



# Case Study: Melissa

## GROW Participant

Melissa, aged 15, is engaged with About Youth, a youth work organisation in the Wester Hailes area of Edinburgh, which is a member of, and supported by, LAYC and Youth Scotland. About Youth is currently accessing the opportunities and support that the Generation CashBack GROW programme offers. This includes supporting the development of a young-person-led evening youth group based in the community.

Chatting about the changes and impacts she has experienced as a result of being part of a Generation CashBack GROW group, Melissa describes growing social networks and horizons, and increased participation in positive activity. Here, she talks about these shifts in her own words.

*“My idea of what’s possible has definitely grown”*





## Engagement in positive activity

“When I’m not coming here I just go home after school and have dinner and then if I have any homework to do I’ll just do that. The youth club gives us something to do so we’re not stuck in the house all the time, it also gives us people to talk to if we feel like we can’t speak to teachers or parents.

## Ownership and initiative

When the group started up we all agreed that everything with the place needed touching up because the walls were once maybe white but they had gotten old over time. So, we decided to make it better. Me and another girl decided that we were going to apply for money to pay for it. We managed to get the funding, and then we all painted and decorated the place. We had the chance to have the group somewhere else but we were keen for it to be part of the place we live in instead of doing it somewhere we don’t live in or know well.

*Photos below: the Comunity Flat where the group meet weekly and the park outside.*

## Opening up to new challenges

It’s made a difference coming along to the group, I’ve started to push myself in things that I wouldn’t normally do. For example, we went on a summer trip to an activity place called Fox Lake. There was no harness on the obstacle course so if you fell you were straight in the water. Now, I don’t like heights so that was something for me to push myself through. Yeah, I’ve definitely opened up to more things.

## Increasing confidence and skills

Before I started coming here I wouldn’t speak to many people, I was quiet and I’m still quiet now but nowhere near as quiet. If an opportunity came up in school I’d definitely look into it, like, recently we had the chance to write an essay for a competition, it was to be on something that would help change Scotland - the prize was meeting Barack Obama. I didn’t win but my essay did get put in the Guardian paper, so you see, learning new skills in here does show off when I’m in school or speaking to new people. Also, being told ‘I’m really proud of you’ well, it makes you want to do more of that sort of thing.

## Expanding social networks

When I was younger I’d only be friends with the people that were in my year, but now I’m friends with people that are older than me, younger than me and the same age as me. I think that had a lot to do with this group having a lot of different age groups in it.

## Expanding horizons

My idea of what’s possible has definitely grown. My focus at the moment is staying on at school and then finding something that I want to study further, whether that be writing or psychology or something like that. I realise that when I first started high school, I thought there was a certain amount of jobs, but from going on activity trips I’ve seen that jobs don’t always have to be sitting in an office. For example, when we went to Fox Lake there were water sports instructors, life guards, there were people that made sure everything was ok, engineers to make sure everything was safe. Basically I’ve realised there are a lot more possibilities than what I thought before.”

