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Applied Research, Education and Training

Evaluation of the Horizons Summer School

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	3
Key Recommendations	3
Student Voice	4
Introduction	5
Horizons Summer School Overview	5
Background: Human Rights, Education and Self-Efficacy	8
Models of supporting survivors with education programmes in the UK	9
Methodology	10
Evaluation Findings	11
Findings on HSS Delivery	11
Findings on survivor outcomes and impact	14
Non-academic outcomes	14
Academic learning and skills outcomes	16
Student suggestions for improvement	17
Programme learnings and suggestions for improvement	18
Conclusion and Recommendations	20
Key Recommendations	21
Appendix	22
References	24

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

Executive Summary

Support services in the modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) sector have, for some time, identified gaps in long-term support for survivors of MSHT. These gaps have been confirmed by several academic studies which highlighted that accessing education for survivors during their recovery and reintegration period is particularly difficult. The Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse at St Mary's University developed a pilot summer school for survivors, the first of its kind in the UK, to fulfil their commitment to developing educational responses to MSHT.

The Horizons Summer School (HSS) was proposed as a model for educational provision over the summer period when other educational provision is closed. A six-week programme was designed. The curriculum was agreed based on consultation with the steering group and other partners, who identified the educational needs of participants. Classes were held on three days per week in the summer of 2021, delayed from delivery in 2020 due to Covid-19. The pandemic also affected the plans for face-to-face delivery and a blended learning approach was offered, in which two days were delivered online and one day on campus.

This evaluation assesses the delivery of the programme and its impact on survivors' recovery and reintegration journeys. The evaluation was conducted from the outset of the HSS. Each student was asked to complete a baseline questionnaire to establish their needs and expectations at the start of the summer school. During the programme, sessions were held at the end of each day so that students could reflect on their learning and general experiences of the programme. At the end of the course, all students participated in an interview. Interviews were also conducted with staff and volunteers to develop a deeper insight into the HSS, recognise its successes and identify areas for improvement.

Evaluation findings demonstrate that the programme has significantly and positively impacted on survivors' mental health by building confidence, establishing a sense of belonging, alleviating isolation, and conferring positive thinking and hope for the future. Further positive impacts include the HSS's contribution to students' development of transferable life skills, particularly improved English and communication skills. Overall, the HSS has supported the students in their recovery journey, contributed to building resilience and expanded opportunities for their futures.

This evaluation recommends more educational programmes to support survivors of MSHT, particularly programmes that ensure equity in provision for survivors in different stages of the recovery journey, and that are adaptable to be able to meet assessed needs.

Furthermore, it invites policymakers to recognise the importance of a collaborative multi-agency approach, including education institutions, in the realisation of survivor education. Lastly, it encourages funders and educational institutions to develop and provide educational options for survivors based on the models developed in this HSS pilot project.

Key Recommendations

This evaluation outlines the following recommendations relevant to the HSS programme, survivor support organisations and educational programme implementers, and policymakers:

For the HSS Programme and future implementers

- Offer childcare and accommodation to ensure accessibility and equity in provision and accessibility for survivors with these specific needs.
- Introduce a longer pre-entry phase to benefit the referral, enrolment, and induction process, enabling students to be practically and emotionally prepared for the learning process.
- Deliver the programme over a longer period. A longer programme could have a more pronounced positive impact by allowing more time in the positive learning environment which can foster deeper engagement, the possibility to include optional courses based on individual needs, and greater group social interaction and relationship development.
- Prepare and train volunteers to assist students proactively and adequately in their learning journeys, in line with safeguarding policies and a trauma informed approach.
- Offer a pre-entry language course to benefit those participants who need to develop further English ability to maximise their learning potential.
- Offer a programme primarily based on face-to-face delivery. This would acknowledge the positive role of social interaction and the learning challenges and needs of students. Additional online components could be added to enhance online skills and strengthen capacity for possible home study and/or work in the future.
- Include professional emotional support such as counselling or experienced pastoral care to support the emotional wellbeing needs of students that might arise unexpectedly as a result of the new and intensive learning experience.
- Explore the potential to make survivors 'key persons' in the community by training them to be 'trainers' or volunteers in the future; this way, they could transfer learnings to other people with similar needs.
- Introduce longer term evaluations of educational programmes for survivors, to contribute to and reinforce knowledge about the educational programmes' impacts.

- Ensure the inclusion of an integrated 'move forward' collaboration with education providers and voluntary sector organisations as a final post programme phase, to ensure students are able to take up opportunities to progress in their development beyond the HSS.

For survivor support organisations and educational programme implementers

- Offer educational and training programmes to improve survivor outcomes more widely as part of immediate or long-term support.
- Cultivate strategies to provide educational and training opportunities for survivors.
- Implement or enhance educational programmes relevant to both non-British nationals and British survivors of MSHT to ensure inclusiveness and address varied needs.

For policymakers

- Introduce mechanisms and policies to ensure support for sustainable collaboration between MSHT organisations, practitioners and education institutions in the provision of multidisciplinary education for survivors.
- Introduce and fund dedicated educational programmes starting in survivors' recovery and reflection period. Education benefits survivors in their recovery by creating a path toward further development and building resilience, and importantly, reducing the risk of revictimisation.

Student Voice

On the afternoon of 22nd September, 10 weeks following the completion of the Horizons Summer School, five of the students returned to St Mary's University campus to meet with the Project Coordinator and the Course Navigator to discuss their experiences of the HSS, to provide feedback for the shared learning event on 4th October. All nine students had been invited but some were unable to attend due to other commitments. At the end of the workshop a statement was compiled, which was then emailed to all nine students who had the opportunity to read it. All nine students agreed with the statement. This is what they said:

"We, the students of the Horizons Summer School at St Marys University, met on 22nd September to reflect on our experience. Our discussion focused on three main points:

- What we learned about ourselves
- What we learned from the subjects we were taught at the Summer School
- What can be done differently for future Summer Schools

From this experience we have learned that it is important to be open to new learnings, to be ourselves, to be positive, express ourselves so that we can communicate and be open minded.

Some of us came to the Summer School with the idea that we only wanted to do certain subjects and we couldn't see the need for attending all the classes. We couldn't see what the benefits would be in attending them or thought we knew enough of a certain subject. We discussed why we thought in that way and some ideas that came up were that perhaps we were set in our ways and lacked confidence in ourselves to face something new; we didn't want to disappoint ourselves by failing.

During the six weeks of the summer school we have changed our minds and recognised that there is always something new to learn, that nobody is perfect and being surrounded by people who are positive gives you the power to think positively, face challenges and encourages you to move forward. We no longer think that we cannot do things and we want to give ourselves the opportunity to try out without fear. One of us who in the past was afraid of sitting in front of a computer and worried about being asked to do something has recently been singled out by the teacher at another course she is attending to demonstrate to her fellow students the correct process to log in and set up online accounts.

We have learned not to exclude possibilities because of a set way of thinking, or because it requires effort, or lack of confidence, or worries about not being able to finish, we have learned to persevere.

All the subjects were interesting, and we enjoyed them and learned something new from all of them. Our English language skills and IT skills have improved, we have learned to sew and about nutrition and healthy eating, how to write poetry and write better CVs and learned techniques that will help us in our job search in the UK, how to budget and save money. However, in our discussion we agreed that we have learned additional skills that are not strictly to do with the specific academic subjects. We think that because of the Summer School our communication skills have improved by interacting with different people and different cultures, sharing different kinds of food, and learning from others respecting others and not overreacting because we don't understand cultural differences.

Our confidence has improved by sharing ideas with others and being confident of speaking in another language in front of people without fear of making mistakes.

We have learned about teamwork and to change our routine and mood because you need to be ready and meet the team when class starts. The Summer School has given structure to our week and helped our mood by knowing that three days a week were planned, there was a purpose for getting out of bed and the house.

We have learned about time management through the cooking classes, they have helped us understand the idea of planning ahead, prioritising, choosing, and organising. We have all been surprised that you can achieve so much in less than one hour. From the IT sessions, Employability skills and Life Skills sessions we have learned about working with professionals coming from different perspectives, networking, doing research and London culture.

The Creative Writing workshops have contributed to improve our writing skills but also the confidence to share emotions and personal thoughts knowing that there would be no negative judgment. The Drama session was a great physical and emotional session that has helped us come together as a group and feel confident with each other.

We have learned about problem solving and to ask for help when needed.

We discussed future Summers School and we think that there should be more Drama and physical sessions, dance movement therapy and singing. These can release stress, tension and help people get close to each other.

