

Interest Link Borders 2020 Impact Report: Children and Young People's Service Evaluation Results

27 members, 29 family carers and 38 volunteers were surveyed via online & paper questionnaires, telephone calls and workshops.

Outcomes Achieved							
Impact on Members	More Friends	Greater Happiness	Improved Confidence	Increased Self-esteem	Better Social Skills	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
Reported by Themselves	96%	92%	96%	100%	84%	100%	81%
Reported by Carers	93%	97%	97%	97%	93%	97%	90%
Reported by Volunteers	98%	98%	98%	98%	96%	98%	95%
	Life Outside Caring		Helped Sustain Caring Role		Greater Wellbeing	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
Impact on Carers	76%		86%		86%	90%	76%
	Increased Learning Disabilities Awareness		More confidence with people with learning disabilities			Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
Impact on Volunteers	97%		92%			97%	87%

Other survey statistics:

- 100% of members and 97% of carers said they still needed our service.
- 85% of Members, carers and volunteers said the pandemic had increased the need for the service.
- 97% said they had been happy with our physical face-to-face service delivered before COVID-19 and 93% were happy with the distance service.

Selected Feedback:

Members Feedback
The Difference made to my life
Easier to communicate
It has helped me to overcome my fears.
Helped me be more social
It has made me happier because I can socialise
Gets me out and about and I have made new friends
It has made me feel so much better when I meet my buddy
Made new friends More confident More enjoyable

I had never joined a group before as I didn't think I would like it but joining baking group with interest link has shown me and people around me what I am capable of!

Interest link has made my life because it has helped me to make friends.

Easier to communicate

Made me feel more independent and confident.

I enjoy being with my friends and playing games. I love making films with them and watching the films in the Eastgate Theatre. That was great! I enjoy the dancing we have done at Garvald with Interest Link.

My favourite lockdown activities

Cooking with Debbie, musical bingo and quizzes with Craig and doing arts and crafts.

Clubbercise Childrens group

Whats App: Trying the mug cake

The quizzes were fun.

Seeing everyone again even if it's over zoom

Bingo and the quiz nights Activities bags Baking

The activities sent through the post and the Facebook page

Newsletters; Seeing what everyone else was up to and getting inspiration whilst being stuck at home

I enjoyed the bingo and interactive quizzes.

The crafts and colouring activities I got in my activity packs, I also grew the seeds I got as well.

Growing the sunflowers and trying out some of the recipes.

Receiving and reading the newsletter. Enjoying the puzzles and laughing at the jokes page. I enjoyed taking photos of my garden for the newsletter.

Carers Feedback

The impact on the member I care for

My daughter is very happy when visiting interest link and looks forward to her Monday nights. Even in the current crisis interest link is a ray of light

Robbie's sensory issues can sometimes limit his involvement with the group activities but that doesn't faze him at all!! He loves to attend 'youth club' to meet with friends, chat and feel part of the group!! As Robbie is home-schooled this is so important for him, his confidence has come on leaps and bounds.

It has helped him make friends at school

Looks forward to meeting group and likes to ask after them. A lot happier to go out and meet people. Has self-esteem in Interest Link group but NOT in other groups.

She is more contented in her time at home because she has the regular activities and contact with people other than close family away from the home.

He is happier when he comes back from youth club, seeing his friends; and he misses them when he's not there. He feels he does well at the group with the various activities and it makes him more confident. The group makes him feel like a valued person because people listen to him and his opinions, and they talk to him.

Front runners is the only opportunity for Victoria to go out and meet with a group of young people in the evening she shows more independence.

Seems more confident to do more things on his own. Seems more comfortable around other people. Really enjoys helping others. Seems happier and always comes home from group with a smile.

Alexander has taken a greater interest in getting involved with things we do in the house. He is more confident about trying out things on his own and uses his initiative more and just gets on with things rather than constantly asking what he has to do.

