classes, one student commented:

“ If I need support, no one is at home to help.” Student P12

Students mentioned that they found learning online tiring and it was difficult to sit and focus for such a long period of time.

Feedback from LSVs also highlighted that although:

“ ...the right amount of individual attention was given to each participant and that the ambience in the class was good, I still believe that, if at all possible, it would be a richer experience on campus, face to face.” LSV

In response to students voicing their need for more in person support an extra day on campus was added to the last week of the summer school, replacing the usual online classes.

Solutions

Residentials

Being able to offer residential places to students would provide a solution to complement online learning. This approach would provide a more immersive experience, enabling more face-to-face teaching to address IT problems and one-to-one peer and staff support. Classes could start earlier and finish earlier leaving time for exploring the university campus, its facilities and to promote socialisation.

More residentials would also make financial sense, with a reduction in travel and subsistence costs. These options are under consideration on moving forward and the delivery of the programme in future.

Reflections on Horizons journey and Graduation

On 24th August students attended the Graduation Day. The Bakhita Centre Director awarded a certificate of attendance and staff from Kew Gardens surprised them with an award for attending the Horticultural Course. These were significant moments for the students. They expressed their gratitude and happiness at the opportunity they had had of attending Horizons and becoming part of St Mary's University community.



(Above) Some of Horizons' students with the Kew Gardens' Team, Anne Randell, Jane Rogers and Chandrika Makwana, after being awarded the Introduction to Horticulture Certificate.



(Above and left) Three of Horizons' students being awarded St Mary's Certificate from Dr Carole Murphy, Director of Bakhita Centre

The celebrations continued with spontaneous speeches by the students, dances and photo taking. In the afternoon students, the Horizons team and guests who had attended the Graduation Ceremony, took part in a special macramé workshop. This was delivered by a person with lived experience. She spoke about her trafficking experience and how she currently employs her craft skills to deliver wellbeing workshops to corporate businesses. It was an additional opportunity for Horizons students to reflect positively on progress and future opportunities.



Completing the programme with a graduation ceremony is an opportunity for students to reflect on their journey of learning over the 8 weeks; to appreciate their achievements; and to plan for the future with their new-found skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

This evaluation was conducted by Horizons team and draws from data provided via the referral forms, the students feedback gathered from their achievement diaries, coffee and reflection sessions, one-to-one sessions with the Course Navigator and Project Coordinator, and feedback forms from teaching sessions and from teachers and caseworkers. The feedback was hugely positive and as with the 2021 summer school it confirmed that survivors can thrive in a short period of time in an educational environment that is welcoming and supportive. In addition to academic skills the students spoke of a sense of belonging and genuine enjoyment of the experience. It enabled many of the students to reflect on their strengths and experiences and realise career and educational pathways.

While there were challenges for Horizons 2023 these were few and they were overcome by the collaborative efforts of a dedicated team. This team consisted of external practitioners and university staff who shared a strong commitment to surmounting these obstacles and ensuring the summer school's success. With a firm focus on enhancing the programme, the evaluation proposes key recommendations, representing significant steps towards achieving this overarching goal.

Key Recommendations

Course Navigator role

The idea behind having a separate Course Navigator role is to enhance the overall support structure within the Horizons Summer School. In the pilot delivery, the CN was an individual solely responsible for providing pastoral support throughout the Horizons Summer School, making each learning session efficient and reducing potential disruptions to the learning environment. Due to limited funding, during this year's delivery, the role of CN was merged with the role of the ESL and Digital Skills Tutor. Going forward, the role of CN will be a separate one to enhance the overall efficiency of the programme, ultimately benefiting both students and staff.

Residential options

Residential options would offer a chance for students to immerse themselves in university life, gaining familiarity with the campus and experiencing student life. The long distances to cover to return to their accommodation meant that Horizons 2023 cohort didn't fully utilise the campus facilities, beyond attending classes, visiting the refectory and the Human Nutrition kitchen. Residentials would also enable more staff and peer support.

