

Background

- Each year in Australia an additional 23,000 young people's (12-24 years) lives are impacted by their own, or an immediate family member's cancer diagnosis.
- CanTeen is the Australian national organisation for young people aged 12-24 years living with cancer. CanTeen's services include specialist hospital care, counselling and individual assistance, as well as information and peer support programs.
- Young people living with cancer (YPLWC) are at considerable risk of long-term emotional and mental health issues, heightened levels of psychological distress and social isolation, delayed career or educational achievement and unmet needs (e.g. support in dealing with distressing thoughts and feelings, peer support).
- Improving YPLWC's psychological flexibility, coping strategies and peer relationships using the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and self-compassion, is one promising approach to address the distress experienced by YPLWC.
- Residential therapeutic camps offer an effective means for providing psychosocial education, experiential learning and respite from the daily stresses of cancer.
- To date, there are no residential therapeutic programs in Australia using ACT to support YPLWC to address the psychosocial challenges they face, now and across their lifetime.

Flyer advertising the PEER program:

PEER Program 2017

June 30th - July 3rd 2017, Sunshine Coast, QLD

PEER is a therapeutic and recreational program for 12-17 year olds. Join your peers and experience a program that enables self-compassion, empowers you to learn new skills, and build supportive relationships within your life. It's a chance for you to share your story and learn new ways to deal with whatever life throws at you.

Live regionally? No problem - CanTeen will organise transport for you.

PEER Program



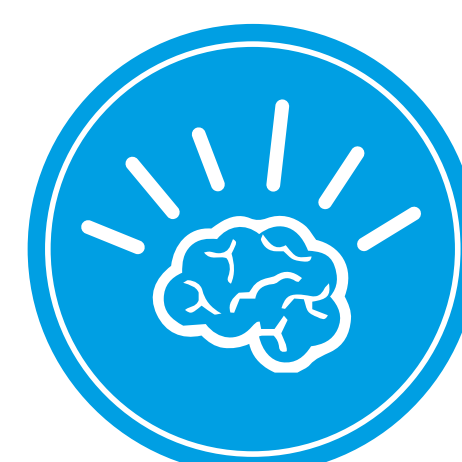
The Place of Enablement, Empowerment and Relationships (PEER) program is a manualised 4-day therapeutic program which uses ACT to help adolescents and young adults (12-24 years) living with cancer to manage difficult thoughts and feelings, reconnect with their values, and build supportive relationships.

The Program includes three modules:



BUILDING SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Exploration of values (personal and relational), listening skills, sharing cancer narratives.



EFFECTIVE COPING

Exploration of coping strategies, benefits of cognitive defusion, expansion/acceptance, mindfulness, recognition of and support-seeking.



