

Assorted support through lockdown

Generation CashBack's crucial role in a fast-changing youth work context



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Digital youth work wasn't a massive thing before lockdown. We had to sort it out quickly, and switch everything up.

Based in Clydebank, Youth Scotland member group Y Sort it, supported by Generation CashBack, offers programmes and activities for young people across the local communities in West Dunbartonshire. Flexible support from Youth Scotland enabled staff at Y Sort It to adapt and upskill, so their essential youth work offer could continue throughout lockdown.

For this case study we hear from Allan Young, Youth Work and Outreach Coordinator at Y Sort It. He told us that Youth Scotland allowed them to enhance their capacity and deliver youth work through new digital platforms. The youth group has been supported to experiment and offer new activities to young people. They have introduced new ways of working with families to encourage outside play and community spirit.

In the second part of this case study we hear from Leslie, the mum of one of the young people who engages with Y Sort It. She talked about how essential the support from Y Sort It throughout lockdown has been for her daughter and for herself.

Flexible support from Youth Scotland enabled Y Sort It to adapt and respond to young people's needs in a confusing and ever-changing context.

“Getting a Zoom package was part of the support from Generation CashBack. Originally we thought we were going to have to use some of the funding to help young people get online, but they were supported to do that through other streams. The funding has been flexible, which means now we can think about reallocating it to face to face work.”

“We've been able to deliver general youth group sessions, activities and issue based sessions too, for example on sexual health, budgeting and finance. Young people engaged with these really well and consistently attended.”

“In one of the groups chats someone shared an article about lockdown going on for two years, and the group chat went crazy. So we had to chat about what had happened, about how lockdown was going to last and we did a lot of work unpicking some falsehoods.”

Lockdown was an opportunity for Y Sort It to extend their reach and meet wider community needs including tackling food insecurity and supporting young people to return outdoors, when it was safe to do so. With support from Generation CashBack, they created time and safe spaces for socially distanced play, bringing people in the community together through outdoor activities and food.

“With Pick, Play & Picnic we can invite families to come along to local neighbourhood parks. We're hoping to engage with some of the young people we haven't been able to engage with through lockdown as we didn't have their contact details. This is one of the highest SIMD areas and the support will enable us to offer a picnic element to those play session. We'll use it to provide them with a lunch pack that should also help them through the weekend where they may not be able to access other community food support. It's national picnic month this month, so it will be fun!”

“Some parents might be hesitant to let their kid out, these sessions we're doing are around lunch time so with it being in the middle of the day it mitigates that safety element. If the parents come out they'll see it is safe and the staff are able to moderate and keep everyone safe.”

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We're encouraging those families who are maybe apprehensive about getting back out into parks, with having our staff there who are able to facilitate safe play sessions, and give them good resources to get families outside and playing again. As well as it being fun, it's about building ownership and that community spirit.

Youth Scotland's Local Development Officers (LDOs) added capacity to the Y Sort It team and helped to build on the success of the online sessions by introducing fun, new activities.

“We're keen to keep the digital youth work going as well. Through Stuart (LDO) we've managed to get some more issue-based groups going. Having the LDOs in to facilitate those sessions it means that our other two staff have been freed up to focus on the play and detached sessions, otherwise they would have been dropped. They've helped us to put together a programme of activity, for example 'Be Internet Citizens' will help young people explore a range of topics from fake news to hateful content.”

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Support from the LDOs has been invaluable. To have the capacity and the expertise to deliver these pure amazing sessions – like laughter yoga! It's going to be chaos.

Youth groups supported by Generation CashBack can access resources and benefits through partners' membership organisations. Youth Scotland's training has been an essential resource for organisations adapting to new ways of delivery.

“The LDOs have supported us to get training too. Most of the staff have done online child protection training through Youth Scotland over lockdown which has been a massive help as we've moved everything online.”



The parent of a young person supported by Y Sort It described how important the youth group has been for the family through lockdown.

Her daughter was recently assessed as having multiple learning difficulties and is a young carer for her mum. Y Sort It have helped her daughter feel supported and kept busy, engaged and positive throughout a really difficult time.

“ I don't know where we'd be without Y Sort It, honestly. She can be doing up to three Zoom calls a day with them. I thought I would get to see more of her with it being lockdown but that's not the case! I hear her laughing from the living room, she just has so much fun on them, I'll go in and pop my head in and say hi to everyone. It's given her connection as she is still able to see people.

Y Sort It has been invaluable for the local community in challenging circumstances, providing food parcels, sanitary products and essential equipment for families in crisis.

“My daughter has become a very good cook through all this! They deliver what she needs to do the cooking and they've been making cakes too, they go through all the steps with her.”

“Another person in our household had coronavirus symptoms so we had to self-isolate for two weeks, and Y Sort It were amazing, with food parcels ... I can't thank them enough.”

“We had a separation in the family; some left and took all their kitchen equipment, so we needed to get some new bits for the house quite quickly. Y Sort It put us in contact with this recycling organisation so we could get a toaster, microwave and kettle.”

“For the community they've been travelling all over Dunbartonshire Council delivering food parcels. They are doing a clothing drive too. Care packages as well, for females, they've been doing sanitary towels and body wash... They've gone above and beyond.”

Peace of mind for the family, and vital support for young people; Allan and the other youth workers are trusted adults in a time of crisis.

“I had a bad fit yesterday. My daughter looked after me. It is a scary thing to see. She messaged Allan, because she was upset and a bit shocked. Allan phoned her straight away and said to let him know if either of us needed anything.”

“ The support they give is fantastic. Y Sort It have male and female workers so she can speak to anyone without judgement. She worries about things, so I'm really glad she has other people apart from me to speak to.

Her daughter has become a vital member of the youth group and she relishes the opportunity to help others.

“She has been a volunteer with Y Sort It since 14, she is heavily involved with the group and she feels important. A lot of kids will go up to her and confide in her, if there are things going on at home, she can tell the workers, but they find it easy to talk to her. She can now spot signs in kids too if she thinks they have behaviour issues. She seems to be able to calm other kids down, she has a lot of patience.”

