



# Meeting the challenge of COVID-19

## Learning and practice



### **How the young people at Aberlour came together during lockdown**

#### **What was the challenge faced by Aberlour?**

The COVID-19 lockdown has posed many challenges for the young people in residential care at Aberlour, including feelings of isolation and loneliness. The requirement to change and relax some of the formal processes they were used to, and the closing of schools, has led to a lack of structure and some young people have been struggling to cope.

#### **What change in practice took place?**

John\*, a care experienced young person, contacted the Rights and Participation Officer to say he was feeling bored and lonely and could he start an online quiz between the eight houses Aberlour runs across Scotland, from the Highlands to southern Scotland. This idea was floated with the adults in all houses and then all the young people were asked if they would like to take part via video conferencing - and the idea took off. John wrote the first quiz entirely on his own, and the prize for the winner was the opportunity to produce the next quiz. As the young people from across the houses became more involved and started to take the lead, other events were suggested and introduced including a talent show, karaoke, and a TikTok dance night. When the school summer holidays officially began, the young people suggested having a 'show and tell' event where they would bring a meaningful object along to discuss, to demonstrate how they are coping during lockdown, including talking about their highlights and the struggles. This took place at the end of June.

#### **Who was involved in making the change?**

This initiative continues to be led by the care experienced young people who suggest the ideas, with the residential child care workers and the Rights and Participation Officer working with them to help facilitate and encourage what they want to do. The IT department is involved to ensure connectivity for all those wishing to take part and providing access to the platform.

## **What difference did this change make?**

A real sense of belonging is growing across the community of young people who are connecting in a way they never have before. When one young person moved houses, the quiz was like a reunion and she stayed on the call afterwards to show her new room to her friends. Staff have reported deeper and stronger relationships with the young people, partly due to the increase in time spent together on the quizzes and events, and partly due to home learning as schools remain closed. These online events have boosted self-esteem and confidence as young people come together to perform in a talent show, or work together on dances. Two young people who felt that they could neither read nor write became confident enough to read the questions at one of the quiz nights. Seeing the adults and children 'cooied in' (snuggled) on a Tuesday night ready for the quiz has been described as similar to watching an episode of the television series Gogglebox!

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