

Holiday Programme

2021

Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership



Youth Work Education Recovery Fund



Scottish
Government
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YouthLink
Scotland
The national agency for youth work

www.youthborders.org.uk

Introduction

The Scottish Government established the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund (YWERF) to enable the youth work sector to support educational recovery of young people across Scotland who were impacted by Covid-19 pandemic. The overall aim of the fund was to support opportunities for young people to engage or re-engage with youth work activities that build their confidence and skills; support their health and well-being; and address the poverty-related attainment gap. This Recovery Fund was administered by YouthLink Scotland, the national youth work agency.

Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership is made up of seven lead locality based universal youth groups; Beyond Earlston, Cheviot Youth, Rowland's (Selkirk), Escape Youth Services, Connect Berwickshire Youth Project, TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action, together with YouthBorders. With YouthBorders as the lead applicant, the Partnership was awarded £59,781 from the YWERF to deliver a coordinated region wide holiday programme for young people in the Scottish Borders. This was to take a regional strategic approach with Scottish Borders Council Community Learning and Development (CLD) Youth Learning Team also contributing to delivery in some areas.

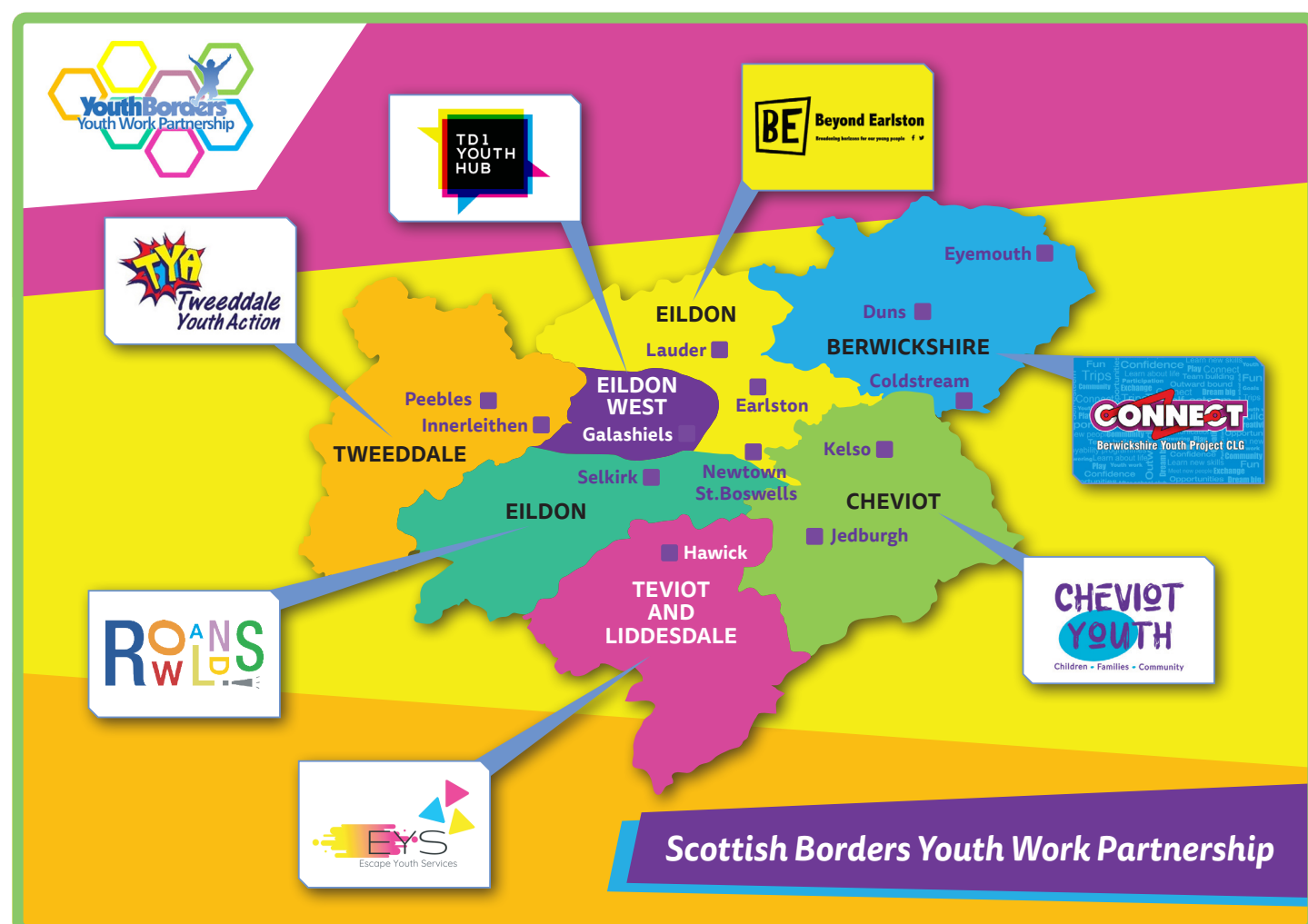


Figure 1: Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership Locality Map.

This report has been produced from the evaluation data provided by the seven youth work delivery partners to YouthBorders. All names have been changed in case-studies and quotes to anonymise the participants and beneficiaries. Photos have been provided, with consent and permission by partners.

About the Holiday Programme

For the first time, the Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership delivered a coordinated region wide holiday programme to support Scottish Borders young people most impacted by Covid-19. The holiday programme took an inclusive approach to engaging targeted young people into high quality, community-based youth work activities during the April, summer, and October school holidays in 2021. We achieved this with partnership contributions in some areas from Scottish Borders Council CLD Youth Learning Team.

