



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Phase 2 understanding from experience

Bryony Harris, Group Leader at Seal Dunfermline

What has continued to help keep a focus on what matters for people during the pandemic?

Seal works with children and young people between the ages of 8 and 16, the majority of whom are referred to the project by social work, schools and health professionals. We have continued to run the service using the zoom platform. This allows our group members to keep in contact with one another and our group leaders.

Are there changes that seem to be lasting longer term and are there things that have slid back to old ways of doing things?

Communication with parents has improved. The group leaders need to message the parents if there are any craft activities or any activities that they need resources prepared before group, this allows the parents/carers an insight into what their group member is doing when they come to Seal. This is something that we are going to try to keep going when we are able to return to physical groups. Each group member will have their own learning journal which will be shared with parents/carers. This will give the parents/carers an insight into the things their group member is doing at Seal.

We want the children and young people to feel valued, supported and listened to. We make sure that everyone gets a chance to contribute and like to begin every group with sharing something positive that has happened that week. This allows us to take time to share some positive news and allows us more of an insight into what our group members get up to. We have kept this going since the start of lockdown.

We have also become more active on our social media. This has allowed us to spread the word about the charity and the work that we do.

What difference has this made to people?

I think Seal being able to continue to deliver groups online has made a big difference to the group members. We have kept weekly contact with our group members and have continued to deliver groups around social and emotional wellbeing. We have also had a specialist on our group zoom to deliver a mindfulness session for our group members, who gave our group members tips on coping strategies and lots of other mindfulness exercises. We had lots of positive comments from parents/carers about how much their group members enjoyed this session/ how much they got from it.

I also think communication with the parents/carers has made a big difference to whole families. Seal group leaders are there if the parents/carers have any concerns or questions.

How did this make you feel?

I am really pleased with how we have been able to continue to support our group members virtually. We are still adapting and changing things and are becoming more confident in being able to deliver

Reflecting on your experiences what have you learned?

As a charity, we have learned a lot over lockdown. We have learned that engaging young people online can be challenging at times. We have also learned how important frequent contact is to the children and young people that we support. When all other clubs were closed, for some children and young people, Seal groups were the only opportunity for them to socialise and talk to someone else their age.

What difference has it made to you to tell your story as part of this project?

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading all of the other stories. Telling Seal's story has given me the chance to take time to reflect on how we have adapted to the barriers posed by covid.