Seeing the potential in every young person

> “It helps me get like my temper out, gone. I’m no getting in as much trouble ootside an that - I used to get polis chases all the time before I started coming here.”

Ferrywell Youth Project (FYP) provides activities and support for young people in the Pilton, Muirhouse and Drylaw areas of Edinburgh. With Christian values at its core, the project – a joint member of Youth Scotland and Lothian Association of Youth Clubs – strives to support young people to make positive choices and changes. Following increased reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the area, Ferrywell Youth Project joined other local groups in an Action Learning session facilitated by Youth Scotland to discuss the issues and challenges they faced. Subsequent funding from Generation CashBack has helped to ensure Ferrywell Youth Project can continue to engage with, and provide support to those who need it most.

In this case study six young people describe their experiences with Ferrywell Youth Project. They explain the difference it has made for them; from positive relationships with trusted adults, activities that bring development and growth opportunities, through to the personalised support that has helped them overcome challenges and make positive change.

Seeing the potential in every young person

Nothing much to do

The young people talked about the need for Ferrywell and what they would be doing if they were not involved with the youth charity. They painted a bleak picture of facilities for young people in the neighbourhood.

"I'm gonna be honest, I don't really go out in this area. I just don't like this area. Same with my mum. The people that hang around there aren't too great. It isn't the best, it's not enjoyable, it's quite uncomfortable and it's not a pleasure to be around."

"There's nothing to do, like, you don't have nothing to do."

"There's not very much to do, we'll just go for a walk up the railway. There's no really anything else. We come here, whenever it's on. Before the summer it was on every week. So we came every week. And then we had a camp in summer."

"I'd just be kicking about with my mates, smoke weed, getting in fights, motorbikes, meeting lassies."

Getting involved

A chance to do something different, and a space to meet up with friends and have some fun initially attracted some of the young people involved with Ferrywell. Others were referred to Ferrywell, through agencies that identified the organisation's ability to effectively engage with young people and support them to make better choices and positive changes.

"I was picking up charges and that [...] social work had said that I could dae this (come to Ferrywell) or end up in secure [care]. I thought it was going to be hell, I'm gonna go here once and that's it like. But its good, it gies you someone to say stuff to, you don't need to keep it tae yersel."

"Being able to have fun, with my friends, and not just be running about the streets."

"I was getting in trouble at school so I got an alternative timetable and I see (FYP staff member) wi that."

> **"They were doing stuff in ma school and then I met (FYP staff member), then they like, gave me a letter for a camp, then I joined in. And then that's how I got involved with this place."**

The importance of activities and new experiences

Opportunities at Ferrywell to play games, meet friends and have fun means a lot to the young people who go there. They make extensive use of the space and facilities which have been set up to make them feel comfortable and safe. Young people reflected on the value of chances to do different things and have experiences that other young people might take for granted, like being driven in a car, or going on holiday.

"Ma mate Mikey and that, we just come up here, sit and chill and have a talk. Ahm here pretty much every day".

"We can play pool, air hockey, go on the PS4. You have a little chat if like something's bothering you. Yeah, you can even make like a pot noodle if you really want, you can play board games."

Seeing the potential in every young person

"And we've just went like on a drive. (Member of FYP staff) said, 'we don't have to sit in the office, we can take a drive'. And even that is amazing because no one in my family drives so it's good for me. So it's a different experience."

"100% especially with new people as well. Because I have not really went like camping it was the first time I went camping. I mean, it was a brand new experience."

"Being able to have fun with my friends, and not just be running about the streets."

These activities help the young people and staff to develop relationships that underpin effective, personalised one to one support. Over time, the young people build the confidence and trust to reflect on their lives and have open and honest conversations about what is going on for them.

"It's more than [activities], I get time, you know, even just looking out the windae, you've got an hour just to clear your head. It's much better and it's crucial for me, when it's needed. It's effective, it works."

"To be honest there's been so many things that are amazing, but there's not one thing that's like, helped me over anything else. Every little chat to every drive to every little meal we've had everything adds up to, like how you feel today?"

"It builds a much much stronger bond... I think that is the most crucial way to do it, with activities, it builds the connection, trust and that."

"It's not only the fun, like, see if you have a problem with something you can go talk to someone."

"If you've got problems and you want to talk to someone[...] They do help me with my problems".

Relationships are the great enabler

The positive relationships with the staff at Ferrywell were evident in young people's descriptions. They described an environment where they feel cared for by people who have their best interests at heart.

"It sounds silly because of course it isn't but it feels like a family, which is probably the silliest thing because it's not. You know what I mean, of course, it isn't family. There's no biological relation. But you do get that feeling like as if you were meeting with your family and had such a heart warming time together."

"It's much more than that to them you can tell that its more than that, no, I think you can see it in them, you know how they do it. You can't fault (FYP staff member), they genuinely do just make you want to be a better person."