The activities funded were additional to drop-in and other project-based activity that is already provided by the seven youth work delivery partners. This created additional capacity or additional youth work opportunities to support young people during a time when other services, in particular school, were not available. This programme directly alleviated holiday hunger, supported young people's health and wellbeing, and created opportunities to develop skills and confidence. The holiday programme also focused on increasing youth work provision and closing the poverty-related attainment gap by addressing the impact that Covid-19 had on young people.

Fund Objectives

All aspects of the project design, implementation and evaluation for the holiday programme was informed by Scotland's Youth Work Outcomes (YouthLink Scotland 2018). In our project we furthered the three mandatory fund objectives and two additional objectives selected by the Partnership.

Mandatory:

- An increased youth work offer with a focus on the national youth work outcomes and supporting young people's educational, social and emotional recover.
- Increased youth work support for young people, families and communities who need it most, including those disproportionately disadvantaged by Covid-19.
- Improved partnership working across local CLD partnerships that supports the delivery of education recovery and renewal.

Additional:

- Improved youth work support for young people's mental health and well-being.
- Increased opportunities for young people to build their confidence and skills for learning, life and work.

Youth-Led Design

It was important that we involved young people in the decision making of the holiday programme, so they can have their voice heard, be in charge by making decisions, gaining new skills and meeting new people. Prior to the holiday programme starting in April, YouthBorders organised a Virtual Reference Group, which was a mixture of young people and youth workers who were going to be involved in the programme. The Virtual Reference Group were responsible for sharing ideas, looking over programme documents, the evaluation tools and deciding which activities would be available during the programme. Beyond the Virtual Reference Group, local partners worked alongside young people to develop, deliver, review and evaluate the project activities.



Who Took Part?

The holiday programme was free for young people with fewer opportunities to attend. We set programme eligibility criteria to make sure we were targeting young people in our area. When designing the project, we focused on supporting young people who were in greatest need of support, and developed a shared agreed eligibility criteria:

- in receipt of Free School Meals;
- live in households with insecure income (limited resources, as defined by the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index); or
- where the young person has been directly impacted by Covid-19 through bereavement of a family member or loss of employment of their parent/carer during the pandemic.