We think that face-to-face is a better model of delivery, especially when people have not had formal studying before or it happened in the past, or English language skills are limited. It is much easier to ask questions in person than online when you cannot find the right words. There was a wide age range in our group and face-to-face sessions would have been helpful.

Creative writing and English lessons complemented each other, and we believe that more time should be dedicated to pronunciation, spelling, conversation.

In our discussion we agreed that group work is important and beneficial, and more time should be allocated to that. The practical classes such as Fashion Upcycling and Human Nutrition were also important, in our view because they were an opportunity for socialising, sharing ideas and find out more about the other students. They were calming and relaxing. We discussed if the Summer School could be delivered one day per week, especially if the university was far from where students live. We agreed that this wouldn't be a good choice, students would forget what they had done from one week to the next. In our view 3 days per week is a good schedule, and the challenge of travelling can be overcome by delivering one or two days online if necessary. The Summer School should last more than six weeks, another two additional weeks would have made an even greater difference.

As mentioned before more physical activities should be added, more drama sessions and creative activities, and when possible, consults with future students for practical sessions. They may have skills such as knitting or beading that they may want to bring to the group and develop. It would also be good to give away as gifts products made in practical sessions or sell them to raise money to support other people in need. This is a summary of our discussion and we all agreed that the Summer School has been a positive and enriching experience that we would recommend to other students, and we hope there will be many more in the future.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation of the Horizons Summer School (HSS) developed by the Bakhita Centre. The Horizons Summer School is a pilot project of a new educational programme designed for survivors of MSHT in the UK, implemented at the university for six weeks during the summer of 2021.

The research for this evaluation was conducted from the inception of the summer school starting in June 2021 and undertaken by an independent MSHT practitioner, in the fulfilment of a master's degree. The evaluation aims were to:

1. Review the delivery of the HSS programme, identifying programme challenges and successes.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the model, and the outcomes and impact on the lives of survivors of modern slavery.

Findings are highlighted to inform stakeholders of the learning from the project and to share knowledge for other programmes that may wish to instigate and/or improve educational opportunities for survivors of MSHT in the UK.

The following questions guided the research:

3. What impact has access to education on survivors of modern slavery during their recovery journey?
4. How is the programme delivered to meet the survivors' needs?
5. What were the challenges and successes?
6. How has this programme impacted the survivors to develop life skills to support their recovery and integration into society?

Horizons Summer School Overview

The Horizons Summer School was designed for survivors of MSHT and implemented by the Bakhita Centre. The programme aimed to offer education for survivors that could potentially increase self-confidence and resilience, develop life skills, decrease isolation, and create a path toward further education as a helpful tool for reintegration. The HSS project was supported by funding from HSBC and the Co-op as well as in-kind contributions of St Mary's University, and the time and expertise given by project partners and steering group members.

The HSS was delivered three days a week for six consecutive weeks. The course was, in the first planning stage, designed to be delivered exclusively on campus with face-to-face teaching. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many elements of the programme had to be altered in line with university and government policies to minimise the spread

of the virus, resulting in the programme's adaptation to a blended teaching model. Online lessons over two days were arranged for theoretical/discussion-based subjects such as English, Employability Skills, IT Skills, Navigating a New Culture and Life Skills, while on-campus lessons over one day were kept for subjects that necessitated live interaction elements such as cooking, sewing, creative writing and drama. All participants were equipped with laptops to facilitate learning, and University IT accounts were set up for students to enable access to online meetings and materials from home.

A steering group was set up following confirmation of funding. This ensured input and expertise from experienced sector professionals and organisations to contribute to the collaborative design of the HSS approach, format, and delivery. Steering group members included representatives from Hestia, Co-op and Bright Futures, Bakhita Centre, Survivors Alliance, Bakhita House, Sophie Hayes Foundation, City Hearts, Snowdrop, Salvation Army, Human Trafficking Foundation (HTF), Her Equality Rights and Autonomy (HERA), Student Services- St Mary's University, Justice and Care (see appendix).

Curriculum

The following subjects were offered on the course:

- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- ICT (information and communication technology)
- Human Nutrition
- Employability Skills
- Creative Writing
- Fashion Upcycling
- Navigating a New Culture and Life Skills
- Life Stories – Visiting speakers.



In addition to the main courses, individual sessions of the following subjects were offered:

- Drama: The Spoken Word
- Financial Wellbeing
- Students' Wellbeing
- Building for Future Success (Careers).

HSS offered an induction day to introduce students to the team, course tutors, evaluation process and St Mary's campus. This day was also used to set up computers and sort out IT issues for the next learning day.

Staffing

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 six-week programme and liaising with referral organisations on any practical concerns about the students.

The Course Navigator role was a particular innovative feature of this programme, designed to act as a support to the Project Coordinator for the duration of the six-week delivery but also with the specific responsibility for directly supporting the students. The Course Navigator was envisioned as a consistent, stabilising, and empathetic presence for the students to help foster familiarity and an environment of

inclusion and acceptance, as well as ensure any difficulties were picked up in classes and assistance offered. The Project Coordinator and Course Navigator assisted the students through the programme, met with the students for one-on-one tutorials and facilitated daily reflection sessions.

Referrals

A process to recruit and enrol participants was implemented. Student referrals came from partner support agencies including Rahab, Medaille Trust, Bakhita House, Hestia and Migrants Organise. Student referrals were submitted by support workers who additionally completed the risk assessments for their candidates, which considered their suitability for the course taking account of their physical and mental health needs, accommodation, travel, and other individual issues. Upon referral, HSS staff then met with each candidate to discuss the programme and their participation. Staff members who facilitated the assessment and enrolment process had previous knowledge and experience supporting survivors of MSHT and vulnerable groups. The project was designed for survivors of MSHT, and the experiences of the HSS participants are acknowledged as such. However, for the purpose of this evaluation going forward, the participants will be referred to as 'students', to acknowledge their status on the HSS.

Student profile

Gender

All students on the HSS were female, however it must be noted that the original design of the Horizons Summer School included provision for both male and female survivors of MSHT, in line with a trauma informed approach. Due to limitations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic it was only possible to offer places to female students. This will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

Age

Students ages ranged from 28 to 57. As detailed in Table 1 below, five students were in the 31-40 age group, two in the 41-50 group, and one in each of the 18-30 and the 51-60 age groups.

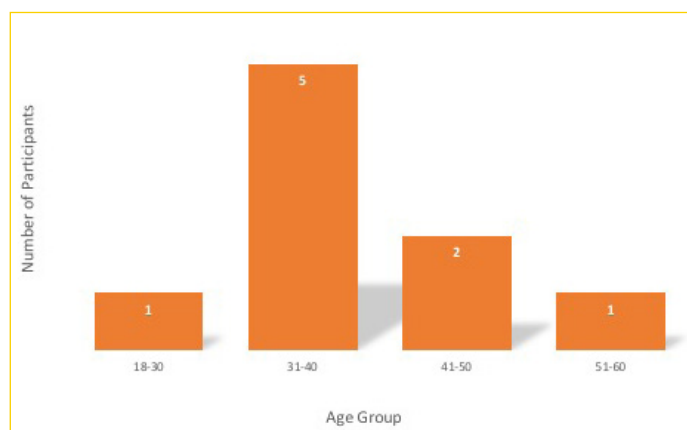


Figure 1. Participant's age

The participants' age diversity indicates the programme's flexibility in delivering content for different age groups. Students also had diverse educational backgrounds, with some students having previously completed university education in their home countries while others had very little or no education.

Country of origin

Students came from seven (7) different nationalities, a feature which complemented the cultural awareness and navigation components of the curricula. The group's diversity offered the opportunity for cultural exchange, and contributed to improved understanding of cultural differences, creating an environment of valuing inclusivity and diversity.

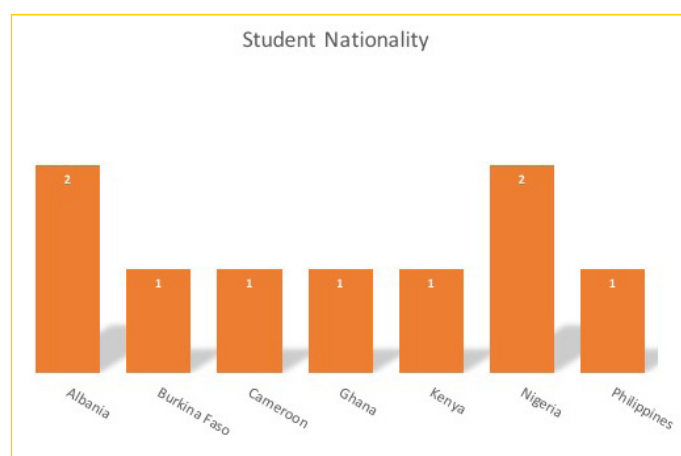


Figure 2. Participant's nationality

All participants were entered in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Seven were awaiting a decision and two had already obtained a Positive Conclusive Grounds Decision.

