



Youth workers in Aberdeen are supporting Syrian New Scot young people and their families to integrate into their new communities. Relationships are built over the school year – initially during the school day, where activities and skills development opportunities, including accredited awards, are offered to enhance their learning experience. As relationships build, young people are encouraged to participate in activities in their communities, also supported by the youth work team.

When lockdown began in March this year, the young people and their families stayed in close contact with youth workers, who offered a wide range of support online. As soon as restrictions allowed, face-to-face group work began again in the outdoors. Young participants shaped their outdoor programme with youth workers. They discovered new green spaces in their communities, spoke English in mixed groups (having spoken almost exclusively Arabic at home during lockdown) and were supported to share questions and worries with youth workers and with their peers. All of the activities used simple equipment and resources, with the intention that young people would replicate some of these experiences with family and friends.

The outdoor groups also created connections that eased their return to school. In the later sessions, one group was joined by their EAL teacher – an opportunity to discuss questions and worries about the school return and to reassure Primary 7 pupils transitioning into S1. Another group walked to school with their youth worker on their first day back, and were met and welcomed by the Deputy Head Teacher. These small, important interactions helped to ease anxieties and enabled the young people to feel more confident about returning to school.

Direct Impact

All 21 young people have made significant progress in overcoming language and cultural barriers to learning. They all showed improvements in their health and wellbeing. Support from youth workers has helped young people to engage more successfully in the school curriculum - and in extra-curricular activities – and to integrate more positively within their school and wider community.

Accredited awards

2 young people are working towards a Youth Achievement Bronze Award

Kirsty Wylie, Youth Development Officer

“Youth work is quite alien to many refugee families initially. Culturally, they place a high value on formal Education, and it takes time for them to recognise the benefits of the youth work approach. Little by little they have learned to put their confidence in us. Now we are welcomed like part of their extended family, and parents as well as young people acknowledge and respect the additional support we offer.”

Young person

“Aberdeen is the smell of mixed rain with flowers really I like this. Aberdeen is the look of nature and wildlife.”

Parent

“I would like to thank you for the activities, the children enjoyed it and it was good to go out with their friends and meet a new people, they loved the arts that they have done with trees. I hope this activity will continue.”

EAL Education Team

“Liaison between EAL teachers and youth development workers has been crucial throughout this whole period, supporting both primary and secondary age Syrian New Scots with appropriate English language learning materials and following this up when there have been cases of non-activity or pupils requiring additional support”