

# making ourselves heard!

## CASE STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT AT CORE ASSETS INDEPENDENT SUPPORT SERVICE



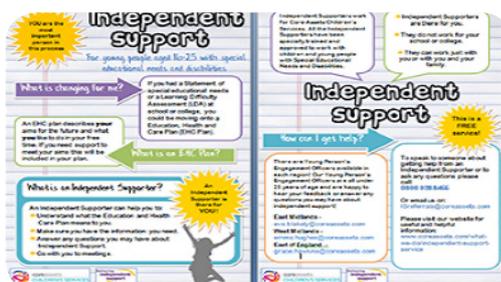
Our names are Eve, Emma and Grace and we are the Young Person's Engagement Officers for the Independent Support Service at Core Assets Children's Services. We are all under the age of 25 and began working for Core Assets in January 2015. The main purpose of our role is to identify, research and develop ways to engage young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the Independent Support Service. Between the three of us, we had a lot of freedom to develop the young person's engagement role. We were asked to be creative and use our own knowledge as young people to shape the role. Starting with a basic outline, "we produced an action plan as a team" to create a starting point to begin to build on our existing knowledge of young people and the most successful ways of engaging with them.

The initial areas we identified to maximise youth engagement in the Independent Support (IS) service were: development of resources, social media, the IS website, articles for local press, activities and outreach work. We looked at the company resources e.g. leaflets, posters and Education Health and Care Planning (EHCP) information and we felt these were all aimed at parents/carers and that we needed to develop resources that were aimed directly at young people.

We reduced the amount of text as well as changing the wording to address the young people directly, using simple to the point language. We also added more colour and used more eye catching fonts. We found that parents also seem to find the updated information more appealing.

We wanted to engage with young people directly so we started by developing outreach activities and researching into our local regions to find SEND youth groups/settings and events to attend. As we aim to engage young people with a variety of different needs we decided that providing them with activity sessions in forums that they already feel comfortable in was the best way forward. With our role expanding into groups and events we have built a stock of resources and activities to engage young people.

We have been attending a number of schools, colleges and youth groups to work with young people and offer them support regarding the EHC Plan. The aim of the visits is to work with young people with SEND and get them to think about their aspirations and goals for the future which is all in relation to the EHC plan.



**Core Assets delivers IS in 27 LAs**

These activities are easily adaptable to be accessible for all young people with various needs. We work 1:1 with young people from the group and help them to understand the new changes and how it will affect them. We use an activity sheet that we created which the young people complete. It has boxes to fill in such as: what makes you happy; what do other people admire about me; and, aspirations for the future. We have found this is a rewarding and effective activity to do with young people which also builds on their self esteem as they start to identify their own positive qualities.

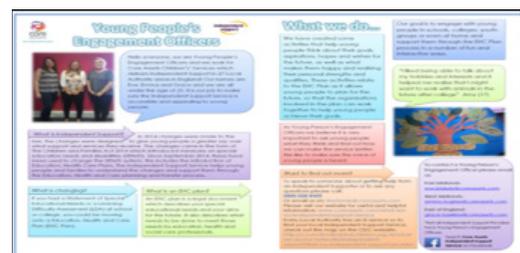
We also work as a group to create an aspiration tree which is where each young person takes a leaf and write or draw their aspirations for the future on it and then stick it on the tree. This is a fun and visual activity and you see some really great aspirations all over the tree. The work we have been doing at schools and colleges has been greatly received by teachers, youth workers and young people.



We also identified that social media is a quick and powerful way to share information and promote services. Social media is very popular with young people so we thought that it would be great way to reach out to them. We decided to start with Facebook as we found it the most accessible and user friendly. The Independent Support page allows us to share group sessions,

events, the importance of independent support and how to access the service. The Facebook page is also popular with parents/carers and our stakeholders.

We created a newspaper article about the IS service to be sent out to all the local newspapers across the 27 local authority areas that the Independent Support Service is delivered in. The purpose was to reach more people across the 27 areas and let them know that this support is available to them and how they could access it. To engage young people, we also created an article about our youth engagement work for 'My Future Choices' magazine which is a magazine aimed at young people with disabilities. It highlighted the outreach work we do with young people and also quotes and feedback from young people we had worked with.

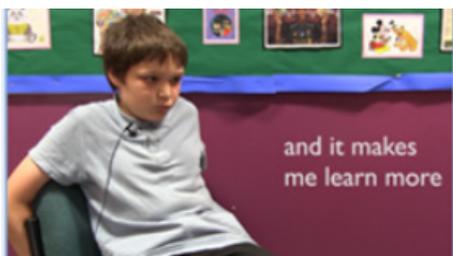


To engage more young people, parents and carers in the Independent Support Service we decided to create a fun yet informative newsletter to be published bi-monthly. The newsletter is packed with news, interviews, information and updates about the service as a whole. We also include a competition and each winner receives a prize. We hoped this would encourage young people to read through it to find some useful information.

We constantly continue to gather ideas and feedback from young people during our outreach work sessions. It became clear to us from our feedback from young people themselves that a lot of young people prefer to receive information in the form of a video.

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With this in mind, we decided to create some videos for young people to take to our sessions, as well as put on our Facebook page, website and YouTube. The videos include interviews with young people and parents who have received Independent Support. It also includes a clip of us working with young people and the things we do at youth groups.



We have made these positive changes to the way we support young people over a period of nine months however we are always looking to expand our knowledge and look for other ways we can support

and engage young people. In the near future we hope to develop resources and activities with the input and ideas of young people. We also want to continue to work in partnership with Independent Supporters in our areas to promote young peoples workshops across a wide variety of settings, using their knowledge of support available to people with disabilities in local areas. We hope to continue to work in conjunction with different regional areas to share knowledge, experiences and best practice to ensure we continue to improve and update the way we work with young people.



## KEY MESSAGES

Eve, Emma and Grace developed a team action plan to identify, research & develop their information resources, engagement activities and support services in consultation with young people:



**Fun, interactive & sensory activities help young people to explore aspirations & outcomes clearly and logically**



**Social media is a quick & powerful way to share information & promote services.**



**A lot of young people prefer to receive information in the form of a video**