



Meeting the challenge of COVID-19

Learning and practice



How Aberdeen City Champions Board has evolved as it responded to the pandemic restrictions

What was the challenge faced by Aberdeen City Champions Board?

The Aberdeen City Champions Board, which brings together care experienced young people with their corporate parents, has been meeting quarterly since its inception. Although the number of young people on the Aberdeen City Champions Board has grown to eight, the number of professionals who attend meeting often still outweigh the number of young people, leaving some young people sometimes feeling that these occasions can be intimidating. When Scotland entered into lockdown, this current way of engaging could not take place and 'ACE' (Aberdeen Care Experienced), a group of young people who influence and engage with the CHAMPS Board, suggested changing the format and frequency of the meetings in new ways to meet the needs of the young people and include their voices.

What change in practice took place?

The Who Cares? Scotland Development Officer, who works in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to ensure that the voice and influence of young people is at the centre of the Champions Board, discussed this with the young people and asked them what they wanted and needed. Overwhelmingly, they said that they wanted the meetings to continue and suggested an online get-together, which would be smaller and more focused. They suggested it would be best hosted on a particular online platform. Because some of the professionals were unable to access this platform through their work equipment, they were asked to consider whether personal devices could be used as a temporary measure. Also, a limit was placed on the number of professionals who would attend in order to ensure more equitable balance. The new meetings were developed to include a social aspect, so pizzas were ordered for young people to eat with their friends online during the meetings. There have also been cookery lessons. The Development Officer cycled to the homes of all young people and delivered a bag of ingredients so that they could all follow an online demonstration, make a dish at home and then eat together online.

Through a live online session, a local police inspector showcased a vegan meal, and the Chief Officer of Housing prepared 'mac 'n cheese'.

The meetings are continuing online and centre on key themes which are either chosen by the young people or, at times, by the corporate parents, which the young people can then approve. Issues have included education and housing, and, where relevant, council and partner colleagues are invited to answer any questions and to address concerns and uncertainties the young people may have.

Who was involved in making the change?

The young people involved in ACE are leading the changes in format and frequency, with the support of Aberdeen City Council, and the Who Cares? Scotland Development Officer, as well as other local corporate parents.

What difference did this change make?

Participation of young people in the CHAMPS Board meetings has considerably increased as lockdown continued. The young people have found these themed meetings to be much more productive since moving online and this model will now continue into the year ahead. Young people in Aberdeen have also commented that the support they have received has made a significant difference to them during lockdown. This feedback is central to a report being considered by the council which is looking at recommendations for furthering strengthening the inclusion of young people, well planned and ongoing communication, and the need for joined-up services.

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Date: August 2020

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