The impact on me/my family
Having a happier child means there is less stress on us.
A wee swim and a sauna revives me and gives me a much needed boost when Robbie is at 'youth club'!
I can have some time to myself when K A is at the group.
We have a short period to 'breathe'
I am able to socialise and I can relax when I know Kelly Anne is with Interest Link.
I am happy when Hannah can go out with Interest Link
Seeing him growing in himself over the years has been amazing.
I relax, sit and read a book, watch telly, listen to music. It gives me a nice opportunity to relax, have time for myself. I'm happy when he's at Interest Link because I know he's having a good time.
The group offers us 2 hours of valuable time for us to be able to catch up with various tasks and get some well needed r&r! We are getting that break every second week and the support from Mary is invaluable. We know he is safe and our stress levels go down.
Happy Aaron makes happy parents
Just to see Victoria happy and with her friends means so much to us.
I love seeing my daughter interacting with other people
It is nice to know he is at a safe place that he really enjoys and I can have some time to myself to enjoy my own social activities.
The time that Alexander is at Interest Link allows us to do things on our own like going for a walk.
Increased need in the pandemic & the value of the distance service
Really appreciate the service and the contact we have had throughout lockdown. The zoom groups and weekly calls have been great.
Contact with Kate and the group has been more important than ever, thank you Kate.
Our son hasn't many friends so interest link is the only group that he can attend and can enjoy supervised and feel safe outside his home.
The COVID-19 activities have been excellent. Without them we would have had very little routine, which is needed at the moment. Please keep them going and don't rush back to in person meetings too soon.
Covid has decimated her opportunities for social contact by closing down all of her external activities. Home confinement has been a burden for her and her parents - continuation of this service is more important now than ever.
I really miss the group
I think that the support that we have had through Covid has been great. Victoria had to shield so didn't leave the house or garden for 3 months. Just to have activities and to keep in touch and hear everyone's news has kept us connected.
The newsletter he receives as well as his weekly call with Alex has been fantastic. It keeps him close to Interest Link.
The team have been supplying our daughter with loads of activities during COVID and now the video meeting has meant there is more interaction
It's been excellent
David's enjoyed reading the newsletter and we've enjoyed sending in his pictures and bits of news. I'm sure once David gets used to using Zoom he'll enjoy it.
Mary Mouat has been amazing at handing out the activity packs to both service users and volunteers and sending out the fortnightly newsletters to keep all informed of their activities during lockdown. Jokes and crafts included. Very welcome.

It has been invaluable
It has been great to keep in touch with Interest Link during lockdown. As said the newsletter and phone calls have been great for Alexander.
Volunteers on impact on volunteers
Learning Disabilities Awareness
I have met lots of different people with learning disabilities through my volunteering and consequently have gained a bit more insight into how diverse learning disabilities are. Furthermore, I have made friends with a girl with autism, who often shares really informative information about autism on her social media. This has allowed me to learn even more and really understand some of the problems people with learning disabilities face.
Interest Link is a very effective way in learning about the different challenges people with learning disabilities face everyday. Before I started volunteering I had a very limited understanding but from working both one on one and in a group setting I have seen that the difficulties people face are very varied and affect people in many different ways.
It has made me aware of the constant struggles they have to face daily which most of us take for granted.
Made me more aware of the difficulties and issues people face everyday and how that can affect them on a daily basis
I have learned about people in my school and the challenges they face in everyday life.
Given me insight into the struggles of not only the person with the disability but also the impact on their family and emphasised the resilience they need to cope with these difficulties.
I learnt that it is hard as a teenager with learning disabilities to integrate and to find situations to hang out with other students from high school. Interest link is a great way to make that network and is a space for the service users to socialise. I learnt that it takes time for some people with learning disabilities to open up and gain confidence when you first meet them yet over time this changes.
More confident in forming relationships with people with learning disabilities
Before Interest Link I had never really been exposed to many people with learning disabilities, only ever having met people briefly in school, but had never been in friendships at all. Now however, I can see how meaningful these relationships are to people with learning disabilities and therefore feel a lot more confident and inclined to form relationships with anyone in this position.
In the beginning I found it daunting but then soon realised that if you are friendly and encouraging great relationships can be formed easily
If I'm in a cafe or on the street I'm happy to stop for a chat just to feel like I'm helping in some way.
I feel I have always formed relationships and friendships with people I encounter through life but it has taught me that you don't have to change your approach, just be yourself and the friendship happens naturally.
I feel more confident to engage with people with Learning disabilities due to engaging on zoom calls.
I do feel more confident communicating with people with learning disabilities and I find it easier to open a conversation.
Definitely feel more happy to just begin conversations and speaking with the service users feels much more natural and genuine now
I think I do find it slightly easier to form relationships with people with learning disabilities, I think I now know how to start up conversations but also know when to back off if someone seems anxious for

example. I also know to take my time and allow the someone within a learning disability to open up within their own time.

After I started volunteering at interest link and I had met the service users, it made me more confident to say hello and start up a conversation with teenagers with learning disabilities at school.

How else has volunteering made a difference to your life?

