YouthLink Scotland

Case Study

Citadel Youth Centre

Digital Youth Work and Cyber Resilience Research May 2023

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Citadel Youth Centre

Discussions around cyber resilience and online safety developed in Citdal Youth Centre's intergenerational activity programme Old's Cool after it moved to online delivery during the Covid 19 lockdowns. Staying safe online and cyber resilience are also discussed through Citadel's employability work and youth clubs. Citadel finds that whilst cyber resilience does not need to be treated very differently from other issues it works on, having time and resource to build organisational understanding of it is important.

Old's Cool

Old's Cool is an intergenerational project through which young people design and deliver activities for older people. It is run by Citadel Youth Centre, an organisation based in Leith that provides a range of clubs for young people, as well as working with mums and toddlers and providing employability support. It provides a trusted, safe space for a range of people.

Through Old's Cool, small groups of young people, working with a partner organisation, find a particular theme they want to inform older people about, and then choose activities to run based on that. Past themes have included archeology in Leith, which the young people worked on with Archeology Scotland, and looking at Helen Sharman, the first British astronaut, in partnership with Edinburgh Science.

Whilst young people originally ran activities face-to-face with older people for Old's Cool, the Covid 19 lockdowns meant delivery had to move online and Citadel needed to explore digital intergenerational practice. Old's Cool looked at setting Zoom up so that young people could deliver activities over this platform, and created and distributed activity packs around space for their Helen Sharman theme. These helped with engagement, enabling the young people to ask older participants to take out objects from their packs and discuss them together. Often activities were similar to that previously took place in person, adapted for an online setting. For example, "the slang game", which looks at the language used by younger and older people, is played with a flipchart and pens in face-to-face settings but was easily translated onto Zoom. Through the Covid Stories project within Old's Cool, young people also received training from a graphic visual facilitator to interview older people over Zoom and capture their experiences of Covid 19 creatively, using sketches or doodles. This was an engaging and inclusive way to work with the young people, supporting, for example, those with dyslexia.

TThe young people had mixed experiences of the project. Those taking part in the digital Old's Cool were delighted to have an activity to take part in at a time of Covid restrictions. However, they also found it frustrating at times. This was in part due to the intensity of switching to online working, with young people needing to take in a lot of new information in a short amount of time. Young people also found planning the sessions more work than in-person sessions, for example, needing to consider all items older people would need in activity packs ahead of time. Citadel believes that younger people had mixed experiences of interviewing older people over Zoom for Covid Stories; some young people were nervous about the Zoom calls, and thinks though some may have seen it as less nerve-wracking than if it had been face-to-face, others may have found it more so. Likewise, Citadel believes that some of the richness of interviews might have been lost, for example, body language. Citadel staff could also find the digital approach challenging. For example, youth workers had to deal with technical issues, such as internet connections preventing people hearing. Youth workers often had to call the older participants after sessions to follow up and check they had been able to connect, which was time consuming.

Learning from Old's Cool

Planning the digital sessions for young people to deliver to the older people can be a lot of work, even if they are going to be relatively short. For example, deciding to use activity packs means packs have to be made up and delivered prior to sessions, which requires a lot of coordinating.

Simpler technology can sometimes provide the most convenient methods of working. For example, one older person found that they were unable to use the Zoom link for an interview session with the young people. However, the young people proposed telephoning them instead, which worked just as well. As this suggests, it is also important to have alternative plans to hand in case the selected technological methods don't work.

Maintaining digital learning can be a challenge, especially as delivery of most of Citadel's work has now moved back to face-to-face. For example, when software is updated and technology changes, some people who could use previous versions might need additional support.

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Cyber resilience and staying safe online in Old's Cool

In the Old's Cool project, conversations around cyber resilience and staying safe online came up organically, or through the process of the project moving online, rather than being planned with specific aims in this space from the start. In face-to-face discussions with small groups of young people relevant issues were discussed such as: internet safety; what to share on social media; how to use devices; and potential challenges older people could have engaging with them.

Citadel's broader cyber resilience and staying safe online work

Cyber resilience and staying safe online discussions also occur spontaneously in other Citadel projects, or in programmes that do not centre around these themes. For example, through Citadel's employability work, discussions around suitable email addresses and passwords, and password security take place. Likewise, in youth clubs internet safety discussions arise. If attendees ask youth workers about the social media platforms they use, this leads to discussions about youth workers' attitudes and boundaries around these sites. Short conversations with young people that occur after specific activities on staying safe online themes can also be important, when youth workers can talk to young people who may be too nervous to engage in the main activity.

Citadel's open youth clubs run activities around staying safe online. Recently this has been encouraged by some particular concerns around girls' safety. One session involved a discussion-based flip chart activity where young people discussed the social media platforms they use, if they use privacy settings, and what threats there could be if profiles are not kept private. This led to talking about cyber bullying, which some young people had experienced and saw as a reason to keep privacy settings high.

Intentional, proactive discussions to encourage volunteers to follow best-practice advice around social media privacy settings take place. Citadel finds that this is often something volunteers have not thought about before.

Citadel has also recently taken young people in its employability programme to a Cyber escape room run by CGI at a nearby location. Young people took part in engaging activities around issues such as phishing, updating software, and password management.

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Learning from Citadel's cyber resilience and staying safe online work

Citadel believe youth workers need to become more comfortable with the term cyber resilience, which can seem scary at first. Once cyber resilience is seen for what it is, youth workers might feel more confident with it. Citadel found that cyber resilience was an issue their practitioners were actually already working around without realising it.

Citadel finds that work around cyber resilience and staying safe online is not hugely different from traditional youth work. It is still about building positive relationships with young people and doing engaging activities with them, looking at issues relevant to their lives and threats they face; it is just that these issues will include online safety issues, like social media use, cyberbullying and potential grooming or unwarranted attention from adults. Similarly, work with young people around cyber resilience and staying safe online can use the same methods as traditional youth work; is not required to be high-tech. As seen in the example of the social media platform flipchart session above, methods used for traditional youth work topics, such as drugs and alcohol, also work. Finally, Citadel believes youth work organisations need the resources and time to explore cyber resilience and staying safe online issues. Teams need one or two people with a strong understanding of these issues, who can then lead on the rest of their team or organisation.

> Through its discussions around online safety and cyber resilience, which have taken place through the Old's Cool project, youth clubs and employability work, Citadel finds a fit with traditional youth work methods and youth worker aims, rather than discussions of these topics being a break from the norm.

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