However, it also became apparent that local partners, insight and intelligence identified a broader eligibility need which included young people and families whose circumstances had changed by Covid-19 and where inequalities had or were at risk of widening.

In addition to the eligibility criteria, the programme had a particular focus on young people who:

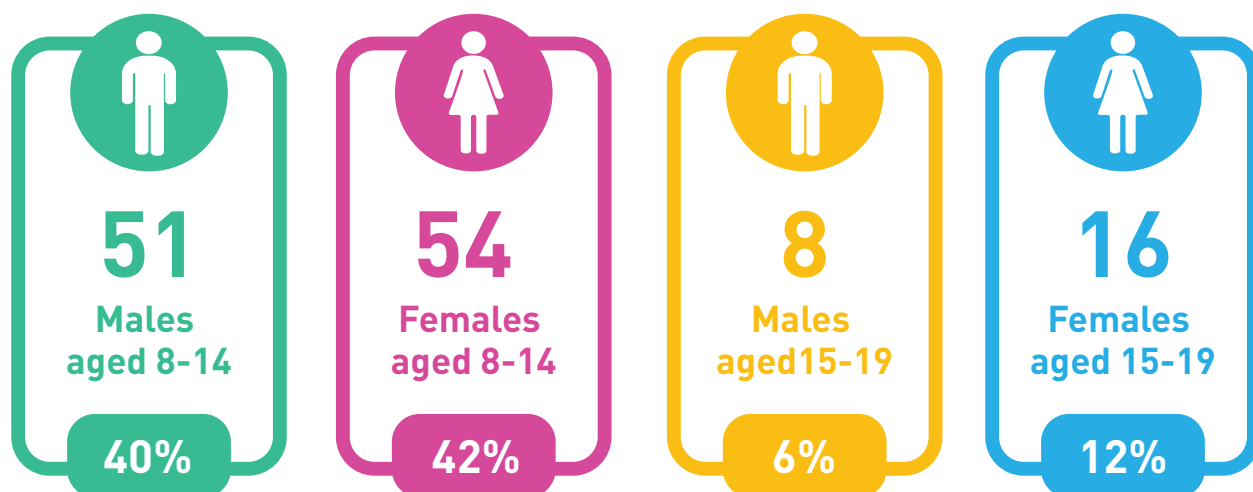
- will be transitioning from Primary 7 to S1;
- are at risk of leaving school without a positive destination; or,
- those where a youth work intervention may increase engagement in learning or continuation of learning in secondary school.

We reached targeted young people in every locality of the Scottish Borders and in all nine secondary school catchment areas: Galashiels, Selkirk, Hawick, Berwickshire, Eyemouth, Peebles, Earlston, Kelso and Jedburgh. This was possible due to over a decade of collaborative working between the seven community-based youth work organisations and YouthBorders. By working closely with parents, CLD Youth Learning Team and schools, we were able to help identify other young people who met the criteria for this programme.



Impact and Reflections

The Scottish Government funding supported us to work with **129 young people** across the Scottish Borders. Our priority age was between 12 and 17 years old however, young people aged 8 and 19 benefitted from this funding. There were a total of 59 males and 70 females who took part in the programme.



Activity Highlights

The partnership delivered **146 high quality youth work sessions** throughout the April, summer and October school holidays. The fund priorities encouraged the use of outdoor and creative practice and activities to support education recovery and this was strongly reflected in the activities offered. Most of the activity sessions incorporated outdoor learning including fishing, sports days, horse riding, gardening, mountain biking, walking and paddle boarding. Our partners engaged specialist providers such as Transform Arts CIC and At Birkhill House CIC to deliver creative arts and craft sessions. It was also important to young people to have the opportunity to have new experiences beyond their own town and the delivery partners were able to take young people on adventurous and educational excursions including the beach, Go-Ape, Deep Sea World, the National Museum, Rock UK, Blair Drummond Safari Park, Dynamic Earth and Foxlake.