SELF-COMPASSION

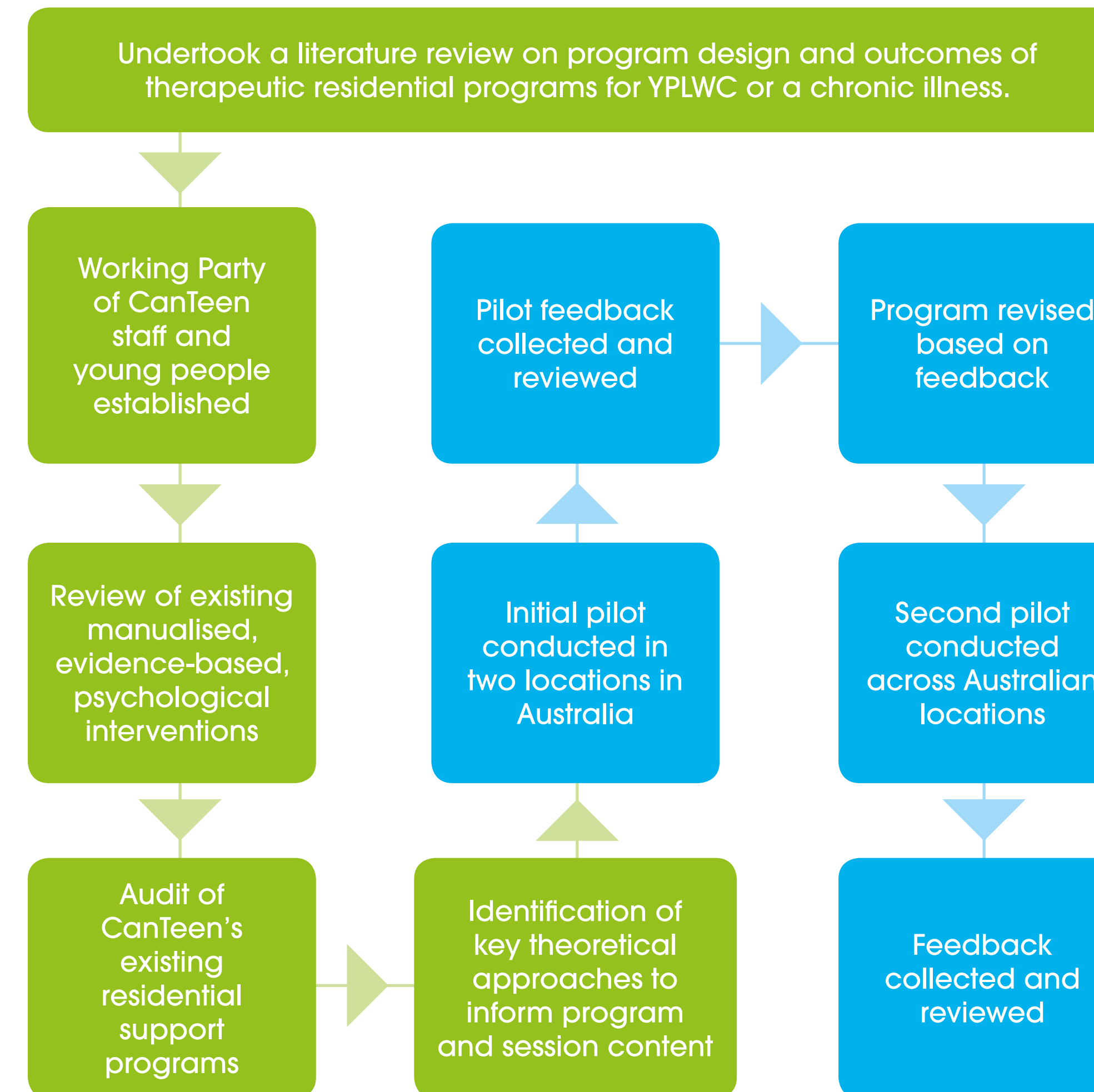
Exploration of compassion, barriers to and strategies to improve self-kindness, common humanity and connectedness.

Each module comprises of two sessions of approximately 90 minutes each.

All the people are amazing and welcoming. It's like a second family with amazing support for us.

The program would benefit anyone going through cancer.

