

# Connecting Voices – how raising awareness can affect change

## Transcript

Ruairi Hunter, Family Support Practitioner

My name is Ruairi Hunter, I'm the family support practitioner who has been working alongside the Connecting Voices Group. The group itself as a young person led participation group. The young people get together regularly to discuss issues, try and make positive changes around policy and practice both locally within East Ayrshire, and nationally. We've done quite a lot of work around relationships and what makes a good relationship. And equally on the other side of that what makes a bad relationship or a negative relationship? We've done videos, we've done audio installations with young people around what are the qualities and what are the strengths? When a worker can go that extra mile to make a good relationship. And then equally on the other side of that, what makes young people maybe lose trust or lose faith in a worker and what things can be detrimental towards that relationship. We have used these videos and audio installations, for training purposes for training locally to train staff, teams, social work teams, practitioners, young people have spoken at national conferences, about relationships and the importance of relationships. Young people have delivered workshops on relationships, and they have turned the question on its head and asked workers what they believe makes a good relationship. And then we've had a discussion and compared notes around that.

But it's important that when we get the views of young people around relationships that we don't just kind of go, Alright, that's all very well and good. We try and incorporate that into practice locally and nationally. I believe it's very important to get the views of young people. How do you affect change unless you have the views of the young people who have lived and experienced the things that we're talking about? We've done a bit of work around employment barriers, and what are the issues for young people when trying to look for jobs. We've talked about the stigma that employers have about young people who have care experience. And we've talked about some of the more practical issues around transportation and a lack of transport routes in East Ayrshire. But also, we talked about kind of the practicalities of young people not being able to afford buses and not being able

to afford to go into a day training placement and go and buy their lunch at lunchtime. It's very kind of ground level stuff such as that.

A lot of the stuff that we do is about raising the awareness of the discrimination and raising awareness of stigmatization. By encouraging this sort of participation work and by having young people being courageous enough or brave enough to stand up in a room full of job coaches or social workers or teachers or other corporate parents and speak about their actual experiences of being discriminated against. I think that raises awareness and I think it really pulls on the moral heartstrings and can I make people aware that although we're in the 21st century, that still does happen. By raising the awareness we can affect change.

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