

Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2021

Executive Summary

“Let me tell you something Baobab is like a family, a big family. I am really happy that I meet them in my life. They support me so much. It's like my family now.”

A 19-year-old man from
Afghanistan

Highlights of the 2021 report

- ◆ The population of young people interviewed in 2021 showed “a clinical level of psychological distress”, with high rates of reported psychotic experiences.
- ◆ Rapid improvements in symptoms of depression and anxiety were reported in the first three years, with slower progress for long-term Baobab members. There was long-term improvement in capacity to reflect on feelings.
- ◆ 85% of young people reported a reduction in difficulties experienced compared to the past.
- ◆ Young people reported significant and positive impact from Baobab, both in case-work support and mental well-being.
- ◆ Having a job/starting a business was the most reported first hope for future life.
- ◆ New in 2021: recommendations for future development of service.

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aobab's 2021 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) report was prepared by a team of clinical psychologists from **Beigi and Chu Clinical Psychology**, a private clinical psychology company with a track record of offering consultancy services to higher education institutions and charities. One of the consultants, Dr Kenny Chu, is affiliated with **the University of East Anglia**, with whom the Baobab Centre is developing research collaboration. The team was brought onboard for their expertise in conducting Service Related Projects and to improve methodological consistency of the Centre's regular M&E data collection.

78%

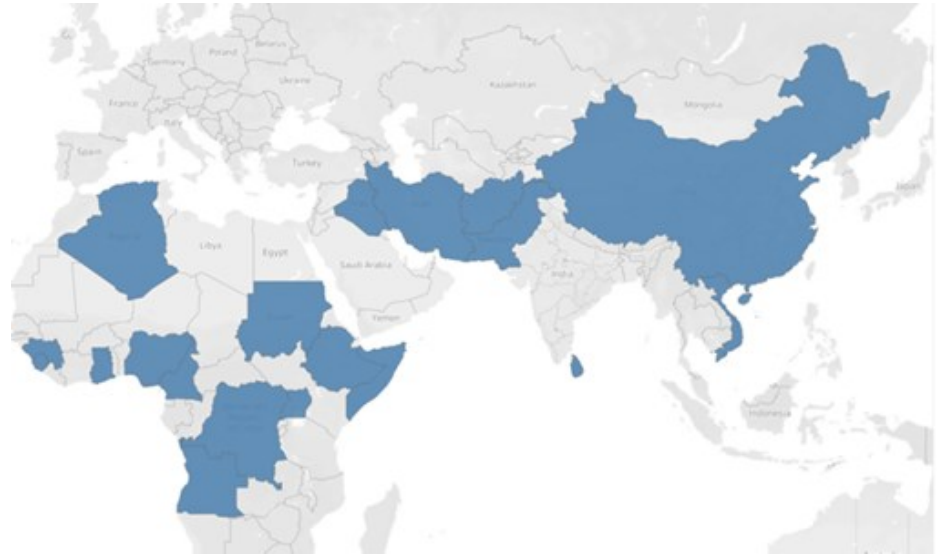
of young people who responded to the 2021 M&E were male

27%

of young people who responded to the 2021 M&E were from Afghanistan

51%

of young people who responded to the 2021 M&E were in education



Map 1: countries of origin of 2021 respondents

Building on the M&E reports which the Baobab Centre has been publishing annually since 2015, validated clinical measures were used **to evaluate young people's mental health, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, regulation of affects, and resilience.** As in previous years the survey also included questions related **to young people's experiences of the Baobab Centre, their sense and constructions of belonging, and hopes for the future.**

44 young people participated in the survey in 2021, representing 53% of young people who were at the Baobab Centre at the time .

92%

of young people who responded to the 2021 M&E had experienced **at least 1 traumatic event** before arriving in the UK

73%

of young people who responded to the 2021 M&E had been **granted** some refugee protection

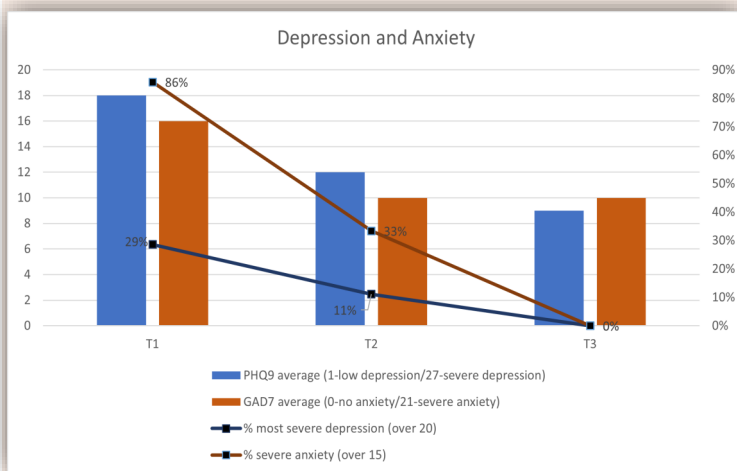
68%

of young people at the Baobab Centre have their first asylum application **rejected**