Needs and expectations of the HSS

All participants of the HSS completed a baseline questionnaire on the induction day at the start of the summer school. The data collected revealed the varied needs of the students as illustrated in Figure 3.

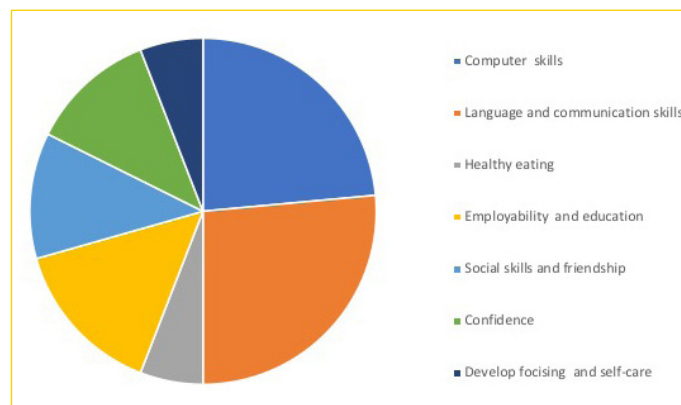


Figure 3: Needs of students

Students desire to improve learning on subjects as diverse as English, communication and computer skills were reflected in the baseline questionnaire. It is expected that this learning will contribute to students' ability to undertake further education and assist with future career opportunities. Improved English language and communication skills also enables access to services as well as the ability to self-advocate.



Figure 4: Expectations and goals of students

Although the list in Figure 4 depicts only the most general expectations shared by the students, it gives insight into the complexity of their needs and the necessary support required to help them achieve these goals, even beyond the HSS.

Summary

The students who participated in this pilot summer school came from diverse backgrounds, nationalities and ages, with varied levels of education. Their expectations of the programme illustrate their wishes to engage with a variety of academic, practical and life skill subjects. The theme of improving confidence and its links to mental health are regarded as key elements that need addressing in recovery. The following literature review outlines some of the debates and provides evidence of the benefits of education for survivors of MSHT and other trauma.

Background: Human Rights, Education and Self-Efficacy

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights prioritises education as a human right and underlines that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and freedoms.¹ As a fundamental right to personal

development, education should be an opportunity afforded to survivors of MSHT. This has been emphasised in the UK's Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards,² which reinforces the need for an integrated, holistic, and human rights-based approach to trafficking and victim-centred support for survivors, including access to education.

Engagement with tailored education has been identified as an important component of long-term support for survivors³ which is fundamental to their recovery as it creates a foundation for integration, reduces vulnerability and is key to restoring capacities.⁴ And it has been identified that survivors of MSHT in particular would benefit exponentially from literacy education, employment and training services.⁵ Education for survivors is multipurposed, as it can contribute to alleviating many of the challenges that survivors face on a daily basis, which are numerous. Some of these challenges are linked to the uncertainty of their status due to severe delays in making decisions within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), with survivors often spending months or years in limbo unable to move forward while waiting for a decision to be made.⁶ Notably, beyond the 45-day reflection and recovery period during which a decision is supposed to be made on their case, survivors face a lack of tailored support as there are no statutory provisions for long-term support and any support is highly fragmented.⁷

The fragility in long-term support for recovery and reintegration of survivors is documented as resulting of British immigration policy since the 1990s, which precipitated cuts in funding for agencies that promote integration into British culture.⁸ This resulted in exacerbating a plethora of challenges including access to housing, mental health support, and to developmental programmes such as education and career possibilities. There has been little development in terms of Statutory provision or guidelines for supporting trafficked persons in the longer term.⁹

- 2 Human Trafficking Foundation (2018) *The Slavery and Trafficking Survivors Care Standards*.
- 3 Balch, A., Craig, G., Roberts, K. and William-Woods, A. (2019) *The Co-op's Bright Future programme: An independent interim review*. University of Liverpool.
- 4 Nicholson, A., Schwarz, K. Landmann, T. & Griffith, A. (2019) *The Modern Slavery Victim Support Bill: A Cost Benefit Analysis*. University of Nottingham, Rights Lab.
- 5 Idris, I. (2017) *Interventions to support victims of modern slavery, K4D Helpdesk Report*. Brighton, Institute of Development Studies.
- 6 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.
- 7 The Antitrafficking Monitoring Group (2018) *Before the harm is done: Examining the UK's response to the prevention of trafficking*.
- 8 Spiteri, D. (2019) Asylum-seeking students' experience of higher education in the UK. In: Sengupta, E. and Blessinger, P. ed(s), *Language, Teaching, and Pedagogy for Refugee Education (Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Vol. 15)*. Emerald Publishing Limited. pp. 17-26.
- 9 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.

1 United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 26:2).

It is well documented that survivors of modern slavery have experienced high levels of traumatic events.¹⁰ Challenges arising from these traumatic experiences or from their experience in the system during their recovery journey,¹¹ and from their displacement in the case of non-British nationals, can be obstacles to recovery and reintegration. Traumatic experiences and exploitation negatively affect survivors' self-perception and perception of personal freedom, their ability to cope with everyday challenges,¹² and contributes to conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and many other mental health difficulties.¹³ For displaced non-British nationals, unhealthy detachment from their homes and lack of family support can cause identity confusion and mental health deterioration. Isolation and mental health issues are consequently frequently experienced by survivors of MSHT.¹⁴

To assist in alleviating these obstacles to recovery and reintegration, survivors' engagement in different groups with set objectives, such as education provides them with a constructive environment to develop a sense of belonging and reflect on personal identity. In this frame, educational groups could offer the right environment for fostering healing steps forward for survivors, and further, to bring this into the community where they live.

In addition to offering the opportunity to develop transferable skills, improve quality of life, and expand opportunities for a better future,¹⁵ learning interventions have also been found to positively affect various health outcomes¹⁶ and importantly have been seen to reduce the risk of poor mental health.¹⁷ The development of confidence and life skills that education offers has an enormous impact on the survivors' ability to

recover and build resilience,¹⁸ and training and education empowers individuals to engage with service providers and achieve the independence needed for their long-term wellbeing.

By participating in education programmes, survivors gain the opportunity to start building their self-efficacy,¹⁹ that is their beliefs about being able to do something. It is established through achieving successful outcomes which contribute to building confidence in those activities which have been mastered. Gaining self-efficacy can improve the concept of self which is vital to produce specific actions needed to take care of self and be independent. These kinds of 'mastery experiences' in an educational setting can create a path for greater independence and toward future education or employment. In this way education is a valuable tool for survivors' long-term support, in providing skills and abilities for an independent life.

It is awareness of both the gap in provision of support for survivors of MSHT in the UK, including opportunities for education and employment,²⁰ and awareness of the many benefits of education, that gave rise to the design of the Horizons Summer School. It was conceptualised as a proof of concept to determine if education support for survivors could be accommodated within higher education institutions in the UK, universities in particular, by leveraging existing resources to fill this gap. While it is acknowledged that other services are available for the provision of educational options for survivors and asylum seekers, it is noted that no other comprehensive multi-subject programme expressly designed with survivors of MSHT in mind, currently exists at a university in the UK. It aims to overcome the barriers that survivors face in accessing education, notably higher education, which include finance, language barriers, difficulties in providing prior educational documentation, immigration status, health, and mental health issues. For these reasons the HSS is an innovation in the sector.

Models of supporting survivors with education programmes in the UK

When exploring education and employability opportunities for survivors of MSHT in the UK, some current and past programmes need to be recognised and commended. Several education institutions and voluntary sector organisations have made efforts to provide accessible opportunities in education and employability programmes to survivors of MSHT, asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable groups in the UK.

