

Interest Link Borders: June 2021 End-of-Lockdown Evaluation Children and Young People's Service

We carried out an in-depth survey and consultation in September 2020, which helped refine the distance service. The June 2021 survey was a follow-up to this, with briefer questionnaires completed by 41 members, 35 carers and 65 volunteers.

For the first time, we asked about benefits to carers from actively participating in distance activities such as Zoom & social media (as opposed to benefit from respite while the person they cared for participated). Unsurprisingly, after a year in lockdown very few reported we had helped them have more opportunities to get out and about.

We also asked if people were happy to continue with some distance activities longterm: most were, but some were keen to get back to face-to-face only.

Impact on Members	Friendships maintained	Greater Happiness	Improved Confidence	More Self-esteem	Better Distance Social Skills	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
	100%	100%	95%	100%	95%	100%	90%

Impact on Carers	Opportunities Outside Caring	Helped Sustain Caring Role	Greater Wellbeing	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
From participating in activities	8%	74%	52%	80%	7%
Generally	11%	81%	44%	93%	7%

Impact on Volunteers	Friendships maintained	Less isolated	Greater Wellbeing	Better Distance Social Skills	General IT Skills	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
	96%	50%	58%	77%	38%	100%	96%

Should some elements of the distance service continue long term?	Members	Carers	Volunteers
	78%	75%	63%

Member Feedback

I look forward to the sessions every week its very exciting to chat to friends.

It's been really good to see all my friends on zoom.

Interest link is the best.

Not quite as good as the real thing but good fun Zoom baking!

I like on a Tuesday morning when we do a blether group. I like this group.

I have loved all the Interest Link activities and they gave me something to enjoy doing when I was shielding. I really like being part of the group and keeping in touch with everyone. I have enjoyed the artwork and have been trying to do more on my own.

I love the Interest Link Zoom group meetings. I love the great activities - arts and crafts, cooking and bingo and quizzes - and the time to chat with friends.

Being a part of Interest Link Roxburgh throughout the pandemic has been great. I've loved the fact that they've allowed me to run my own projects as it's help me get more experience and boost my confidence.

Carer feedback

Thank you for providing these groups - they have been a lifeline at a really difficult time !

Kate has been brilliant, keeping in touch and keeping us connected, thank you.

You've done a fantastic job keeping our young person entertained and challenged during lockdown. The variety of activities has been great. Well done to Stephanie and the team!

Sheila seems really excited to see friends again over zoom it's a really nice way for her to connect. Due to being deaf using a phone, which can be taken for granted by others, is not an option.

It's been a great way to support my son to join in activities & see his friends.

My son and I have enjoyed being part of the group and feeling valued and cared for. The online activities have enhanced the benefits of Interest Link for us and we appreciate the bond that the group has. Thank you

Interest link is a great organisation and keeps my son busy especially during lockdown while he's been shielding

It has been great having all these group activities. So good keeping everyone in touch and still able to interact with everyone.

It has been great seeing Alexander getting involved with the Zoom chat sessions and Zoom craft sessions. He is now more capable of managing these activities on his own with less support, which is great to see. We love asking him what he wants to contribute to the newsletter and helping him with his photos and contribution. We also love looking through the newsletters to find out what everyone has been up to. Interest Link is a fantastic support for Alexander and even although he cannot attend all the sessions as he works in the evenings he is made to feel very much part of the group. Rosa and Alex have been absolutely outstanding. A credit to Interest Link and all it aims to achieve. They always have great ideas.

It has been a boost to watch how much pleasure my daughter Galina gets from engaging with the Interest Link Zoom meetings. They are so well organised and carefully structured. Galina misses meeting up with the group in person, but the imaginative way in which Interest Link

has kept contact and activities going during the pandemic, with Zoom, as well as the regular Newsletter, has been fantastic.

Volunteer Feedback

Volunteering at Interest Link is really fun and I think it's helped me not only understand other people better but also myself.

You are just amazing

Well done on the first class work that you do

Prefer in person

Really enjoy being part of the interest link group, it's been great to keep in touch with everyone through zoom. So much effort has been put in to trying to keep people connected over this difficult time and it's amazing!

Throughout volunteering with interest link I have found the service to be extremely beneficial to both service users and myself. I feel that online activities and one to one sessions will allow me to develop an understanding of service users needs and wishes etc.

The Facebook and zoom has helped keep us all connected during these difficult times, helped us know we are not alone and still have all our friends from the groups!

When I first joined the group on Zoom I was feeling an 'excited nervousness'. I can be shy so find it easier to talk in the breakout rooms.

Have enjoyed the Zoom sessions.

All the different sessions have been different and there has always been a great variety of activities to make each session unique and allow people to continue to engage every week.

The weekly zoom calls were fun because it made the time between actually meeting up face to face go faster.

Zoom has been fun and easy to do, so could still Zoom if ever we can't meet face to face.

Feedback from teachers

Interest Link is an amazing support not just to the people with additional needs but also their families.

Very accommodating staff from Interest Link who were keen to think creatively to solve problems helped this to be a success. An excellent service!

Daily input. A real lifeline for young people in trying times, and also very uplifting and inspirational for adults

Interest Link has been a steady source of inspiration, good cheer and enabling young people to have safe access to adults, and reassuring normality of contact with each other.

Feedback from tutors & sessional staff

The group has definitely become closer during this time. The creative spirit has shone through- and people have joined in and tried new challenges

Been an amazing way to keep in touch with each other and having someone to talk to during this difficult time.

I love being part of interest link, joining in on all the activities and encouraging others to take part, I look forward to meeting in person.

The last year had been amazing what we have all done over the Facebook and zoom it's kept us connected and kept us creative,