Activities were physically active, encouraged young people to assess and consider risk and make informed decisions and choices. Young people felt good about themselves as they were challenged to step out their comfort zones and try new things. Young people also expressed how much they enjoyed the sense of independence and building their confidence by being away from their home and families for the day and visiting new locations. Young people appreciated the support and encouragement from youth workers and asked for help when they needed it.



Activities such as the colour run, team challenge days, bubble football, visit to Escape Rooms and cooking and baking together enabled young people to build on their teamwork skills and communication skills. Young people were given the opportunity to meet new people, including young people from other youth organisations through joint activities. The young people worked well together and supported each other in group situations and were able to develop their inter-personal skills, including communication, problem solving, motivation, peer to peer and peer to practitioner relationships.

*“At the zoo I was tired but enjoyed it very much so I kept walking.
I also had more confidence even though my parents were not there, I enjoyed the independence”.*

young person



“Doing the fishing I never thought I would be able to do that, but I did and when I got home and the family saw the pictures and what I had caught they were all really proud of me, especially my grandad so it was a good feeling”.

young person

Evaluation Highlights

Young people that took part in the holiday programme worked with their youth worker to complete a pre and post questionnaire at the start and the end of summer holiday block. Young people answered a mixture of statement questions (agree/disagree) and open questions, based on the programme objectives.

Feedback from our evaluation questionnaires found that:

85% ... of young people agreed or strongly agreed that since starting the holiday programme, they have **increased their confidence**.

82% ... of young people agreed or strongly agreed that since starting the holiday programme, they have **learned new ways to cope and be happy** again after something difficult or bad happens.

70% ... of young people agreed or strongly agreed that since starting the holiday programme, they have **increased their self-esteem** as they feel better about themselves.

70% ... of young people agreed or strongly agreed that since starting the holiday programme, they are **better at communicating and sharing ideas and opinions** with others in a group.

68% ... of young people agreed or strongly agreed that since starting the holiday programme, they are **better at working and supporting other people** in a group.



As part of our evaluation, we also asked young people to write down three words that best described how they felt about starting the youth work holiday programme. We then asked them to write down three words on how they felt since taking part on the holiday programme (see table 1).

Before	After
Nervous	Fun
Excited	Proud
Eager	Safe
Thankful	Happy
Okay	Confident
Anxious	Included
Worried	Amazing
New	Resilient
Alright	Comfortable
Motivated	Eventful
Buzzing	Awesome
Adventurous	Independent
Ambitious	Interested
Helpful	Belonging

Table 1: Young people’s words which best describe how they felt before and after the holiday programme.

Wider Learning and Achievements

Young people’s experiences and achievements were recorded and celebrated by the youth work teams. Photographs of young people in action were celebrated on social media to recognise their achievements. These posts reached parents, carers, guardians, schools, other youth and partner organisations. An impact film was also commissioned to capture the youth work experiences of young people involved in the programme to communicate its impact.

Six young people are either working towards or have successfully completed a Youth Achievement Award and twelve young people completed a Young First Aider Course during the programme. Overall, the number of young people achieving accredited learning during the programme was lower than anticipated. We recognise that having different CLD contribution than initially planned impacted on capacity for youth award support; but also, some young people had previously achieved youth awards; and others were not motivated or willing to engage in accredited learning during the holiday period.

Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership - YWERF Holiday Programme 2021 - YouTube



www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2L_BTPhB8c

Feedback and Reflections

Young People said:

"When I went to Foxlake I was a bit scared to go on the zip wire at the end. I was watching other people do it and the youth leader supported me through encouragement. When I done it, I felt proud of myself".

"Just getting to be involved with others and be included made me feel so much better about myself and helped my self-esteem".

"I was grouped with someone I didn't know but was confident and made a new friend while on a farm trip".

"Taking part in new activities really helps me believe in myself and that I can do things and can try new things too without being scared".

"Mixing with other people, especially with people I didn't know and had come from other youth groups. Being at the zoo was really good as we were allowed a lot of independence to go around, and this was really fun".

