

Making a Splash

Youth Scotland member group The Ripple is a community-based youth project supporting the communities of Restalrig, Craightinny and Lochend in North East Edinburgh. They are also an active member of LAYC. The project received Generation CashBack support from Youth Scotland, through Development Worker advice, staff training and equipment. This enabled the group to shift to an outreach approach, to trial online engagement, and to continue to reach a broad range of young people during a difficult period of time.

In this case study, Danielle, Youth Services Manager, and Tuesday, a Youth Worker, reflect on lockdown in 2020, a time of severe restriction for youth work services, when The Ripple successfully changed tack.

Ordinarily, the project runs its activities from 'the hub' where "the whole idea is that it's aimed at different young people every night". Drop-ins are aimed at harder to reach young people, "some of them we know are causing a bit of disturbance out and about, and maybe are a bit, you know, non-engaged in education and probably are creating a bit of trouble socially in the community". A boys group and a girls group have more planned activities and offer a supportive environment while "our drama club is our only sort of younger, under 12s kind of age group." All of that changed early in 2020.



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Prevented from the normal centre-based practice of drop-ins and organised groups, The Ripple Youth Work Team were keen to reach out and support young people, and began a new approach of initiating contact with young people in local streets and parks. Youth Scotland provided support during the implementation of this new approach with advice and toolkits, as well as various training sessions including Online Engagement, Issue-based workshops and, more recently, support in Reopening Indoor Youth Work. They also benefitted from Youth Scotland's kitbag of sport and games equipment. A further crucial element was that Generation CashBack support enabled the purchase of branded staff uniforms (hoodies, jackets, ID badges), giving The Ripple a clear visual outdoor presence, along with the purchase of a project mobile phone as a point of contact for young people.

A new approach

Staff described how lockdown required them to perform their roles differently and promote the project in new ways.

"You became a bit of a detached youth worker overnight... you have to take your youth work skills and implement them outside and see how that can build up... and it has been very successful..." [Tuesday]

"We got wee Ripple business cards made... they could take it home and show their parents and they could follow our Facebook and things like that, so they can keep up to date when clubs are back on or when we're out and stuff. And they've been really well received. Which is brilliant, the kids go 'I'm gonna get my mum to like that page' and stuff, which has been really nice to hear." [Danielle]

Renewed community visibility and impact

Being out in the community and wearing uniforms purchased through Generation CashBack support, has had a valuable impact on The Ripple's profile, its support of young people, community relationships and future work:

Identify and presence: "It gives us that opportunity to actually be able to go out and do some outdoor stuff as well. Because we're not just going to be randoms on the street, we've got the uniforms, we can go out, we can do more stuff." [Danielle]

Consultation: "By the October break we should've spoken to enough young people to kind of have a cohort up at Craigentenny, to know what kind of things they want to do." [Danielle]

Awareness among young people:

"So the young people that don't know us, that don't come to our groups, it's been good because obviously we've introduced ourselves... you're all dressed the same, and they know straight away you're from somewhere. Because you've all got the same hoodies on, the same jackets and stuff, so it's great, you can go up and they talk away to you and they'll say to you 'oh I know what the hub is' and you go 'oh do you, have you ever been to the hub' and that starts the conversation straight away, and you can tell them what clubs are on and stuff. So it's getting The Ripple name out there, it's getting it a bit of publicity for the group for when we do start back... And a good few of the kids have already been like 'oh I would love to come to that club' so that's brilliant." [Danielle]

Profile-raising in the community: "People come up and say 'oh I've seen yous about in the street' and things like 'what are you all about?'. One of the parents said 'I've always wondered what are yous doing'. I explained, and she went 'that's fantastic'... it just shows you the impact that a uniform can have..." [Tuesday]

Ideas for the future: "I'm quite keen to try and get some more of that up and running once everything's settled a wee bit more. So I think, just having the uniform will always set us in good stead... it's just a good thing to have. Now we've not got an excuse not to go out. We've got the uniform, we've got the kitbags, let's get out... let's go to where young people are." [Danielle]



“With the virus, it's really hit the teenagers, and they can't come into the centre, so you've got to have something else...” [Tuesday]



Activities creating and building relationships

Along with the outreach approach, outdoor activities using sports equipment provided by Youth Scotland have been used as a way to bring young people together, but they are also providing important opportunities for support.

"We'll say to them on social media, we were going to meet, and hopefully we'll find them there, and we'll just say you know 'do you fancy a game of football' or whatever, rounders or something...so that they're not just walking the streets." [Tuesday]

"Workers have seen about twenty to fifty kids, and they're getting good contact, they're getting good socialising, and they're having a joke and a laugh." [Danielle]

"... Building up a trust with some of the kids is so hard, because you're breaking down barriers, some of the kids have had it really hard or they don't really communicate very well..." [our message is] "you can trust us, we're not going to let you down... we still want to see you, we still want to talk to you, we still want to make sure you're alright, you're safe." [Tuesday]

During lockdown, The Ripple project staff attended Youth Scotland training designed to help maintain engagement such as an introduction to Zoom. More recently, sessions on Reopening Indoor Youth Work and Development Worker support on reopening the project's Buddying Network have been invaluable. While there are new ways of running reopened groups, the reaction has been positive.

"I think I pretty much attended nearly every bit of training that was offered... I like Youth Scotland training, it's really good. I like the way they run it, it's very much 'you take part... the more you take part in it, the more you'll get from it...' that's the way I learn more, so for me it's useful." [Danielle]

"They have been social distancing and they're quite enjoying it, they've been using it more as a game and doing the whole two metre thing... They're seeing it more and more each week as they come as a bit of fun and a bit of a game, and like 'what's

my temperature?... which I think is good, because as much as the Covid is serious, let us see the fun side a wee bit too, being in the building, yes we're taking it serious... but we can still be here and we can still enjoy ourselves, which is nice." [Danielle]

"I really like their award stuff... we've got three kids that have done [Youth Scotland] Hi5 Awards whilst we were in lockdown. They were just doing some art and they were doing that anyway. I love that kind of stuff, because I think it's so easy to follow, it's absolutely brilliant, and they really simplify it for young people so that they really are getting it for doing something that they're already doing." [Danielle]

"They [young people] seemed to be chuffed with things like that [Youth Scotland Hi5 Awards] so, it's just nice to get recognised for something that you're doing and you're quite good at. [Danielle]

Solid foundations for the future

While not a straightforward transition, staff have found reward in trying the new approach and seeing positive results and advice, training and resources from Youth Scotland have all played a part.

"That's part of your job as a youth worker, you have to adapt... I must admit, at first I was a bit disheartened, but now I love it... I'm really proud that we are still doing something, we're still trying to reach out to them... I'd much rather be going out walking the streets, and if I didn't get a kid then I've tried my best..." [Tuesday]

Overall, the project has succeeded in remaining open for business, getting out into the local community, trialling new approaches, and safely restarting indoor work which was further supported by Youth Scotland advice and training, when the opportunity arose.

"The fact that we're still open in the pandemic, is massive... that we're still reaching out to all different ages... trying and making sure that every child is getting, almost catered for in the sense, that they're not getting lost in the system." [Tuesday]



Find out more about how James, Zafar and Salama have benefitted from Generation CashBack support helping The Ripple restart activities after lockdown by reading their case study.