"Because (FYP staff member) is such a nice person, they are very caring for people and that, aye."

Seeing the potential in every young person

Trust is also a critical aspect of these relationships, without which meaningful, open and honest conversations wouldn't be possible.

"There's been many situations where I haven't wanted to open up. But I knew it was for the best, you might not want to do it, but it's better to do it. I mean, I wouldn't want to talk to my mother about it, but I know I trust them enough and I know it's for my benefit."

"Trust is one of the biggest things in the world for me, trust is the difference between me opening up and not."

"Because aye, with something as strong as that you need to trust someone huge amounts to pass information over. You know what I mean? I mean, it was something really uncomfortable and an uncomfortable thing to talk about. But, you know, I mean, that trust, that level of trust."

> **"At first I didnae trust them, and then I got to know them better, then I did (trust them). You know they winnae tell anyone else about it so I tell them."**

Being there when needed

Young people described the importance of relationships with adults who are consistently present and available for them. Knowing that there is someone to talk to if you need advice, have a problem to share or just need someone to chat to is significant for these young people, who may lack stability in other parts of their lives.

"They say you can come in if you want, you don't have to schedule a time, you know, you can just come and see them if you need to."

"They're nice. They're really good. Like if you've got problems and you want to talk to someone. You could talk to (FYP staff member), there's a person called (FYP staff member), and there's (FYP staff member), you can talk to them if something's wrong."

> **"So then they talk about, like, if there's anything you need help with as I'm growing up, I can always turn to them."**

"We just talk about if there is anything on my mind, and they help me out and stuff. Just getting it off my mind and that".

One young person told us that Ferrywell had supported him and also his mum when she was having a difficult time. It reinforced his positive views of the staff and the difference they make.

"My mum has had issues as well just from like, her relationships in the past. She says (FYP staff member) has been wonders for her, because like, course they are there for anyone who needs it and they offered that to my mum and she's spoke to them before and even I really liked that, I was really glad that my mum was able to come to them."

Equipping young people with strategies and skills for life

Staff at Ferrywell Youth Project provide help, advice and support, but they also strive to equip young people with strategies and tools that will help them to do the right things and make the right choices throughout their lives.

"I will message them if I need to, or sometimes I'll just think back to the amount of meetings that we've had, the amount of chats that we've had and yeah, I just get these flashbacks like what we've said, it's like, it helps me control myself more independently."

"Aye its gave me more things to do to take it out. Like they are giving me options, I wouldn't have really thought if I was angry to do these certain things for calming down or keeping yoursel collected. But now that I have, and they're just embedded in my mind, that I now know them you know, I mean, it's good coping mechanisms I can use."

Chipping away at barriers, and making positive changes and choices

Reflecting on their time with Ferrywell Youth Project, the young people spoke about the difference it had made. For some there was a significant impact on wellbeing, confidence, aspirations, and social skills.

> **"I wouldn't feel, I don't think I'd be as fulfilled. Like it gives me a happy, a heart warming, like a really genuine feeling that I dinnae get off much things."**

"I'd be less confident. It's being around more people, than what I would have been."

"It's helped me to learn to just be myself around other people."

"Because it builds up people's confidence and instead of them being on the streets and vandalising things."

Seeing the potential in every young person

"I want to get a job and a hoose an that. I was speaking to (FYP staff member) last week about helping me to get a job, and they were like yeah we can look into that."

"This place has only made me more confident talking and being myself. A lot of the times, aye, throughout the years I would be really nervous, panicky, I was quite a fidgeter, I would never really talk."

> **"A lot different. And different maybe like, I wouldn't have as much friends as I've got now. Like, after school, I would have nothing to do like, I would have no one apart from my mum. I'd have no-one to talk to about my problems."**

Other young people told us that it had made them stop and think about their own behaviour and choices, and the positive changes this has led to.

"I would say it's changed me a lot. Changed my behaviour. Definitely. With my parents, I'm gonna be honest, I used to treat my parents like s**t. Like, I wouldn't listen, I would call them names like, I would say 'I hate you' to them like. Since I met (FYP staff member) I've been behaving, I've helped my mum a lot."

"I'd still be getting the police chases and just getting in trouble, doing all that s**t."

"It helps no get in arguments with my mum so much. (FYP staff member) talks to me about how you really should treat your family and how you should speak to them. They've taught me how to be respectful, how to care for other people an that."

> **"It's helping me, like, I'm an angry wee boy. I get angry easy. So coming to them, it chills me oot a bit."**

"Like if they said, 'Oh, you want to come out?' And like I would say yeah, but at the same time if they were tanning windows I'd be off, I wouldn't be part of it."

In the accompanying case study, we describe the experiences of staff from Ferrywell Youth Project and three other Youth Scotland/LAYC member organisations supporting some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in Edinburgh. It highlights the approaches that create change, delivery challenges, young people's emerging needs in the pandemic, and the impact of youth work.