- 10 Katona C., Robjant K., Shapcott, R. and Witkin, R. (2015) *Addressing mental health needs in survivors of modern slavery: A critical review and research agenda*. Helen Bamber Foundation.
- 11 Van Dyke, R. and Brachou, A. (2021) *What looks promising for tackling modern slavery: A review of practice-based research*. St Mary's University Twickenham, Bhakita Centre for Research on Slavery, Abuse and Exploitation.
- 12 Robjant, K. (2016) *Statement of Katy Robjant, Vivo International, DRC*. In: *Revealing the Child Faces of Modern Slavery: Expert Panel on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery 2016*, 2 December 2016, Geneva. OHCHR.
- 13 Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Abas, M., Light, M., and Watts, C. (2010) The relationship of trauma to mental disorders among trafficked and sexually exploited girls and women. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(12), pp. 2442-2449.
- 14 Katona C., Robjant K., Shapcott, R. and Witkin, R. (2015) *Addressing mental health needs in survivors of modern slavery: A critical review and research agenda*. Helen Bamber Foundation. f
- 15 Taylor, S. and Sidhu, R.K. (2012) Supporting refugee students in schools: what constitutes inclusive education?. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 16(1), pp. 39-56.
- 16 Grossman, M. (2000 & 2005) cited in: Chevalier, A. and Feinstein, L. (2006) *Sheepskin or prozac: the causal effect of education on mental health*. IZA Discussion Papers, No. 2231. Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). Bonn.
- 17 Chevalier, A. and Feinstein, L. (2006) *Sheepskin or prozac: the causal effect of education on mental health*. IZA Discussion Papers, No. 2231. Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). Bonn.

- 18 Schuller, T., Preston, J., Hammond, C., Brassett-Grundy, A. and Bynner, J. (2004) *The benefits of learning: The impact of education on health, family life and social capital* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- 19 Bandura, A. (1977) Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*. 84, pp. 191-215.
- 20 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

Her Economic Rights and Autonomy (HERA)²¹ works with young women vulnerable to trafficking and re-trafficking to pursue their aspirations and ambitions for a better life. HERA delivers entrepreneurship courses, which are designed to equip women with the business skills to start a career or launch a business. HERA courses provide a range of workshops to teach students valuable skills, through group work and self-reflection students grow in confidence and their understanding.

Sophie Hayes Foundation²² offers programmes designed to support MSHT survivors by sharing essential life skills that will help with confidence building, followed by essential skills development for future employment and education. In addition to group and one-to-one workshops, they offer 4-6 months of coaching sessions to prepare participants for work placements, further education, internships, and volunteering opportunities.

The Bright Future programme,²³ launched by the Co-operative Group (Co-op) in 2017, offers paid work placements and jobs for survivors of modern slavery and is recognised as an excellent initiative in supporting survivors to build employment skills. An independent review of this programme found that it offers a clear pathway to rebuild lives for survivors of MSHT who have the right to work in the country, develop emotional stability and acquire a suitable level of English.²⁴

In partnership with refugee organisations, the City of Sanctuary has created the “Universities of Sanctuary”²⁵ scheme where higher education institutions provide educational opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers.

As part of their post-NRM support services, the Snowdrop Project²⁶ offers education and employment opportunities to empower survivors, including English language provision, and in partnership with the Co-op’s Bright Future Programme mentioned above, paid work opportunities for survivors.

Free Thinking²⁷ was an educational course for MSHT survivors developed in 2018 at Northern College in South Yorkshire. The programme’s benefits are known to be long-term as many of the students are now in employment or further study.²⁸ This course consisted of various practical and creative subjects to improve students’ life skills and build self-confidence.

Methodology

This evaluation was undertaken to review the delivery of the HSS programme and underline innovations, challenges and strengths; to reveal the programme’s impact on participants who are survivors of modern slavery; and to highlight and communicate the findings to stakeholders.

Research Design

A flexible design was selected for the research, utilising a case study approach, including interviews, surveys, and observations. The case study approach enabled data collection from the group of students in the specific context of the HSS, to generate knowledge of the programme and understand its impact on survivors.

Research Ethics

This research involves data collection from survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, as such the research process has complied with the ethical guidelines set out by St Mary’s University. Ethics approval was granted by the St Mary’s University Ethics Sub-Committee prior to data collection. The researcher and the evaluation were introduced to the participants on the HSS induction day. The evaluation was explained to the students and consent was granted by each student to participate. They were reassured about confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the right to withdraw from the evaluation at any point, to minimise potential anxiety and to foster a trusting relationship with the researcher. A trauma-informed approach was used during the study, and all ethical issues were monitored throughout the research process. Additionally, as the research was undertaken during the summer of 2021, the data collection was in line with governmental restrictions in place regarding the Covid-19 Pandemic.

21 For more information, please see: <https://hera.international/business-training/>

22 For more information, please see: www.sophiehayesfoundation.org/programmes

23 For more information, please see: www.co-operative.coop/ethics/bright-future

24 Balch, A., Craig, G., Roberts, K. and William-Woods, A. (2019) *The Co-op’s Bright Future programme: An independent Interim Review*. University of Liverpool.

25 For more information, please see: <https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/>

26 For more information, please see: <https://snowdropproject.co.uk/casework-befriending/education-and-employment/>

27 For more information, please see: <https://www.northern.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Northern-College-Brochure-Free-Thinking.pdf>

28 Williamson, J. (2019) Free Thinking: Lessons learned from survivors of modern slavery, Part One. *European Commission*. 21 August 2019 [Blog]. Available at: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/free-thinking-lessons-learned-survivors-modern-slavery-part-one>

Data collection methods

Method	Data collection	Analysis
Semi Structured Interviews	Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 9 students of the HSS, staff members and tutors, as following: Nine interviews with students (five interviews online via Zoom, and four are conducted face-to-face at St Mary's University) Three online interviews with staff Three online interviews with tutors	Thematic analysis
Participant Questionnaires	Nine questionnaires completed by the participants at the beginning of the HSS.	Thematic analysis
Participant Observation	Participant observation during six coffee & reflection sessions online and one full day at the university. Participant observation during a single reflective meeting with Learning Support Volunteers.	Thematic analysis
Secondary Data	Review and consideration of Learning Support Volunteers' notes taken during classes. These were provided by HSS staff with the consent of the volunteers.	Thematic analysis

Evaluation Findings

Findings on HSS Delivery

A new survivor-tailored approach

In responding to the need for better support for survivors and enhanced educational options that could contribute to their long-term recovery and reintegration,²⁹ the concept of the summer school was tailored to offer more than just knowledge but a diverse set of life-enhancing and transferable skills, as well as a community of help and support.

One staff member reflected:

“ I think that drama, student wellbeing and creative writing was another way of accessing a different kind of student experience, and I think some of that stuff was the stuff that really touched the women because some of the women who go to local colleges said it wasn't like going into one of those colleges, this was going to and belonging to a community and a group of people. So, I think doing it in that format and bringing people together intensively for those weeks create a very kind of special experience for students.” **Staff member**

Additionally, although the programme was a group programme, students' development process was tailored individually based on their needs. Individual meetings with the Course Navigator or Project Coordinator ensured monitoring of their educational needs and offered tailored support to ensure individualised, competency-based progress. Learning Support Volunteers also offered further support and encouragement to students and were viewed by students as peer mentors.

All members of the steering group as well as the referral partners contributed to ensuring a carefully tailored approach for this programme. This illustrates and affirms the importance of collaboration in the sector in efforts to offer support for survivors.

Trauma-informed approach

Trauma-informed services are defined as 'those in which delivery is influenced by an understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence and victimisation on an individual's life and development'.³⁰ MSHT stakeholders stress the importance of trauma-informed approaches as fundamental in offering safety and minimising risks of re-traumatisation.³¹

29 Murphy, C. (2020) Surviving trafficking, seeking asylum: Waiting, status and the state. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 41(5/6), pp. 627-642.

30 Elliott, D.E., Bjelajac, P., Fallot, R.D., Markoff, L.S. and Reed, B.G. (2005) Trauma-informed or trauma-denied: Principles and implementation of trauma-informed services for women. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 33(4), p. 462

31 Witkin, R., and Robjant, K. (2018) *The Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct for all Professionals working with Survivors of Human Trafficking and Slavery*. Helen Bamber Foundation.



This approach was a feature in the delivery of the HSS. The environment reflected consideration for students' needs and respect of culture and individuality through a trauma-informed approach and non-judgmental communication. Staff and tutors had an excellent awareness of working with survivors of trauma, and the relationship created between the survivors and staff incorporated vital elements of trust and emotional support. It is noted that the HSS undertook to ensure survivors' emotional wellbeing. One student highlighted this as follows:

“The staff has some much calmness and giving us love and not putting pressure...” **Student**

All staff, volunteers and tutors who taught the modules had experience and knowledge of working with survivors of MSHT or other vulnerable groups. Online training and information sharing sessions with volunteers and tutors prior to the start of the summer school assured a high level of understanding of participants' needs according to a trauma-informed approach and in line with care standards when working with survivors.³²

32 Human Trafficking Foundation (2018) *The Slavery and Trafficking Survivors Care Standards*.

“Summer school was perfect; the teachers were very calm, gentle... I have always said, taking care of adults, if you don't have the passion, you can't do it. The teachers have been amazing, like taking their time especially, I have never been in a sewing machine before, but they are taking their time to teach me.” **Student**

Reflection sessions

The programme included reflection sessions at the end of every day, as a space for students to evaluate their experiences and to reflect on their learning process. Reflection has been recognised as crucial activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, and evaluate it³³ and one that is essential in competency-based education models for vulnerable learners.³⁴ This recollection and recapturing of experience in the daily reflection sessions was evident, as was the development of critical thinking; a valuable transferrable skill beyond academic learning. Students commented that these sessions were one of their favourite components of the programme.