Program development and piloting



Procedure

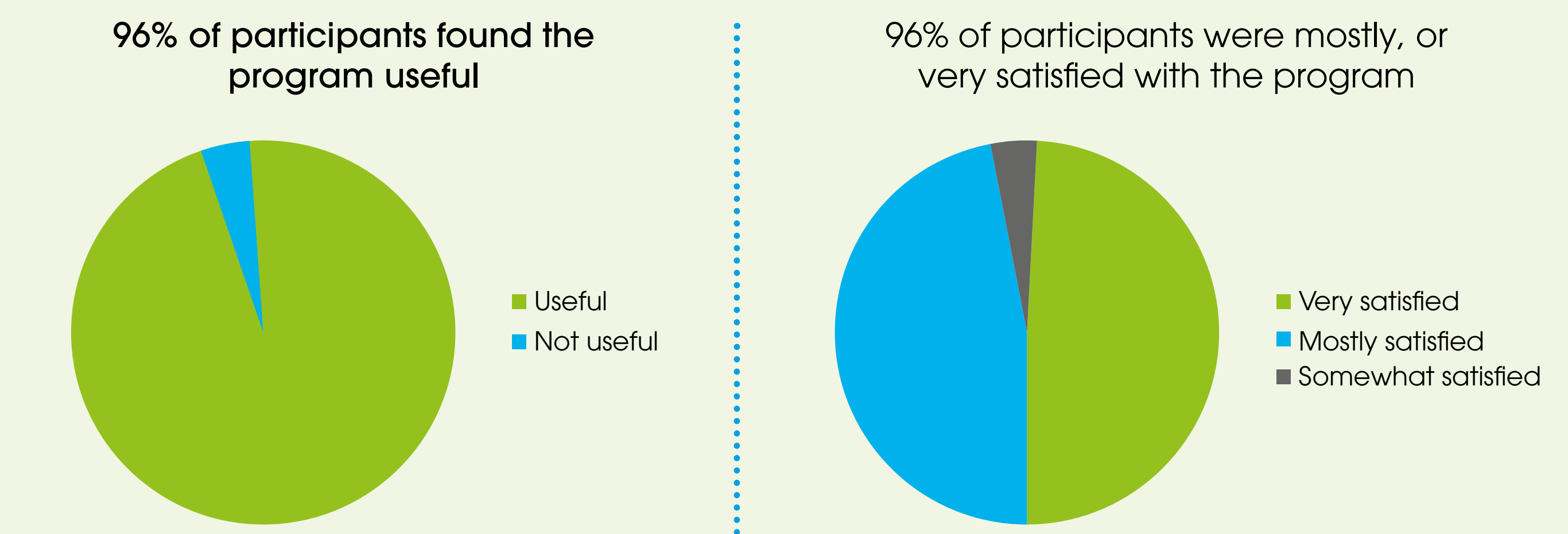
- Young people who are members of CanTeen and have been diagnosed with cancer, have a parent or sibling who has cancer, or have experienced bereavement and loss from cancer were eligible to participate in the program.
- Phase 1 of the pilot was delivered in two states in Australia in 2015.
- 84 young people aged 12-24 participated in the first pilot and completed evaluation surveys.
- Following a program review, changes were made to the program to enhance ACT-based skills acquisition and delivery of sessions.
- The revised program was piloted in six Australian states between April and October 2016.
- N=175 young people 12-17 years (age M=14.6, SD=1.7; 45.7% male) participated in the phase 2 pilot and completed pre-, post and 2-month follow-up evaluation surveys.

Participant Questionnaires
Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire - Youth (AFQ-Y8)
Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) - Brief Form
Coping Strategies Inventory - Brief COPE ^a
Self-Compassion Scale ^b
Young People Living with Cancer Supportive Relationship Measure
Sense of Belonging
Happiness with Life as a Whole

Note: ^a Subscales: Active Coping, Emotional Coping, Instrumental Coping, Planning; ^b Subscales: Self-Kindness; Self-Judgement