I started volunteering at a time when my mental health really wasn't so great. I felt inadequate. Volunteering has been a really positive experience for me because it is almost always a fun experience where I can forget about schoolwork and other things that I'm worried about. Volunteering has allowed me to improve my social skills as I have gotten to know so many new individuals over the course of nearly a year now. In short, I am really grateful to have found Interest Link.

It has made me more confident

Volunteering with Interest Link has helped me both socially and generally in my life; I feel I am now more aware of the people around me and the difficulties others face, and also has helped me gain confidence in being in larger groups of people and helped me grow as a person from the experiences it has brought me.

Certainly given me some belief in myself and satisfaction at helping people.

I am much more confident in speaking with people and are much less afraid.

My confidence is definitely improving and it has changed a lot of how I see the world and my own issues

It has made me more confident and I have also made good friends

I'm not generally a very social person but have so much fun joining in with the games and activities and it improves my self-esteem.

Volunteering with Interest Link has definitely made me a more confident person and my communication skills have also developed.

Socialising skills and being more confident to start up conversations. Shown me the great impact of saying hello has on someone with learning disabilities & making them feel more comfortable especially in high school.

I was much more shy before I started volunteering. It allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and push my boundaries.

Volunteers re impact on members

Happiness, confidence or self-esteem of those with learning disabilities

When we are all together everyone seems really happy while playing games and stuff

I think so, especially one girl who joined Interest Link several months ago who I go to school with. She seems much happier now. Before when I saw her in the corridor she often looked a bit anxious but now she is often smiling and laughing which is really nice to see.

It is very clear how much things like this affect not only the people taking part but the volunteers as well, as it brings a sense of joy from seeing how much other people appreciate what we may take for granted.

I would say that there is definitely a feeling of happiness when were on days away.

I have seen the youngster be more socially confident & is growing up.

Yes, one of the best parts of volunteering is seeing exactly how happy the service users are and how much they need the activities

Seeing people smiling, having fun and being able to get out and access the community really makes me happy

I've noticed people in the group becoming more confident and outgoing

As you develop your relationships with the service users at Interest Link you definitely see a growth in their confidence whether it's when they're participating in activities or when you're talking to them individually.

Noticed the improvement in confidence of the new members between when they first joined and much later, where they are more comfortable with making conversation and during activities.

At the beginning of our 1:1, my service user found it very hard to pay for things as she finds it difficult to understand money. Although she still gets nervous after some casual prompting she seems a lot more confident.

I remember one of the service users being very quiet when I first met her yet after a couple sessions she started to open up and play more games - you could see her confidence grow.

Social and communication skills of those with learning disabilities

I know they are having fun because I see their smiles and they can talk freely in the group.

Yes. At first the youngster was VERY quiet - now he is happy to converse.

We know the things we like to speak about and our communication is clearer. My friend has a slight speech impediment but we now know to take our time.

People have been more chatty and have been able to communicate better by letting us know what they need

Group members seem relaxed in each other's company and enjoy interactions with volunteers.

Most noticeable to me is just the gradually increasing openness of the service users who perhaps before were a bit shy and withdrawn but are now much more comfortable with making conversation and happy to speak about themselves

I have noticed that she's not as reserved when talking to shop assistants, bus drivers etc.

Volunteers: the increased need in the pandemic

Yes, as we are all much more isolated. I found it really great to still be able to volunteer and see everyone at Interest Link via Zoom during Lockdown as it helped me feel less lonely.

Yes I think people may feel isolated during these tough times and I feel interest link provides a friendly face and something to look forward to

I certainly feel that this has put a strain on a lot of people's mental health and it always helps to meet people and have a chat.

Yes. Our service provides fun just as much as it provides support and stability and for a lot of service users, it's a big part of their routine. In 2020, with the Coronavirus and all the other issues, it's important that we have the good along with the bad. We're a community that thrives together, not apart, and the fact that we can still provide sessions and activities is an important part of that.

Yes as I think that people will definitely be feeling lonelier and looking for things to do. Interest Link has been extremely helpful as they have provided plenty of activities that people can do easily at home and they have kept everyone updated on how others are doing.

Yes. I think that the social interactions and sense of community that have been majorly limited by Covid were something that Interest Link did a great job of providing and more and more people will be needing a way to re-establish these human connections.

Yes, with nothing being on a normal routine for months on end and with decreased social contact everybody is feeling socially isolated. That must be even more so for those who already feel that way and therefore do not have much of a network of friends to rely on.

Yes because most service users don't have many friends from school or clubs that they communicate with online and it also helps with provide a wee bit of routine