“One thing I liked about the course was, we finished a section every day, and they will call, ask individually how you feel about the course today? or what did you learn and the kind of feedback.” **Student**

Moreover, feedback from staff on the daily coffee and reflection sessions noted high levels of, positive energy amongst the group whilst speaking and reflecting on their learning process and experience. These reflection sessions, facilitated discussions and sharing opportunities contributed to increasing students' confidence and ensuring they felt heard and prioritised. This way of communication increases trust and confidence and creates the 'illusion of time',³⁵ in line with the Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct, which means that students have felt that staff were there for them without perceiving the potential pressure of time.

Bespoke flexible curricula

The teaching programme, combining academic knowledge with various practical and creative subjects, was perceived as innovative. The curricula were broadly decided from the collaborative pre-delivery steering group consultations and from the experience of survivors' support organisations and finalised nearer delivery as lecturer availability was confirmed.

33 Boud, D., Keogh, R. and Walker, D. (2013) *Reflection Turning Experience into Learning*. Independence Taylor And Francis.

34 Russell, C. and Weaver, N. (2019) Reaching refugees: Southern New Hampshire University's project-based degree model for refugee higher education'. In: Sengupta, E. and Blessinger, P. ed(s), *Language, Teaching, and Pedagogy for Refugee Education*. Emerald Publishing Limited. pp. 157-180. And; Hatcher, J.A. and Bringle, R.G. (1997) Reflection: Bridging the gap between service and learning. *College Teaching*. 45(4), pp. 153-158.

35 Witkin, R., and Robjant, K. (2018) *The Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct for all Professionals working with Survivors of Human Trafficking and Slavery*. Helen Bamber Foundation.



Alongside the core subjects, individual sessions were included to support students in developing knowledge and skills useful for everyday activities, such as financial wellbeing and budgeting. Moreover, emotional wellbeing, career advice and real-life stories from other survivors inspired hope among students. Students reported their enjoyment of the varied enriching aspects of the curricula, highlighting the creative writing, which surprised many, and the cooking, which they additionally found beneficial.

Staff noted that students responded differently to different components of their learning which points to the benefits of a varied curricula, as when some struggled with some lessons, they were more successful in others, even helping other students. The varied curricula in this way also diminished the risk of any one student being unable to advance or succeed in some way through their learning journey.

“ I think all the women who engaged in the programme benefited in some way, maybe some more than others, but I do believe it benefited them all.” Staff member

The design of the programme also took into account that most of the participants did not have the right to work in the UK, so the classes were designed to develop transferable skills to help survivors in various ways in their recovery and reintegration journeys. Flexibility, in approach and delivery, which has been recognised as essential in learning programmes for vulnerable people,³⁶ along with on-the-ground-access to academic support, characterised HSS and indicates an element of its success.

University-based programme

There were both benefits and challenges to the HSS being implemented in a higher education institution. Existing university resources offered added value to the HSS, as resources and facilities offered not only appropriate class spaces but also staff expertise, which ensured a safe place for survivors and eased recruiting and training new staff for some subjects.

“ It seems like St Mary's is a very safe, protected environment where a lot of staff are aware of survivors needs. So, if they were to replicate it in another university, it would need to be that sort of safe environment, and I think St Mary's as a university has done that really well, and the staff as well.” Lecturer

“ We could use the facilities in terms of the teaching spaces, the refectory and the nutrition, the cooking space for nutrition degrees, the drama studios, and draw on all of the skills and expertise of their teaching staff and the support staff. So it really did make for a kind of really fantastic, flexible program that would have been difficult to do anywhere else, because we could not just out of the blue magic a careers person who, who is lovely and understands the background of these students.” Staff member

However, when planning such a programme in a university, there were challenges due to internal university or departmental structures and policies, so procedures and policies need to be considered at an early stage in the planning. Staff noted that successive steps in planning often required unexpected additional time to resolve. However, if analysing both the advantages and the challenges of implementing the summer school in a university, the benefits were significant, and most challenges were part of the learning process of this pilot programme; consequently, any obstacles can be overcome with further improvements to future planning and delivery.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on delivery

The implementation of the HSS was directly affected by external factors related to the Covid-19 pandemic, which presented several challenges including staff change, change of scheduled delivery timeline and adapting new delivery format and curricula based on lecturer availability, all the while preserving the original budget. Nevertheless, in such an unprecedented situation, the programme achieved the primary objective of offering a legitimate and valuable programme for survivors.

36 Russell, C. and Weaver, N. (2019) Reaching refugees: Southern New Hampshire University's project-based degree model for refugee higher education'. In: Sengupta, E. and Blessinger, P. ed(s), *Language, Teaching, and Pedagogy for Refugee Education*. Emerald Publishing Limited. pp. 157-180.

Findings on survivor outcomes and impact

Non-academic outcomes

Students shared that the programme positively impacted their emotional and mental wellbeing, their sense of self and their outlook in numerous ways. The key themes in this regard relate to managing anxiety and depression and improved emotional resilience; finding motivation and a positive frame of mind; belonging and friendship; easing of isolation and loneliness; hopefulness for the future; gaining self-esteem and confidence particularly through self-efficacy. All students reported a vast improvement in these areas.

“Trust me; it has helped me a lot in my personal life. Before I started summer school I was not okay at all, honestly. I do not know, I was like, my mind was not settled... I've been in my room crying, I had nothing to do just sit here thinking, but when I heard that I have the summer school to go to, and when I get there, meet friends, my teachers, they are so good, so friendly, I cannot wait to go. Everybody, even in my house, told me: you have changed. They do not see me at home all the time. So that is good.” **Survivor**

The students acquired self-help strategies, gained skills in managing anxiety and developed capacity for positive thinking. Students highlighted that the HSS had given them motivation to get out of bed and they reported less distress in the period they attended the summer school. An important learning for the students was in gaining a better understanding of isolation as being unhelpful in coping with mental health issues; and that on the contrary, having a walk, getting out of bed for lessons or coming to the campus were exponentially helpful in easing their feelings of depression and loneliness.

Students reported that COVID-19, with its enforced isolation, had led to a deterioration of their emotional wellbeing. In this context, the socialising made possible through the HSS contributed to improving on their physical and psychological isolation. Hence, they reported that being in a group where they could feel understood and share experiences has given them emotional stability and the experience of friendship.



“So being an asylum seeker, I came here and met so many asylum seekers and all we shared experiences, and then we shared ideas, share advice, meeting people, socialising with others... it was a healing process to me.” **Student**

“... but now coming to the summer school, you know..., you meet people, new friends, forget... and then you see you are not alone.” **Student**

Importantly, being with other survivors helped the students to form connections beyond their accommodation situations and understand that they are not alone. Beyond making new friends and developing social skills, survivors reported having felt they belonged somewhere. The students communicated this concept of belonging in their interviews and staff reported this was witnessed, additionally in class observation a sense of community and mutual support was noticeable.

“I think the thing that I appreciate more about this course is to be with people, expand my network and belong somewhere.” **Student**

For those who have moved from their home country or who are placed in a new culture, identity becomes unstable, and a sense of belonging is confused.³⁷ The lack of social support intensifies this difficulty, which is further exacerbated and deepened by the language barriers and lack of proper reintegration support. The sense of belonging created for the HSS students had helped to tackle these difficulties by offering a social community with values of respect and acceptance in which they could feel a sense of belonging and solidarity. The HSS contributed to greater connectivity, improved emotional resilience and a mental shift to a more positive outlook.

37 Madsen, K.D. and van Naerssen, T. (2003) Migration, identity, and belonging. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*. 18(1), pp. 61-75.

Furthermore, most of the survivors emphasised the skills and knowledge that they acquired in the HSS programme has given them hope in themselves, and some underlined the 'life story' sessions shared by recovered survivors. In the Life Stories sessions every Tuesday, students on the HSS heard from visiting speakers, themselves survivors, who shared their experience of taking part in similar educational projects, apprenticeships, mentoring and coaching. They were a great inspiration offering hope; that despite the difficulties in their lives, they can change their situations and create new dreams for the future.