Results

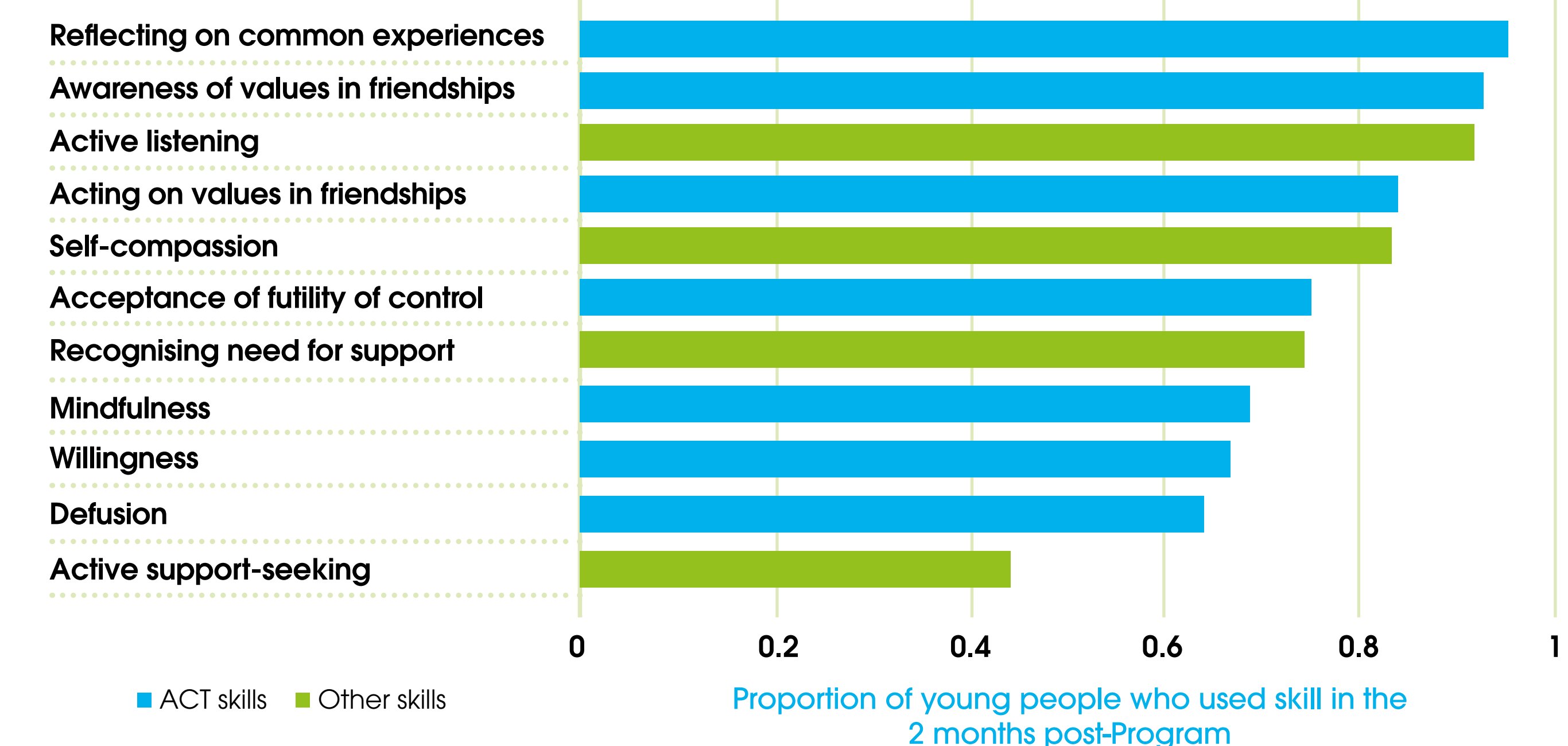
Program usefulness and satisfaction



The program was well-received by the young people with 99% recommending the program to other YPLWC.

Skills learnt

82.4% of participants (84/102) reported using 7 or more of the 11 skills taught on the program at follow-up (2 months after the program).



Impact of PEER program on well-being

- Significant improvements from pre-program to the 2-month follow-up were found for active and emotional coping and mindfulness.
- Increases in psychological flexibility from baseline to follow-up were associated with significant improvements (baseline to follow-up) in:
 - Supportive Relationships ($F_{1,97} = 6.00, p = .02$)
 - Sense of Belonging ($F_{1,98} = 5.42, p = .02$)
 - Mindfulness ($F_{1,89} = 52.92, p = .00$)

I meet a lot of new people going through the same thing.

The program was helpful to me because I now know how to calm myself when stressed.

Next steps

A review of the program has been completed based on the results of the pilots. A full-scale national evaluation of the program will occur in 2018.