

EYP Empowerment^(a)

A call to action: How the See Me EYP family promotes individual growth and empowers young people to make an impact in their day to day lives.

What is it?

The Education and Young People's programme (EYP) is a team within See Me that focuses on education and training across the Children and Young People's (CYP) sector within Scotland. The EYP programme have developed a team of Youth Champions (YC), these young people all have lived experience of mental illness and the stigma and discrimination that surrounds poor mental health. These young volunteers have shown dedication and passion to share their own experiences with the youth of Scotland and have facilitated open, non-judgemental and empowering conversations.

Who is it for?

The EYP team deliver training and important messages to CYP across Scotland. Over the past six years the team has worked with multiple individual schools and four local authorities across Primary and Secondary schools, as well as Higher and Further Education facilities and with people in the local communities who work with CYP. For example, local ministers, school nurses, parenting groups, etc. More than this, the EYP is there for the YCs to support one another. The EYP fosters creativity and enables the young people to address mental health stigma and discrimination in all areas of their lives.

What was done?

To start this journey the YCs all attend a weekend long residential (or 'resi' as it came to be known). This allows them to get to know one another and the staff team – manager, officer and youth workers. The YCs were asked to complete a questionnaire about their experiences from the resi. The feedback from these was very positive and there were a few main themes that could be identified.

- Firstly, YCs were excited to be able to talk to like-minded individuals who have both lived experience and a passion to change the way mental health is seen in our society and culture.
- Secondly, YCs noted how empowered they felt after the resi and how excited they were for the opportunities that being a part of See Me could offer them.

- Finally, YCs commented that they felt as though they were part of a family who are always there to support one another no matter how big or small the issue. This last point is evidenced by the active and positive environment that a Facebook group has developed through the involvement with staff and YCs.

"Becoming a part of the See Me community has also given me the opportunity to retain my identity as a person with lived experience of mental health, without needing to remain ill for this to be valid."

"I was excited to meet others with similar life experiences to me and work on something positive together, so that what I went through wasn't for nothing!"

Why was it done?

The EYP team was devised following consultation with YP from across Scotland who told See Me that they wanted to learn from their peers and people who had experienced what they were talking about. By using a peer facilitation model, such as this, the EYP team are able to build the knowledge of mental health stigma and discrimination across Scotland whilst providing the dedicated YCs opportunities to boost their confidence, combine their passions, influence change and make an impact.

What was the impact?

Youth Champions are provided with a variety of opportunities that allow them to take the 'It's Okay not to be Okay' message and make an impact personally, in their community – including at both national and international level.

- The main impact of the YCs is to co-facilitate SMHFA training to school pupils across the country. YCs feedback indicated that this significantly improved their confidence and gave them hope.
- There have been ample media opportunities for See Me YCs to spread the message across Scotland. Youth Champions also have opportunities to influence policy and decision making. For example, meeting with the late Dr Denise Coia to provide insight from a young person with lived experience's perspective regarding the Mental Health

Taskforce and how this should address issues faced by CYP. Moreover, YCs have been part of an Engagement Group, working alongside other teams within See Me, to direct guidelines and policy being updated by Government.

- YCs take their experiences as part of the EYP team and implement change and action in their personal lives. For example, one YC started a mental health society at their university. Similarly, another YC started a Mental Health Ambassadors programme at their school empowered by the passing of their friend this YC wanted to make a difference and she successfully campaigned for her school to receive mental health training from See Me. After this the YC set-up the Mental Health Ambassadors programme in her school which helps to relay the correct messages to younger pupils.
- Finally, YC are encouraged to find a means of action that interests them, for example, one YC who is an art student has combined their studies with volunteering and has produced several pieces of artwork. One of which used data collected from Feels FM to produce a soundwave from the feedback gathered from YP who were consulted during the development of Feels FM. One of these prints now hangs in the Minister for Mental Health's office in Holyrood! Other YCs use their experiences with See Me to empower them in other areas of work or study.

Without a doubt however, the greatest impact that being a YC has, is that all involved significantly increase their confidence. YCs found being a part of the EYP has aided their own recovery – and now they feel empowered to go out and share their story with others. Some YCs also note that their families and friends have noticed great changes in the way they act since becoming a part of the See Me family. This is, no doubt, down to the support that every member of the EYP team provides to one another. This support fosters empowerment which YCs then use to spread a message, challenge mental health stigma and discrimination and drive action – both in their capacity as a YC, and in their wider personal life.

"I faced stigma and discrimination in every part of my daily life with mental health, I felt like the world was against me and I was alone in a bubble... Volunteering has helped me find my own voice... It has helped me grow as a person..."

"Joining See Me has done a huge amount for my confidence, and through that, my recovery."

"I feel it's been more beneficial than any medication or talking therapies I have received in the past."

Resources

- Feels FM [Link](#) »
- Feels FM Executive Summary [Link \(pdf\)](#) »