Laptop Donations

Loaning laptops to our students during Horizons journey was a transformative step. However, being able to gift them laptops would ensure their continued educational journey beyond the Horizons Summer School. With access to laptops, students could extend their learning, engage in further skill development, and access valuable online resources. By donating laptops, we would not only empower them academically but also enhance their digital literacy, a skill crucial in today's technology-driven world.

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Hestia
Rahab
Medaille Trust
Migrants Organise

Bakhita Centre/Horizons Summer School Team

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Dr Anta Brachou, Postdoctoral Researcher

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External Organisations and Practitioners

Sophie Hayes Foundation – Employability Skills sessions

Strength and Stem – Floristry workshop

Amandas Ong – Creative Writing Tutor sessions

Anvita Madan-Bahel – Life Skills sessions

Kate Molan – Public Legal Education sessions

Helen Lewis – Public Legal Education sessions

Mihaela Buga – Macramé workshop

Rachel Witkin, Head of Counter-Trafficking and Publications at Helen Bamber Foundation – training on The Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct (TiCC)

Joanne Chidwick, HERA Chair of Trustees, Life Stories session

Jane Rogers – Community Horticultural Learning Coordinator, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and her team of volunteers Anne Rendell and Chandrika Makwana, 'Introduction to Horticultural' Course

Jane Williamson – Migration Yorkshire, Life Stories session

RaPal – Poetic workshops

Survivor Life Stories Input

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A special thank goes to AK, one of Horizons' 2021 alumni, who provided admin volunteer support for Horizons 2023.

Appendices

Appendix I

Details of Referral organisations

Bakhita House – Caritas Bakhita House was opened in June 2015. Caritas Bakhita House offers emergency support for victims of human trafficking, providing them with the safety and support they need to begin the process of recovery and rehabilitation <https://rcdow.org.uk/donations/bakhita-house>

Hestia – Deliver services across London and the surrounding regions, as well as campaign and advocate nationally on the issues that affect victims of modern slavery, women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, young care leavers and older people <https://www.hestia.org/Pages/Category/our-organisation>

Medaille Trust – Medaille Trust runs ten safe houses across the country, making it one of the UK's largest providers of supported accommodation for victims of modern slavery <https://www.medaille-trust.org.uk>

Rahab – A charity caring for women in situations of risk and vulnerability, and women who have experienced exploitation through modern slavery and gender based violence <https://www.rahabuk.com>

Migrants Organise – Migrants Organise provides a platform for refugees and migrants to organise for power, dignity and justice to enable meaningful inclusion and integration <https://www.migrantsorganise.org>

Appendix II

Horizons Staff and Volunteers role

There were two core staff roles for the Summer School delivery: the Project Coordinator and the Course Navigator. The Project Coordinator was tasked with the operational and logistical planning, coordination, administration and delivery of the Summer School. Additionally, the role was responsible for overseeing safeguarding, as well as being the point of continuity for the students throughout the duration of the eight-week programme and liaising with referral organisations on any practical concerns about the students.

The Course Navigator role is a particular innovative feature of this programme, designed to act as a support to the Project Coordinator for the duration of the delivery but also with the specific responsibility for directly supporting the students. The Course Navigator is a consistent, stabilising, and empathetic presence for the students. Her role is to enhance the overall support structure within the Horizons Summer School.

Learning Support Volunteers (LSV) are vital to Horizons and they are recruited to offer further support and encouragement to students in class and whenever possible on one-one-basis. All LSVs for Horizons 2023 were students at St Mary's University. LSVs have the opportunity to develop professional knowledge in education, modern slavery and working with survivors.

Appendix III

Example of 'My Initial Thoughts' form



July 2023

Name _____

My Initial Thoughts

1. Why do I want to take part in Horizons Summer School?

2. Have I attended similar programmes in the past? If yes, which one?

3. What do I want to gain from being here?

4. What skills do I want to learn?

5. What are my learning goals for this 8-weeks journey?

6. What might be difficult during the Horizons Summer School?



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