"Just feel more confident now, especially about starting secondary school because I actually know people there now".

"When at Rock UK I was nervous to do the abseiling. My team gave me the support to do it and I felt great".

"Going to M&Ds with a big group including folk I didn't know which made me feel anxious but by the end I was really confident with them all".



Parents/Carers/Guardians said:

"My daughter's confidence has grown greatly over the holidays, I honestly believe that the holiday programme has given her the confidence to take on secondary school without any worries. I also feel that the holiday programme and weekly sessions have given kids the skills and confidence socially that may have been lost after lockdown and during restrictions".

"She gained confidence, teamwork ability, communication, importance of health and well-being, safety and security".

"My son has gained some vital skills regarding patience and tolerance. He was the youngest in most sessions and this helped him learn how to take turns, trust and resilience".

"My 13-year-old son had been really struggling with anxiety and feeling isolated. The holiday programme made such a difference for him. It was amazing to see him come back from the days out looking so happy and talking about what a great time he had. It has really brought him out of a very hard time".

"I cannot express how much this has supported my son as he transitions to high school. At the start of the summer we were experiencing violence at home and his participation in the sessions has helped turn around his emotional behaviours, given him a sense of belonging and community and given him self-esteem".



Youth Workers said:

"Young person is much more confident and is leaving the house more and is making more friends".

"This young person has learnt so much from the holiday programme and came away with new friendships and lots of confidence".

"Having access to opportunities this young person may not otherwise have experienced. This has inspired the young person to engage and commit as part of the group and as an individual. He has improved his confidence in his own ability and to try new challenges".

"We had a young person who was struggling a bit up the tree but managed to be confident enough to take the leap and jump. He was amazing".

Formal Education Partners said:

"Teambuilding opportunities and the chance to try new activities and experiences. On occasions, these were out-with the young person's usual comfort zone – which is a good thing!".

"A fantastic range of opportunities were on offer – there was a trip or activity to suit everyone! It really gave a number of young people a boost, in particular over the long summer holiday".

"Greater confidence in returning to school. A more positive outlook".

"Improved social skills in terms of getting on with peers and being appropriate with members of the public".

CLD Youth Learning Team said:

"Young people increased their confidence, had a 'can do' approach and improved their interpersonal skills".

"Young person is more confident in himself and a better communicator".

"Young person has settled into high school well, built up a strong friendship with another young person who was on the summer programme with her, and this undoubtedly helped her settle positively into S1 and support her learning journey".

Case Study 1: Rachel

Rachel is aged 11, who lacks confidence and self-esteem. She is very shy and relies upon her older brother for friendship and security. Due to the impact of Covid-19 lockdown, Rachel missed out on the majority of her last year at primary school. As the transition programmes had to be cancelled, she was particularly anxious about starting secondary school after the summer.

