



Meeting the Challenge: Involving young people in COVID-19 Route Mapping

How the Good Shepherd Centre involved young people on their Covid-19 Route Mapping

What was the challenge faced by the Good Shepherd Centre?

The COVID-19 lockdown changed the day to day lives of young people at Good Shepherd Centre (GSC), a secure close support and semi-independent living service for vulnerable young people. Just as for everyone in Scotland it meant many restrictions, so fewer freedoms and choices than usual within the context of secured and close support care. To keep everyone safe in their care houses and school GSC introduced physical distancing and smaller learning groups. This meant young people not being able to spend time with friends from other houses on campus, the school day was shortened and there were additional pressures from living and learning alongside the same group of young people for an extended period of time.

What change in practice took place?

As always, the GSC team were determined to listen to and learn from young people in their care. During May and June, like all children's services, GSC managers had to keep pace with the continual national guidance and COVID-19 updates. They recognised that young people may be feeling powerless and found ways to both inform young people and help them make sense of Scotland's Route Map, Through and Out of the COVID-19 Crisis. Staff worked alongside young people to develop a survey about the negative and 'silver linings' aspects of the COVID-19 situation for them and followed this up with a second survey about what was most important to young people for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Route Map. The majority of the young people took part. Key things young people wanted to see happen as quickly as possible were in person family visits to the centre, and being able to have a haircut and they had ideas about how this could happen safely. The feedback was fully taken on board and incorporated into GSC's own Route Map, including arrangements for outdoor family visits in the gardens and sports pitch, and the safe re-opening of the on-site hair salon.

Who was involved in making the change?

GSC staff worked alongside the Pupil Council to develop the initial survey about COVID-19 impact and invited all young people to take part. There was a very high completion rate, because the young people involved as Pupil Council representatives encouraged their peers to have their say. The School managers, Education and Care teams all worked together; as they have done throughout the lockdown, to plan, risk assess, and practically prepare for family visits and the salon re-opening. Engaging and accessible information was developed including information leaflets and films. These were produced collaboratively with young people and remotely edited by the film-maker who works with GSC.

What difference did this change make?

By involving young people closely in developing the GSC Route Map, there have been some really important opportunities for learning and developing understanding. Conversations have reflected on lockdown, public health, social and physical distancing and the impact of what is happening in the world. This is important to help young people make sense of what's happening outside of the GSC environment for their own families and the wider community. Most importantly, young people have had a sense of agency and influence in shaping GSC's own Route Map which has an impact on how they live and learn at this time.

More information: Find out more about the GSC Route Map approach and Covid-19 Resilience from: Alison Gough, Director
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