

'FIT LIKE? FAMILY WELLBEING HUBS



How It Started

The 'Fit like? Family Wellbeing Hubs are a Council-led group of services available to families to support children and young people's mental wellbeing.

The addition of creative sessions aimed to support children, young people, and families on a one-on-one basis and in groups, by encouraging greater all family participation in creative activities, learning through participation in drop-ins and short series of activities. The team of Creative Practitioners Elaine Grant, Cate MacPherson and Samm Anga developed creative activities and projects that reflect the needs of the young people and supported their families.

At the centre of this activity was the understanding that families and young people needed to feel comfortable, not judged, and supported in their interaction with the project.

This co-designed approach, with the Creative Learning partners and schools, helped develop activities and tools to build self-confidence and resilience for young people and their families, enabling them to engage with their local communities, family and friends outwith direct hub activity.

The main focus for this project was to engage with young people who weren't participating in school, due to a variety of reasons. In some cases this has been made worse as a result of lockdown and in other cases the needs of the individual have changed making it challenging for them to attend school after lockdown.

The project took place mainly during school term as well as running summer programmes, both had a mix of engagement. One clear learning from delivering during the school term was the challenge for young people to attend sessions on the school grounds. Participants were still disruptive and in some

cases would not attend at all. Sessions were greatly improved when they moved to more neutral space such as the Rosemount Community Centre. This pattern was evidenced during the summer programmes as young people were encouraged to leave their homes to engage in meaningful, creative activities during the holidays in community spaces, rather than school.

What are the project values?

Citizenship & Creativity

The Hubs give the participants the soft skills and tools they need to return to school in some instances. While they do not enjoy school, they are working towards qualifications so they can plan for their future as active citizens. This will enable them to deepen their connections with families, friends and their community.

Fun & Learning

The activities gave the young people something to look forward to, it allowed them independence and it allowed them space to share with the creative practitioners their challenges or achievements that week. The Creative Practitioners have also learned a lot from this process, enabling them to think more about the therapeutic nature of their work and how to adapt their delivery to support the needs of the participant.

Openness & Respect

This informal, relaxed environment, created by the creative practitioner provides a space for participants to explore their thoughts and feelings, about themselves and those around them. They don't worry about making eye contact if it feels uncomfortable, about saying the wrong thing or feeling pressure. As one participant put it; *"My therapy sessions are like going in a circle, the Hub is a road I'm travelling on."*

Self-respect & Trustworthiness

There are other methods of support in the community to allow young people to work on mental health or divergent needs, however the 'Fit Like? Hubs provide a safe space for self-led exploration, with creativity at the heart of it, providing progress and satisfaction in achieving something.

Why does this way of working matter?

The 'Fit Like? Hub provides early intervention which can have significant positive impacts. Young people could be spared the need for costly services like school refusal programs or mental health care units if their autism was identified and supported early on.

This approach isn't just preventative, in the long-term it's empowering. By helping young autistic individuals, especially girls, discover and embrace their strengths and ways of working, they will understand their own potential to thrive by being themselves rather than adapt to suit the formalities

of institutions or systems that work against them, allowing us to understand what young people have to offer, rather than what are the challenges society is making them face.

Future Plans

The Creative Learning team at Aberdeen City Council have appointed a new team member to continue the activities and learning of the North East Culture Collective programmes and support young people. While the ambition to support families was an ambition of this project it never reached a formal structure in collaboration with the 'Fit Like? Hub partners. Funding is now being identified to create support networks and activities for families who need support with their young people, to provide a safe space for them to connect and support each other.

Want to Know More?

- ['Fit Lik? Family Wellbeing Hubs website](#)
- [North East Culture Collective Project Page](#)
- [Beyond the Canvas Podcast - Fit like? Hub workshop](#)

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