

EYP Empowerment^(b)

Being a part of something: the personal journey of empowerment from Youth Champion to Youth Worker.

One young person's testimony in their own words

"I applied to become a Youth Champion in the summer of 2017 and attended the resi in October of the same year. I decided to apply as I was also applying to university, and felt that having experience with a mental health charity would boost my application. Although after attending the info and selection day I wanted to join not only for uni, but because I felt that I could make a difference with See Me and I realised how welcoming and understanding everyone was. This helped massively as I was anxious about applying until I met everyone.

The residential was amazing! It felt great to be surrounded by a team of people with the same goal – to tackle mental health stigma. Before I arrived at the residential I was very anxious and scared, although everyone was so welcoming and kind, so this alleviated my anxiety about the weekend. I noticed a lot of personal growth from the residential, particularly my confidence. I also learned a lot about mental health, and how to tackle the stigma surrounding it. The main message I took away from it was the importance of listening to someone, and how to listen to someone that needs to talk about their mental health. I left the residential excited to start and ready to change the world!

Through being a Youth Champion I have had many influential opportunities. Excitingly, I was offered a place on the SMHFA T4T training. Completion of this allowed me to begin leading training and start as a consultant Youth Worker for the EYP team. Another important opportunity was the Stonewall conference we spoke at, as I proved to myself that I was able to speak in front of that many people, which I couldn't do when I first started with See Me. This was a massive achievement for me.

I love being a part of the See Me team! It has increased my confidence massively, and I have achieved so much because of that – through See Me and in my personal life. When I first started as a Youth Champion I was very shy and hardly spoke to anyone, and now they can hardly get me to stop talking! I think these changes came about because See Me staff and volunteers were patient and supportive with me and let me go at my own pace. When I became a Youth Champion, I looked up to the Youth Workers, but I never knew I would progress on to become a Youth Worker myself. I was happy to volunteer my time and getting paid didn't matter to me because the role was so rewarding itself. When I found out I was becoming a Youth Worker I was over the moon, because it meant that I could get more involved in planning and organising events, and it meant that I was now in the same role as those I had looked up to since high school. I hope I can be that role model for some of the younger volunteers, because I know how much the staff and volunteers helped me grow and gain confidence throughout my See Me journey."