“ Even though I have these problems in my life, this programme shows me I need to have hope and be strong in this life. Because I have a choice, I think this is what the summer school showed me. They have made me stronger; this is what I think. I cannot believe that in two months they... I don't know, I have hope today. I hope to learn, be someone I hope one day I will be me and be a strong person.” Student

The students referred to the programme overall as inspiring hope for the future and giving them the desire to take initiative by leaving their homes and doing something. This, together with the impacts already discussed are substantial steps forward for the students in their recovery, and highlight the HSS's success in contributing, through education, to combatting the effects of survivors' trauma, of which PTSD, anxiety, depression and hopelessness are primary characteristics.³⁸

An overarching theme in the HSS and an important contributor to the positive impacts already discussed, is the building and boosting of confidence, as reported by all students. This evaluation finds it is a key achievement of the HSS. Gaining confidence is an important asset that can further enable survivors to work for their own empowerment and improve their self-concept.³⁹

“ I was glad to come out confidently to show how I feel, what I like and what I do not like, so definitely this has developed my confidence of coming out of my comfort zone of being shy. Maybe I would not be able to look at you straight-talking to you.” Student



The development of self-esteem and confidence increases the possibility for diminishing anxiety and depression and so increasing independence, enabling students to take their own steps in their recovery in the future and engage more in their progress, moving away from reliance on support workers to access services.

“ I can even see a huge difference in confidence, so I think there has been incredible value in what has been done. I can say from before, and after meeting the women, you could see an incredible difference, like not being afraid to speak or ask a question, even talk in front of a room of 30 people is amazing. And to know that a lot of people did that, it takes huge amounts of confidence.” Lecturer

According to self-efficacy theory⁴⁰ the confidence to perform a task or specific action comes from 'mastery experience'. This means that students' previous experience is vital to how they perceive their ability to act and succeed. In line with this, the HSS has provided students with mastery experience of being in a higher education environment. Students have had the opportunity to experience student life, travel to the university, participate in teaching sessions and discussion, interact with tutors and peers, use the university facilities, and know what a UK higher education institution is like. Also, they have had the chance to practice English and improve their communication skills. Overall, this university experience has increased students' competence and confidence in taking the initiative to search for further opportunities and apply for other courses or even employment, when possible, and can be underlined as a critical achievement.

“ Everything I learned in summer school is useful for me in the future, because today if I want to walk and check for a job, or check for some problems, or go to the hospital... I learned, I know where to check, I know whom to call to find help, is because of summer school.” Student

38 Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Abas, M., Light, M., and Watts, C. (2010) The relationship of trauma to mental disorders among trafficked and sexually exploited girls and women. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(12), pp. 2442-2449.

39 Schuller, T., Preston, J., Hammond, C., Brassett-Grundy, A. and Bynner, J. (2004) *The Benefits of learning: The impact of education on health, family life and social capital* (1st ed.). Routledge.

40 Bandura, A. (1977) Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*. 84, pp. 191-215.

The students' university experience had a profoundly positive effect on their emotional and psychological wellbeing, by boosting their confidence and increasing positive emotions. They emphatically enjoyed being on campus and delighted in getting a university ID card, having their own online student account and their own laptop to study. The formal graduation ceremony held for the students at the end of the programme, to which they could invite a guest, was an additional highlight, along with receiving certificates of completion from the HSS and from Skills Enterprise who delivered the ICT course. They expressed feeling proud of themselves in these things and in completing the programme.

“ They will put you to university, oh my God, that is great, makes me feel all right; being in university, it makes me proud of myself. So anywhere I wanted to tell people, it is a short course, a summer school, but it is in university. I am proud of it.” Student

Overall, the HSS has had far reaching positive impacts on the students that extends far beyond the classroom and their academic learning. In combination with the learning programme, the welcoming, supportive, encouraging and accepting environment created by the staff, tutors and volunteers are viewed as fundamental to the success of the programme.

“ I have loved the summer school not just because it gave me something to do and structured my week and has made me part of another reality, but also because of the people who were chosen to deliver the summer school. It is because of the people that I committed and found the experience unforgettable. It would not have had the same impact on me if someone else was doing it.” Student

Academic learning and skills outcomes

Equipping survivors of MSHT with practical skills and critical thinking can serve as beneficial long-term skills for overcoming difficulties and becoming independent. The students of the HSS have shown good progress in these areas, which correspond to the needs identified in their baseline questionnaires at the start of the summer school. This indicates the programme has achieved its intended aims in this regard and has improved survivors lives by equipping them with needed life skills.

In analysing their academic and skills progress, one of the most reported successful outcomes was the considerable improvement the students noticed in their ability to communicate. Language skills and communication were developed through the English classes and the intensive participation in an English-speaking environment, which was excellent practice to build confidence and learn nuanced speaking manners.

“ I have gained skill of communication, develop confidence, independence. And creative writing also improved my writing.” Student

The programme has also been a substantial step in building study skills for those students who aim to undertake further education. Students who had experience in other colleges said that the skills they gained during the summer school, like writing, critical thinking, computer skills and language, would help them study further.

“ According to me the horizons summer school it is a good project. Because the weaknesses that I have, like IT, PowerPoint, Excel. It was difficult, I was really sweating in the other college. I was being told to do homework in PowerPoint...I really struggled; oh my god. But now, at least, I can know what I am doing. So here, I've gained some experiences, I've gained some skills, and seriously I can be very determined and focused.” Student

Students expressed that the life skills they have gained, such as being more independent and the employability skills lessons, are transferrable in their everyday lives and they can draw from these in preparation for when they have the right to work in the UK. All nine HSS students were asylum seekers, an immigration status that does not give them the right to work in the UK; only one student had recently gained the right to work. Irrespective of this, all students maintained that newly acquired skills are positive additions to their lives. In addition, they have gained knowledge in adapting to a new culture in a secure way which has significant importance on their wellbeing.

“ I enjoyed all the lessons. Employment skills can help me in the future because that is where I am heading to. And even the culture sessions can help me. I am going to live here, and maybe through that learning, I can adapt to the situations quickly.” Student

Furthermore, students reported improved life standards by learning and developing practical life skills, like budgeting, healthy eating and nutrition.

“ I am terrible at saving money, but we had lessons, very helpful, how to download apps that help us on how to save money, to see how much we spend for every day, make an effort to understand and realise than maybe one coffee a day you spend money for, it is a lot of money at the end of the year. These lessons are beneficial.” Student

Most of the students expressed interest in further education possibilities. Several students who were already attending local colleges and ESOL classes in their community reported that the summer school has helped them improve their studying abilities and confidence to register for the following levels.

“ So if I had known about summer school before I joined the college, I was to join summer school first, then the other place. Because in the college they only teach you about the subject, they don't know about English; they don't know about a lot. In college, I was illiterate in IT, so I really struggled. If I got the summer school first, where I have been trained in IT, the basics, I would be okay. But now, it's not too late, because what I have gained from summer school, if I go for the second level, I will feel better.” **Student**

For others, HSS has sparked their imagination, and they aspire to undertake more education, even in new subjects, recognising it as a helpful way toward their empowerment and wellbeing.

“ Summer school... it has indicated, or has wakened up my brain, let's say, to do further studies. It depends on circumstances, but if I do a further education level, it will help me to be independent. Now I feel like I am confident enough to try to find something that I would like to do.” **Student**

The HSS has also increased students' ability to reflect and developed critical thinking on what might be in their control to facilitate their recovery and future independence. They shared that they now understood the need to do something for their future and believed that education was a tool that would help them to be more independent and have a better life with dignity. Their interest in further education and employment was evident, and, while not having a settled status in the UK remains a significant challenge to access education opportunities, as most education routes are dependent on a regularised immigration status, the students expressed appreciation that their increased energy and confidence has prepared them for future steps to be taken.

“ I think the school moved me from where I was to another step. I did not know how to write a personal profile, a cover letter. Now it will be easy for me to apply.” **Student**

The blended teaching model with one day on campus and two days online had, according to students, both benefits and drawbacks. The benefits highlighted by students included avoiding travelling, particularly for those who

lived far from the campus, as well as minimising the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. Also, as the ICT lessons were one of the subjects adapted for online classes, this was an excellent opportunity to learn and adapt to the evolving digital world, the online environment and its platforms, equipping students with transferrable digital skills. As expressed so succinctly by one student:

“ I find it very, very good because, actually, if you want to go to further education, with the evolution that is coming, we have to adapt. If I want to go to higher education right now it will be online, and the summer school has given me the base to be able to attend classes online, or if I want to do any other courses.”