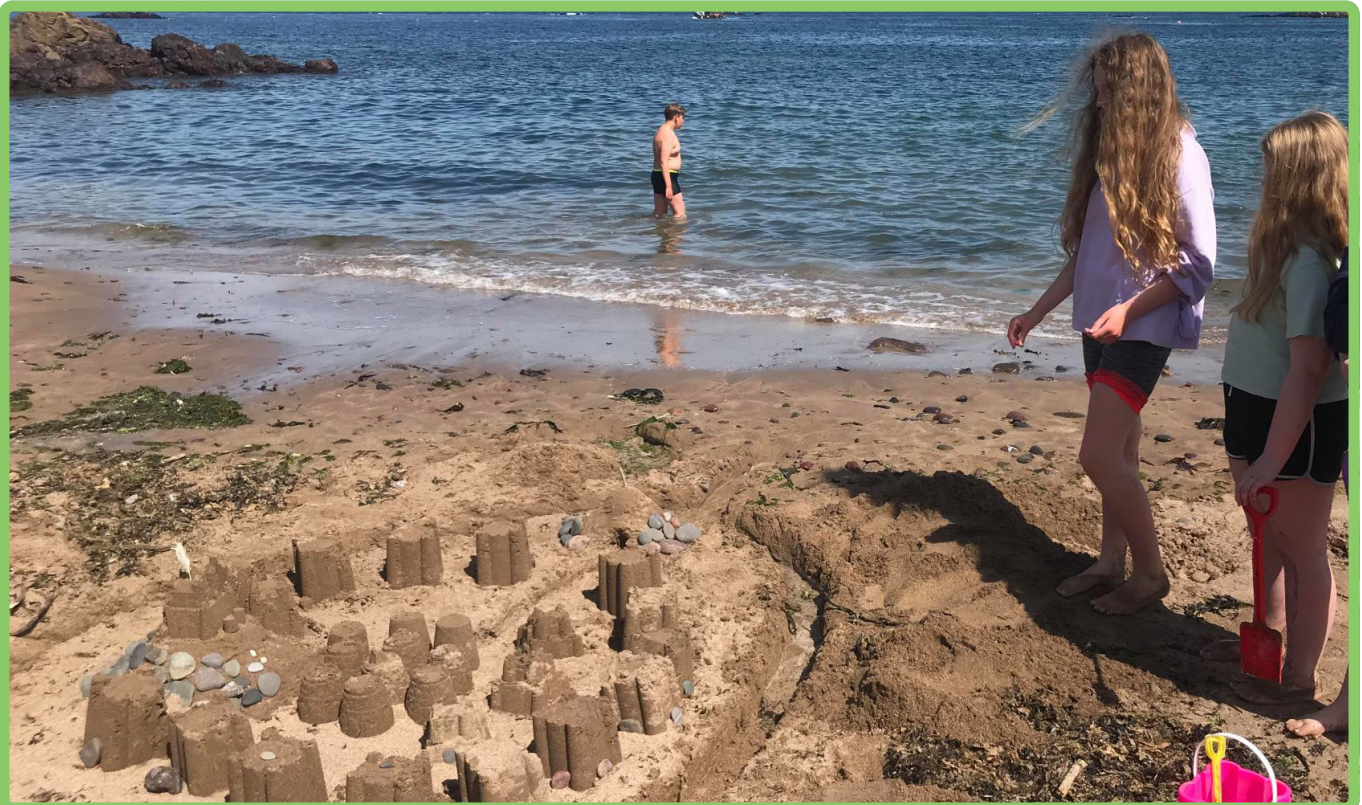
During the holiday programme, Rachel was willing to try new things and went on some youth work trips to Edinburgh Zoo, Deep Sea World, and Blair Drummond Safari Park. These opportunities allowed Rachel to push herself out her comfort zone, claim her independence and make her own decisions. Her confidence grew as she began to build friendships and familiarise herself with other girls who were also in the same position as her. This was important to Rachel as she was able to talk to them about her feelings and worries of transitioning to secondary school. Rachel worked on her communication skills and was more confident at sharing her thoughts and supporting others in a group.

The holiday programme was extremely beneficial for Rachel as she is now settled into secondary school, engaging well in learning and has more confidence and increased self-esteem. Rachel has continued to engage with the youth work and has joined a youth group which she regularly attends with one of her new friends from secondary school. Here she is continuing to learn new skills and participate in new experiences.

Youth Worker said: “Rachel was a very timid girl who wouldn’t leave her brother’s side whenever taking part in activities. By the end of the summer not only would she leave his side but went on a trip without him! This was a measure of how much her confidence had grown”.

Guidance teacher said: “Rachel has settled into secondary school well, she has built up a strong friendship with another young person who was on the holiday programme with her and this undoubtedly helped her settle in positively into her first year and support her learning journey”.

Rachel said: “I really enjoyed the summer trips, I loved Blair Drummond as I got to see the monkeys and that was really cool. I made a friend who I now spend a lot of time with – she is probably my best friend now”.



