



Life coaching: Improving outcomes for young carers

POSITIVE REALITIES FACTSHEET 1

IN THIS FACTSHEET

Life coaching & young carers

Introducing life coaching

Coaching as an intervention has been used for many years in sports, and is increasingly being used within the business sector. Both types of coaching are used to improve performance of individuals.

The benefits of coaching are also being recognised by the public sector, with life coaching being used in various contexts, for instance to support self-management of long term conditions or to enable young people leaving school achieve positive destinations.

In these forms, coaching may focus on improving health and wellbeing, employability or life skills. Life coaching is delivered on a one to one basis and can help identify personal goals for life improvement and empower people to work towards these goals.

Positive Realities & life coaching

From early 2013 Positive Realities has received funding from the Edinburgh Community Health Partnership to deliver life coaching to young carers living in Edinburgh. This factsheet

outlines findings from the first year of this initiative.

A volunteer coaching bank was established with coaches working towards accreditation and who had already successfully undertaken the Multidisciplinary Certificate in Life Coaching run by Coaching Direct.

Young carers were offered a choice of coaches and matched to coaches by a development worker. In total eighteen young people worked with a coach (three of these used the service twice), with fifteen cases completed to date.

Generally, the setting of short term goals are encouraged, to enable achievements to occur within the timespan for delivering life coaching – usually around three-six months.

Coaches worked with the young carers to set an action plan and provided encouragement and explored ways of overcoming barriers experienced. Once young carers had engaged in the process, powerful personal outcomes were often achieved through coaching (see page 2).

Life coaching and young carers

This article will explain what life coaching is and how it has been used to support young carers in Edinburgh since early 2013 through Positive Realities.

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Issues facing young carers in Edinburgh

Here we outline the range of issues that young carers experienced at the point of accessing life coaching through our service, and explains how life coaching can provide a useful framework for addressing these issues.

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Improving outcomes through life coaching

Here we outline the range of issues that young carers experienced at the point of accessing life coaching, and explains how life coaching can benefit young people.

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Issues facing young carers in Edinburgh

At the point of referral, most of the 19 young carers had low self-reported wellbeing. Referrals came from young people themselves, schools, youth groups and other professionals.

A wide range of issues were reported by the young carers and their situations were often chaotic and caused them considerable emotional distress. Unhappiness, suicidal thoughts and self-harming behavior were commonly reported by the young people at the outset.

The main worries of the young carers included their caring responsibilities,

CONCERNS OF YOUNG CARERS

Most of the young carers experienced a range of complex needs, including isolation, financial worries, mental health issues and family concerns.

relationships, social isolation, finance, finding employment or daytime activities, abuse or harassment and the transition into adulthood. Other, less common concerns included service related issues such as:

- Accessing services
- Attending meetings
- Consultation or lobbying
- Child protection or adult incapacity
- Housing or police issues

In addition, a third of the young carers reported concerns about the level of support to which their parents/carers had access. If such support is inadequate this can place additional responsibility and stress on young carers who may seek to fill the gaps.

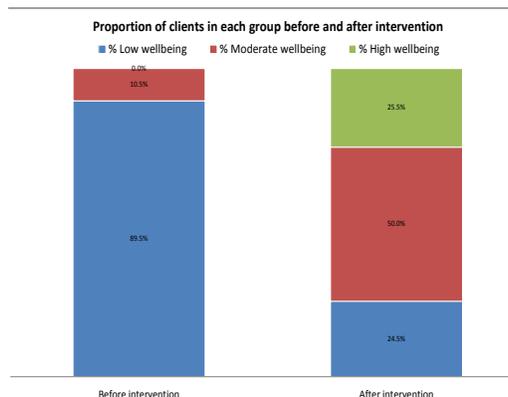
The scale of issues facing young carers should not be underestimated, and can often feel overwhelming to young people.

Improving outcomes through life coaching

Given the range of issues facing young carers (number of completed coaching cases was 16), the first task is to help clarify what life areas they wish to work on. Thereafter, coaches encouraged the young carers to achieve their goals.

Using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) before and after intervention, it was found that wellbeing improved significantly.

Before coaching, almost 90% of young carers reported low wellbeing, whilst after coaching, this reduced to less than a quarter. Interestingly, a quarter of young carers reported high levels of wellbeing, with the remaining half reporting moderate wellbeing.



Confidence also improved, with three quarters initially reporting low self-confidence. Following intervention, over half reported high levels of confidence. Similarly, over two thirds reported improvements in feeling close to others whilst over four fifths reported feeling more interested in others following coaching. This is particularly interesting in light of the

high levels of social isolation initially reported by these young carers.

Although the numbers reported on in this factsheet are small, we hope over time to demonstrate that coaching really does have the positive impact indicated in this project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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We now have funding to support other vulnerable young people in need of support.