“A clinical level of psychological distress”

The report found that on measures of depression and anxiety, “service users were experiencing a clinical level of psychological distress”. Furthermore, **22% reported severe levels of strange/unusual thoughts** – a “surprising” result “given the low prevalence rate of psychosis in meta-analytic reviews” (p.20). The report suggested that this could be due to the fact that “unaccompanied minors may have **experienced multiple traumatic events** during their developmental years, and such experiences may elevate the likelihood of developing **psychotic experiences**” (p. 20). The authors further concluded that “the reported level of psychological distress among service users underscores **the importance of providing psychological care in community settings**” of the kind the Baobab Centre provides.

22%
with reported **severe** levels of
“strange/unusual thoughts”



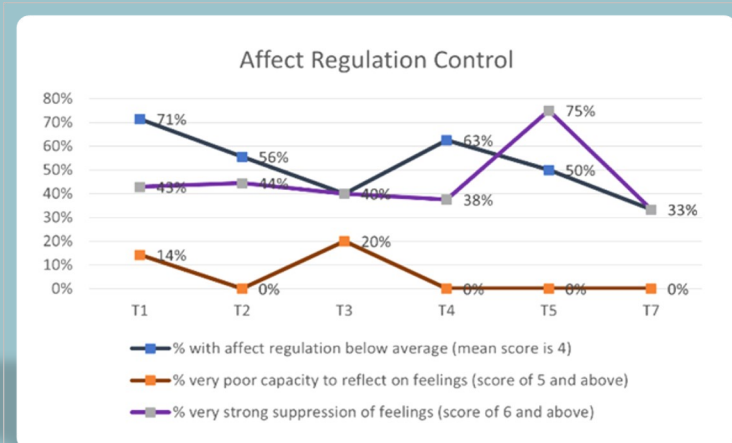
Evolutions of symptoms

To measure the evolution of symptoms of **depression** and **anxiety** across time, the 2021 report uses the notion of “**caseness**”, which refers to a severe enough score that would lead a clinician to suspect possible mental health disorder. Scores from a smaller sample of young people were analysed at different **time-points**, with T1 indicating someone in their first year at Baobab, T2 someone in their 2nd year, and T3 someone in their 3rd year.

- ◆ **Depression caseness decreased** from 94% at T1 to 89% at T2 and 83% at T3.
- ◆ **Anxiety caseness decreased** from 100% at T1 to 83% at T2 and 67% at T3.
- ◆ The percentage of individuals with low resilience scores (in the bottom 15% of the general population) went from 44% at T1, to 17% at T2 and 0% at T3 – **indicating increasing levels of resilience.**

Main Clinical Findings

- ◆ Both short-term (less than 3 years) and long-term (more than 4 years) service users experienced reductions in anxiety and depression caseness. Aggressive behaviours and unusual experiences remained high for long-term users.
- ◆ Confirming these results, 85% of respondents reported a reduction in “difficulties” when compared to the past.
- ◆ **“Given the high level of service user engagement, it is likely that the Centre has contributed to the positive changes reported by their service users.”** (p. 21)
- ◆ Capacity to control affect (emotions) remained more elusive over time, with strong suppression of feelings still ubiquitous in long-term users. **However, the capacity to reflect on feelings showed persistent improvement over time**—a sign that the reflective work all young people engage in during therapy was offering more resources to think about and understand their own feelings.



How young people experience the work of the Baobab Centre

"Baobab Centre is the best place to find help. They have helped me a lot in every single thing. They are very friendly, and they are really helpful."

A 20-year-old man from Afghanistan

Percentages of service users agreed that Baobab Centre has helped them to access:



Most young people reported in 2021 (as in previous years) that the Centre had offered help and support across various dimensions, some related to **practical issues** (housing, education, asylum, health), some to their **mental wellbeing** (feelings, memories, etc.)

