



Meeting the challenge of COVID-19

Learning and practice



How Dundee City Council increased contact with their young care leavers whilst keeping them safe

What was the challenge faced by the Throughcare and Aftercare Team at Dundee City Council?

Normally the team is based in Dundee City Centre, so much of the work involves face-to-face meetings with young care leavers and those transitioning from care to independence. Soon after lockdown in Scotland was announced it became apparent that the team could not provide the level of service that the young people needed and deserved entirely through phone calls or online. Some young people said they were really missing human interaction. The team worried about the potential for deteriorating mental health, increasing substance misuse, domestic abuse, financial difficulties and increased risk-taking behaviours. The team wanted to find the best way to increase contact while keeping young people and staff safe.

What change in practice took place?

The lockdown changed and restricted the structure and routine which many care experienced people value in their daily lives; whether through further education, work or access to services. It was noted that for some this led to sleep disruption, changes in peer groups, lack of routine and other unsettling changes. The Throughcare and Aftercare team began receiving calls and social media messages more often in the late afternoon and evening. In order to support the young people when they were accessing the team, the working hours of the Duty Line were extended to 9am–9pm Monday to Friday and weekend afternoons. This was promoted on social media. The team delivered food parcels, supermarket vouchers, sanitary and contraceptive products, and money for gas and electricity directly to young people rather than other services doing so. Staff went with young people on socially distanced walks to encourage the government-advised one hour a day of physical exercise and offer direct interaction while discussing plans and support.

Who was involved in making the change?

The Throughcare and Aftercare Team has listened to the young people throughout lockdown and responded to their needs. The team worked within the Council to lead on this support for care leavers and develop stronger working relationships with other teams and services. In crisis situations, resources and information have been shared more efficiently to respond quicker. Also a multi-agency group was formed in response to an escalation in adolescent substance misuse under lockdown. Representatives from the Children & Families Service, substance misuse services, antisocial behaviour team and supported accommodation in the group aim to build a current and accurate picture of substance misuse trends and keep relevant teams educated and informed so practice can change in line with need.

What difference did this change make?

By finding new ways to support care leavers in Dundee, the team has provided stability during a period of great uncertainty. Maintaining safe but necessary face-to-face contact has been so important to the young people. As well as providing a listening ear, the team has been able to identify crisis and help young people stop risk behaviours escalating. The young people have responded particularly well to the socially distanced walks and said they enjoy getting out for exercise. Many said it was easier to talk about things that are affecting them rather than in the usual office setting which can be more intense. The team is keen to build on this learning.

More information

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