

Young Facilitators

Young Facilitators are young people, aged 14 - 18, who have experience of being in care. They are trained in facilitation, session planning and behaviour management techniques. They deliver sessions, activities and workshops for both adults and young people on lots of different topics.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, Participation People were asked to engage with and support young people in care to improve services across Dorset.

After 3 months, we found that there were lots of older young people wanting to improve their skills, professional experiences and CV's. There was also a high proportion of Care Leavers who were not in education, training or employment. We needed help facilitating sessions with all the young people we had recruited to our #YouthVoice sessions too!

So we recruited 12 young people, who had experienced being in or were in care. They applied for the role, were interviewed and attended an induction day. Most wanted to be social workers, teachers or lead groups.



THE PROBLEMS

The big ones were:

1. Retaining young people's interest for a year.
2. Supporting services and teams to use Young Facilitators' skills meaningfully.
3. Continually developing Young Facilitator skills as individuals and as a group.
4. Keeping up with demand from other services.
5. Incentivising young people's time so that it didn't interfere with their benefits.
6. Young Facilitators not ready to lead sessions because of poor mental and physical health and lack of confidence.
7. Ensuring their Personal Advisors and / or Social Workers were kept up to date with all of their work!

THE SOLUTIONS

1. Creating a role description and policies e.g. expense and travel booking forms for the group.
2. Giving Young Facilitators access to an online diary and a paper one.
3. Setting up a closed Facebook group to share opportunities, celebrate successes and banter!
4. Setting up fun, accredited and engaging training days every school holiday.
5. Creating a check list for services to complete before they "book" Young Facilitators' time.
6. Building excellent relationships with Young Facilitators' support network and sharing exciting opportunities.
7. Offering other opportunities to get involved when they weren't ready to facilitate e.g. session design, researching new games, helping with the training days.



83% retention

We have 10 Young Facilitators taking up opportunities a year on. They have become the backbone to delivering the Junior in Care Council, Children in Care Council, training with Foster Carers and Student Social workers and being on staff recruitment and selection and commissioning panels. They have led on delivering 1 county wide and 1 regional conference with groups of young people too!

Young people have said, "having a Young Facilitator helps me talk about things. They just get it and I don't have to explain what it's like being a young person." A Young Facilitator said, "before this, I wasn't doing anything. I didn't know where I was going or what skills I had. This has helped



67%



70%



100%

- Young Facilitators with a learning difficulty or disability
- Young Facilitators with a diagnosed mental health condition
- Young Facilitators reporting a 50% increase in confidence, communication and team work skills

Social Impact

We have asked existing Young Facilitators to stay on and help us recruit the next cohort. They will act as mentors to the new group. We have also asked them to be #YouthVoice champions, partnering them up with Social Services managers. They meet every month to discuss a challenge that, that manager is facing. They develop new skills and senior level contacts as a result.

Young Facilitators were asked at the beginning of their year to write a letter to themselves in 5 years time, introducing their achievements. We have repeated this exercise with the group. We have seen a marked difference in their responses from: "I just want to be a Mum so I can have my own house" to "I will be a primary school teacher somewhere other than Dorset."



● Recruitment



● Training



● Support



● Facilitation



● Signposting



The Participation People

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