Percentages of service users agreed that Baobab Centre has helped them with:



"I am motivated to do something. They make me feel like I can do when I end up...when I feel that I am nothing or I do nothing."

A 25-year-old woman from Ethiopia

"caring"

"trustworthy"

Words to describe the Baobab Centre

"responsive"

"practical"

"more connected, less isolated"

"I think it has helped me with feelings and emotions...My life used to be very isolating, now I meet new people with the same mindset."

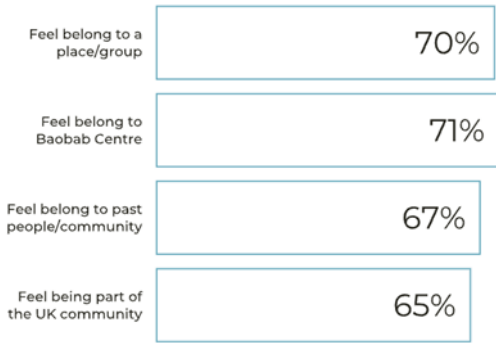
A 23-year-old man from Pakistan

"Baobab has helped me to accept and face my life. They have encouraged me to face challenges and keep moving forward and not giving up."

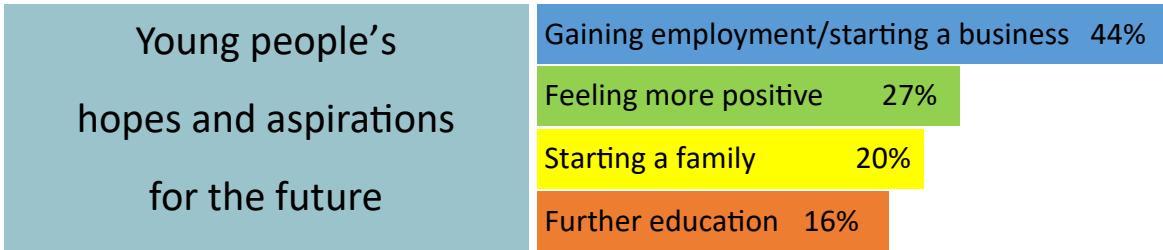
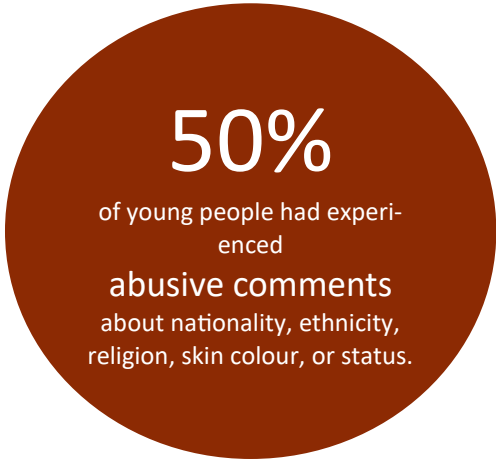
A 26-year-old man from Algeria

Exploring Belonging

Percentages of 'yes' responses



*“Regarding sense of belonging, **most of the service users reported feelings of belonging to someone or somewhere.** They described several positive qualities that could increase their sense of belonging. They also outlined negative factors that hinder the development of belonging, and these qualities are largely linked to physical and social trauma. Of note, over 50% had experienced negative remarks about their nationality, ethnicity, religion, skin colour or status. **This figure highlights the need for further evaluation.**” (p. 22)*



*“When asked about hopes for the future, service users were most likely to mention ‘having a job, a business, or a career’, which **highlights their need to establish independence.** Other frequently observed topics included feeling better, starting a family, getting a settled asylum status, and having more opportunities. **The Centre is thought to have helped with moving closer to these goals.**” (p. 22)*

Recommendations for future service development

◆ Characterize short and long-term service user needs

The 2021 M&E noted indications of differences in symptom evolution of short-term and long-term users, but a larger sample size of long-term users is needed to confirm.

Specific studies of needs and symptom evolution of long-term users may need to be conducted.

◆ Increase sign-posting of self-directed resources

Build on existing resources at the Center to continue increasing access to education, jobs, etc. Consider organizing events such as CV clinics, start-up workshops, interview skills training, etc....

Linking with partner organisations offering employment skills training is underway. The Centre offers private tutors and financial support for education.

◆ Increase participation of non-male users in future M&E

Efforts should continue to be made to ensure female users are represented in M&E collections.

The population of young people at the Baobab Centre is on average 85% male.