Case Study 2: Matthew

Matthew was new to our youth group and struggles with his speech and communication. This has a significant impact on his confidence and ability to build relationships with his peers. As the holiday programme was free to attend, Matthew participated in most activities. He came to Edinburgh Zoo, craft and chill session At Birkhill House, Rib Trip and beach, candle making, Bubble Football and Nerf Wars. He was a little anxious about getting on the minibus each time, but the group made him feel very welcome and went above and beyond to make him feel part of the group. Everyone was really patient and allowed Matthew time to talk and they listened carefully. This built his confidence and he loved coming to activities. He is now part of our youth group and always shouts “hi” to young people and youth workers with a big smile on his face. He feels included and understood. It is evident that he feels comfortable and confident in the youth work setting. We hope his confidence continues to grow now that he is back to school and about to begin Primary 7.

Matthew said: “I’ve had so much fun. I’ve tried new things, even things that scared me. I’ve made new friends”.

Youth Worker: “Matthew has been great for our group. The older young people have been very respectful and patient with him and this has brought out their caring side”.

Case Study 3: Fox Lake

The group of young people that were supported had experienced the impact of Covid-19 on their social skills and peer interaction. The priority of the activity was to support and development friendship. At the earliest stages of the project some young people were involved in the Virtual Reference Group and were responsible for helping plan the trips and activities for the programme. These young people wanted a safe place to come and socialise with their peers, build new friendships and try new exciting things. One activity they chose was to do the adventure challenge course at Fox Lake.

In summer, young people travelled to Fox Lake where they took part in the over water and the tree top experience. Many young people in this group were scared of heights however, it was heart-warming to see young people helping and supporting one another. The young people showed great leadership skills when it came to managing their way through the obstacles across the water, motivating, encouraging and cheering each other on. Some of these young people had only just met the week before so it was amazing to see them working together and building these new found friendships. It was obvious that resilience building, friendship building and stepping out of your comfort zone was the three main achievements of the day.

Parent said: “Thank you so much, Ben has managed to meet up with some of his old friends and made new ones because he attended your programme”.

Young person said: “This summer was amazing, I’ve learned so much, tried new things and managed to face my fears. It’s been so active and thank you for all the lovely food and snacks”.



Case Study 4: Liam

Liam often feels anxious, has a very short attention span, minimal focus and struggles with relationship building. His mum contacted us and was aware of the support that we offer through youth work. Prior to the holiday programme, we introduced Liam to another young person through one-to-one and small group work. Once he started to build trust and relationships, we slowly worked with him to join into the programme activities until he was ready to go on trips out of town.

Liam attended walks, museum trips, M&D's Theme Park and youth club days. His confidence has increased considerably, particularly noticeable in bigger groups and he has made steps towards making new friendships and interacting with peers. Relationships with peers have been fraught in the past and it felt like he was always striking first, expecting people to be antagonistic and unkind towards him. He has learnt to be more positive and to give people a chance. This is so important to him as he is transitioning into secondary school after the summer and he will be able to use his communication skills to make new friends. During the holidays, Liam also worked towards achieving a Hi5 Youth Award.

Parent feedback: Liam's mum has told us that she has seen a noticeable improvement in his confidence and in the way he behaves at home.

Liam said: "Thank you for the opportunity and including me in so many different activities. I have made friends and I have had fun".

Case Study 5: Amelia

Amelia recently moved to the Scottish Borders part way through her Primary 7 during the middle of Covid-19 pandemic. Amelia and her family are Polish, and although she speaks English fluently she acts as translator for her parents when needed. Amelia puts on a lot of bravado and can come across a little aloof and 'too cool' for the youth club activities. Youth workers felt that she was more nervous about the transition to secondary school than she let on.

During the holiday programme, Amelia attended the beach trip but did not bring any swimming clothing with her. Instead of playing in the sea, she isolated herself and sat on the beach alone. Youth workers tried their best to encourage Amelia to participate in the group games but she repeatedly declined. As the day went on and the sun came out she started to make comments about wishing she had brought some more beach appropriate clothing with her. The other girls rallied round and encouraged her to roll her leggings up and come in the water, which she eventually did. She ended up enjoying it so much she dived in the sea fully clothed to swim! It was really lovely to see her slowly loosen up, build confidence, make new friends and grow less reliant on staff.