The HSS' flexibility to offer a programme for survivors with a range of diverse backgrounds and needs, many without a regularised immigration status is a key component of its value.

For 8 weeks following the conclusion of the HSS, students had ongoing access to follow-up guidance in identifying pathways for progression. As a final post programme phase, this was established as a 'move forward' collaborative practice between education providers and voluntary sector organisations. Students' progression was facilitated by directing and assisting them toward further educational or career development opportunities through the various HSS partner support organisations. This included students being referred to the coaching programme with the Sophie Hayes Foundation as well as some students having also signed up for the mentoring programme with HERA.

Student suggestions for improvement

Analysing the feedback gathered from the staff, teachers, and the students was an opportunity to acknowledge challenges and areas for development for this ambitious programme. This section provides information and reflection from both the delivery component and the students' experience and perceptions.

Student challenges

All participants had a good level of English, but some struggled with higher level aspects of the instruction in classes. Because of this it would be important to include additional individualised English language support during such programmes or a supplementary language preparation stage prior to its start.

An additional reported challenge was difficulty in travelling to St Mary's University and back on the same day. Travel costs were covered, but the travel length was tiring, for some exceedingly so because of poor transport links. Other challenges mentioned include some discussed earlier in the report, include difficulty concentrating for a long time

online, problems with the internet connection as the prepaid internet dongles provided by HSS often did not work at home. In addition, survivors mentioned personal issues, such as mental health as well as their accommodation, and while not caused by the HSS, these affected students' learning ability.

Student suggestions

Students also shared suggestions for the summer school. For instance, they expressed that the programme should be longer because they found it helpful and involved them intensively and just as they were getting settled in, it ended.

“ According to me, now the summer school is ending, of which, if I had power, I was to extend it. Because it's too short, and you know now... It is when we have gained that ability of doing something; now it is finished. So, we are all going back at home after the whole of these months; we are going indoors. It feels like... it doesn't feel OK.” Student

Other suggestions from students were the need to have more English lessons, to be face-to-face on campus on all days, have more well-being sessions, and include more arts in the programme. Many of the students expressed interest in further education options and personal development beyond HSS. Some of these suggestions made by survivors were also reported by staff and tutors.

Programme learnings and suggestions for improvement

Student Recruitment and Induction Phases

The change in staff and general COVID-19 complications for referral partners impacted the student recruitment process, which was finalised by the new staff shortly before the delivery phase. This hindered plans to host an open day for all students and support workers to attend, to provide an opportunity for familiarisation, provide information about the programme scope and discuss practicalities.

Additionally, some complications arose at the start of the programme regarding overlap with other aspects of students' lives, such as completing other courses and other scheduled appointments, which hindered their successful start and progress. However, questions to this effect were asked in initial assessments by HSS staff, responses indicated that there were no obstacles to participation. This points to a possible misunderstanding early in the referral stage between HSS, students and referring support workers, a key learning for future delivery.

The induction day on the first day of the programme was the first opportunity for students to be on campus. The single day did not allow the group, which comprised of mixed educational backgrounds and learning ability, adequate preparation with regards to computer and university

account set-up, internet dongle installation and IT issue troubleshooting, as well as general orientation, staff and lecturer introduction and class icebreakers. Students noted feeling confused at the start of the programme particularly regarding the computer and online account set up. This single day proved insufficient, and more time should be allocated, to help students feel more comfortable, and confident about practical aspects before starting lessons online the very next day. An open day prior to the start of the programme would have been beneficial. Recommendations from staff suggest that this induction phase to be dedicated to the first week of the programme in the future.

Childcare

Childcare costs were initially included in the cost of the programme, but due to the extension of the timeline as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the budget was re-allocated to ensure the delivery of the overall programme. The importance of offering childcare is recognised widely in many universities, and the UK government, which provides financial support to cover childcare expenses to enable parents to access education.⁴¹ It is unfortunate this was not able to be offered in the HSS, as it would have been beneficial for women childcare responsibilities. Including this support in similar programmes would further ensure equity for participants.

The programme initially included accommodation for students travelling from outside London, although as a result of COVID-19 challenges and budget reallocation, this offering was reduced. Two potential candidates from outside London were referred and were offered accommodation, however they ultimately declined to attend due to the pandemic.

Volunteers

The involvement of Learning Support Volunteers was a critical element of the programme but due to pandemic related delays, there was limited time for them to become familiar with the programme and curricula before the delivery phase. Volunteers expressed that more time to ensure they were prepared was desirable, to ensure they could offer adequate support during lessons, to both tutors and students, particularly as the delivery moved to online.

“ So it was a bit harder to get to know them and see what the necessities were. I personally would like to make us interact more with them, I know that was because it was online, but I think more interaction between us would have been more ideal to basically 'use us'.” HSS volunteer

41 Gov.uk (n.d.) Help with childcare while you study [online]. Available at: www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/support-while-you-study (Accessed 15 October 2021)

HSS online learning

Students highlighted that being in front of the computer for long periods of time affected concentration and caused tiredness, additionally making it difficult to follow the instructions in the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) classes because of the very basic computer skills of some students. They expressed that it was not easy for them to multitask on the computer without having face-to-face instruction and in-person assistance.

“The only problem with me is that the IT shouldn't be online. It should have been face-to-face because it is hard for us, it is very tricky sometimes working on a computer, especially when you don't know what is going on, what is happening. You can sit face-to-face and ask them how to do something.” **Student**

Additionally, the online learning was problematic for several students due to their accommodation arrangements. Accommodation and the inadequate provision thereof are one of the biggest challenges for survivors of MSHT in the UK. The lack of adequate safe house provision for non-British national survivors and poor-quality asylum accommodation hinders recovery from multiple traumas and instead contributes to re-traumatisation, exposing women to a high risk of further trafficking.⁴²

Challenges for the HSS students associated with their accommodation included lack of adequate study space and suitable furniture, with some students laying on their beds or on the floor. Those with physical ailments struggled sitting for long periods in inadequate seating arrangements, frequently reporting physical pain. Internet connectivity was a considerable problem for several students, where the internet did not work well enough to be connected to online sessions all day, or at all. This required some students to find alternative locations such as outdoors or the library which required travel. Further to this, some students had accommodation that made it difficult to concentrate, like shared rooms with other residents which additionally made them feel restricted in their ability to participate in online classes. In some instances, students' living arrangements were so problematic that they had to stay at friends to join online classes. That all students did indeed join the online classes, if only in some instances for part of the day, is both illustrative of their desire to participate and learn, as well as the difficulties they faced to do so.

In conclusion, students expressed their preference for the face-to-face method. For them, being on campus provided greater possibilities for communication, interaction and socialising with the group, which was a significant experience of friendship and of breaking down isolation.

“I would like more to be on campus because staying in front of the computers for such a long time, concentrated for such a long time it is a bit tiring for me. But still, knowing the circumstances is understandable. But if it would be my choice, if I had to choose, I would choose to come in at the university.” **Student**

Offering professional emotional support

Staff and tutors also suggested that offering professional emotional support would be a useful addition to the programme. The Course Navigator was explicitly there to support students with a consistent, inclusive and supportive presence, and aid them in navigating their learning experience. However, staff noted that in some one-on-one discussions emotional matters arose which seemed unexpected by the students. In journeying with the students, staff ascertained that the HSS held some possible unanticipated triggers, memories and/or thoughts of what their life was previously or what their life could have been. Considering this and the students' level of trauma experienced, additional dedicated wellbeing sessions or additional experienced pastoral or counselling support should be considered to ensure students' emotional stability and maximise their learning potential.

Gender

The HSS was a pilot programme designed to meet the needs for recovery and integration for survivors of MSHT. Male survivors were originally included in the programme design; however, this was not possible due to COVID-19 related challenges and obstacles.

The recruitment of women only was eventually agreed upon by the steering group. As the HSS core staff were all female and female volunteers were then recruited, a comfortable and safe environment for the students was easily achievable. The students had input and support from male members of St Marys staff that they regarded positively, this consisted of an online Career Service session, a face-to-face Student Wellbeing session which was hosted by a mixed male and female staff team, and the IT support team who assisted the students with their computers. Although this evaluation is unable to assess the extent to which student experience and outcomes are linked to the HSS being female only, it is noted that the female-only group experienced supportive relationships with one another, which offered emotional wellbeing and decreased anxiety levels. Additionally, at the time of the HSS some of the students resided in safe houses, requiring a certain degree of trust amongst the cohort.