Youth Worker said: "Amelia joined in the bowling with a team of young people she didn't really know well. She also became more open to conversations with other kids and not just the staff."

"Amelia became more confident. She was really quiet at the start of the summer but she became more of a 'people person' towards the end."



Case Study 6: Rhianna

Rhianna experiences low self-esteem and low mood. She has expressed persistent feelings of irritability, angry outbursts and was at risk of self-harming. During the holiday programme, Rhianna attended the arts and crafts sessions. During the session, young people started to get into a discussion around gender. Young people were supported to share their own views and perspectives – the views were not always shared. One young person started to disagree with Rhianna's view point, which caused her to become angry. After everyone in the group had voiced their opinions, Rhianna soon learned to respect other young people's point of view and she calmed down and continued with the group discussions.

At the end of the session, Rhianna acknowledged that she sometimes struggles to control her anger and emotions. Youth workers praised Rhianna as they were proud of her for handling her emotions and controlling her temper well this time. She learned to allow others to give their opinion and listen to what they had to say respectfully. Rhianna is looking forward to keeping a personal journal as a space to clear her head and write it down. This strategy will hopefully also help her to analyse and understand her emotions.

Rhianna said: "I am glad I attended both of the arts and crafts sessions as I feel more relaxed doing the work and felt more at ease to approach staff again".

Case Study 7: Jacob and Finn

Jacob and Finn attended our first trip on the holiday programme and didn't know any other young people. They were both very shy, nervous and lacked self-confidence. Once the boys were introduced to each other, they realised they were both transitioning to the same secondary school after the summer break.

The boys immediately started to build a friendship and sat together on the boat trip. When we came back to the youth club for lunch, it was fantastic to see Jacob and Finn talking and laughing together as they had a lot in common. Such a wonderful friendship has been formed and their confidence has grown massively over the course of the holiday programme. Both Jacob and Finn are excited to start secondary school together as they are less nervous and are keen to come back to the youth club and get involved in more groups.

Finn said: "I am so happy that I came on the trip today, I wasn't sure about it because I didn't know anyone but I'm happy because if I didn't I wouldn't have met Jacob and now we are looking forward to seeing each other on the next session".

Jacob said: "I'm happy that I made a new friend and we get on really well. It's good to meet new people and you learn a lot from each other, which is what it's all about".



Case Study 8: Hayley

Hayley experiences some barriers when trying to socialise with her peers. Hayley suffers from the neurological condition ADHD. Hayley has been known to be very loud and shouts out at others as a way to gain attention. She often finds herself in some type of confrontation with others due to her loud personality. Hayley also lacks confidence and needs a lot of reassurance.

During the holiday programme, Hayley took part in the silent disco and the sports day. This activity gave the young person an opportunity to let down their guard and enjoy the music with no judgment. The activities during the sports day included bubble football, archery and nerf guns. Although she was hesitant to take part in the activities at first, Hayley's confidence grew and she was able to overcome her fears through the support given from the youth workers. She also learned new skills including interpersonal skills through communication and team work activities. At the end of the sessions, she felt good about herself and enjoyed receiving positive feedback from other young people and youth workers. Hayley learned that she could get help from others simply by asking and not shouting. It is important that Hayley continues to try new things and feels included to promote her mental well-being and social inclusion.

Hayley said: "It was great fun, I was frightened at the thought of going into the bubble football but I overcame my fear and realised that I would be safe. I absolutely loved it and felt so proud of my achievements".

Youth Worker said: "There has been a noticeable change in Hayley since the holiday programme. She now comes up to youth workers and asks for help in an appropriate manner. There has definitely been a reduction in her shouting during sessions which is a good improvement".



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