As this evaluation is unable to address the matter of mixed gender participation, should a similar programme wish to include both female and male survivors, it is advised to seek experienced practitioner input and undertake an in-depth candidate risk assessment to mitigate risks and complications and ensure a safe and successful programme delivery for all participants.

⁴² Hibiscus Initiatives (2020) *Closed Doors Summary Report: Inequalities, and injustices in appropriate and secure housing provision for female victims of trafficking who are seeking asylum.*

Limitations

As this was small-scale study, the findings are not generalisable to the broader population of survivors. Nevertheless, taken in light of the literature review, the findings are further evidence of the need for education programmes for survivors. Furthermore, the evaluation can contribute to greater understanding of the potential for reproducing this summer school in other institutions. Arguably, the model is effective, and learnings can be shared and adapted for implementation by other institutions or organisations that aim for survivor empowerment through education. The findings are also intended to influence policymakers and funders seeking to address gaps in long-term support and barriers in accessing education for survivors of MSHT.

The findings have been derived from a short-term evaluation immediately after summer school delivery. Some of the education impacts may occur later in the students' journey and relies to some extent on immigration status and rights to access education and employment in the UK. It would therefore be useful to conduct a follow-up review with the students after six months to one year, to assess the longer-term impact of the HSS on the lives of participants.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evaluation of the HSS identified successes and challenges in piloting such an educational programme for survivors of MSHT in the UK. The lack of knowledge on how educational approaches in a higher education setting should be designed to meet survivors' needs, how to maximise impact, and what education institutions are faced with in delivering for vulnerable groups,⁴³ has been evident during the implementation of HSS.

Despite not having standardised guidance, the HSS drew on learnings from other programmes which have contributed to survivor education and empowerment. Highlighted core values from these, such as flexibility in approach, utilising blended learning based on availability of on-the-ground academic support, providing an adaptive and contextualised programme, and ongoing delivery assessment,⁴⁴ have all been identified during the delivery processes and approach of the HSS.

Although delivered as a group educational programme, the HSS included elements of individual survivor-tailored support to maximise students' learning potential. It also offered an

emotionally safe environment for self-development and empowerment through its supportive approach with its innovative inclusion of the Course Navigator role. Moreover, a self-reflection process throughout the course contributed to ensuring the programme's success. The range of knowledge offered in the curricula and the blending of the main courses with additional sessions offered varied learning opportunities for each student. As such, the HSS has been an appropriate programme for survivors with different support needs and from different educational backgrounds.

However, although the programme has been assessed to have a good level of inclusivity of participants from different educational backgrounds and age groups, this could be extended, with adequate planning and resources, to include women with childcare needs as well as male survivors. Moreover, the HSS could be extended for British survivors of MSHT, to cater for their specific needs.

Given the circumstances, online learning provided the opportunity to prepare students for the digital world. However, the findings showed that students embraced learning on the campus as crucial for human interaction, socialising and better maximise the ability to concentrate and learn.

The main conclusion drawn from the evaluation of the HSS delivery is that it has served as an outstanding pilot initiative in offering education dedicated to the needs of survivors of MSHT in the UK, particularly as it was designed to overcome the lack of education options for this group as well as the barriers faced by this group in joining education. Although many challenges were faced during the process, most of which were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it resulted in a valuable education experience.

The evaluation of the HSS's impact on the students reveals that in being guided by a trauma-informed approach to working with survivors, the HSS has contributed a remarkable positive impact on the students' mental health; additionally, it has developed their confidence, given them hope, built aspiration for the future, and has conferred positive emotions and a more positive outlook. The development of confidence through education is a known contributor to a person's ability to recover from trauma and build resilience.⁴⁵ While evaluating students' recovery from trauma was beyond the scope of this research, students' participation in the HSS has diminished anxiety and distress amongst the students and aided in establishing emotional resilience.

A component of the HSS straddling the programme's positive impact on students' emotional and mental wellbeing, and its positive learning outcomes, is that of its contribution to survivors' self-efficacy beliefs. Past experience creates the understanding of personal abilities and defines the likelihood of a person trying again in the

43 Campbell, P. (2020) *Policymakers must not forget refugees' higher education*. HEPI.

44 Russell, C. and Weaver, N. (2019) Reaching refugees: Southern New Hampshire University's project-based degree model for refugee higher education'. In: Sengupta, E. and Blessinger, P. ed(s), *Language, Teaching, and Pedagogy for Refugee Education*. Emerald Publishing Limited. pp. 157-180.

45 Schuller, T., Preston, J., Hammond, C., Brassett-Grundy, A. and Bynner, J. (2004) *The Benefits of learning: The impact of education on health, family life and social capital* (1st ed.). Routledge.

future,⁴⁶ the HSS has served to develop students' mastery experience, which has built confidence, contributed to positive thinking, and increased the potential to take initiative and forge a path to further education and employability.

The HSS has equipped survivors with improved English language and communication, study skills and computer skills, as well as varied life skills such as sewing and cooking, budgeting and adapting to a new culture. Students have reported that these skills contributed to learning how to manage their time and become more organised, and improved their ability to reflect, make decisions and devise plans. In creating a supportive and accepting group educational environment the HSS fostered a genuine sense of belonging amongst the students. This sense of belonging, in addition to the life skills, improved communication and social skills, and confidence, can extend beyond the HSS to shaping the students' positive social identity, thereby creating a secure route for individual empowerment.

Overall, the HSS was seen as a positive experience that has developed transferrable skills, improved life quality and mental health and expanded opportunities for the future. It has increased survivors' interest in education as a tool for empowerment and has served as a path toward survivors' further education. All survivors stated that they would suggest the summer school to other survivors as a helpful programme for their recovery and integration.

The HSS is a model which offered the foundations an educational approach to achieving good outcomes and ensuring a positive impact on survivors of MSHT recovery journeys. This is a practical and flexible model which can be easily adjusted in any work or educational environment where survivors' safety can be guaranteed, and at the same time can be adapted to be efficient for broader participant's needs and backgrounds.

Key Recommendations

This evaluation outlines the following recommendations relevant to the HSS programme, survivor support organisations and educational programme implementers, and policymakers:

For the HSS Programme and future implementers

- Offer childcare and accommodation to ensure accessibility and equity in provision and accessibility for survivors with these specific needs.
- Introduce a longer pre-entry phase to benefit the referral, enrolment, and induction process, enabling students to be practically and emotionally prepared for the learning process.
- Deliver the programme over a longer period. A longer programme could have a more pronounced positive

impact by allowing more time in the positive learning environment which can foster deeper engagement, the possibility to include optional courses based on individual needs, and greater group social interaction and relationship development.

- Prepare and train volunteers to assist students proactively and adequately in their learning journeys, in line with safeguarding policies and a trauma informed approach.
- Offer a pre-entry language course to benefit those participants who need to develop further English ability to maximise their learning potential.
- Offer a programme primarily based on face-to-face delivery. This would acknowledge the positive role of social interaction and the learning challenges and needs of students. Additional online components could be added to enhance online skills and strengthen capacity for possible home study and/or work in the future.
- Include professional emotional support such as counselling or experienced pastoral care to support the emotional wellbeing needs of students that might arise unexpectedly as a result of the new and intensive learning experience.
- Explore the potential to make survivors 'key persons' in the community by training them to be 'trainers' or volunteers in the future; this way, they could transfer learnings to other people with similar needs.
- Introduce longer term evaluations of educational programmes for survivors, to contribute to and reinforce knowledge about the educational programmes' impacts.
- Ensure the inclusion of an integrated 'move forward' collaboration with education providers and voluntary sector organisations as a final post programme phase, to ensure students are able to take up opportunities to progress in their development beyond the HSS.

For survivor support organisations and educational programme implementers

- Offer educational and training programmes to improve survivor outcomes more widely as part of immediate or long-term support.
- Cultivate strategies to provide educational and training opportunities for survivors.
- Implement or enhance educational programmes relevant to both non-British nationals and British survivors of MSHT to ensure inclusiveness and address varied needs.

For policymakers

- Introduce mechanisms and policies to ensure support for sustainable collaboration between MSHT organisations, practitioners and education institutions in the provision of multidisciplinary education for survivors.
- Introduce and fund dedicated educational programmes starting in survivors' recovery and reflection period. Education benefits survivors in their recovery by creating a path toward further development and building resilience, and importantly, reducing the risk of revictimisation.

46 Bandura, A. (1977) Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*. 84, pp. 191-215.

Appendix

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