

Self Care Coronavirus Innovations Award – Highly Commended

Emotional Wellbeing Boxes for Young People

Below are details of the highly commended entry for the 2020 Self Care Coronavirus Innovation Awards. The Self Care Forum is keen to spread ideas of best practice and we hope this will be helpful in providing tips to implement self care strategies that will benefit people in your community.

Title and contact details

<p>Title of Initiative</p> <p>#Connections BOX: Emotional Well-being Boxes to promote self care- young people age 14+</p>
<p>Nominated entry</p> <p>Aine Wallace/ Fresh Minds Education and NHSCT Health and Wellbeing Team</p>
<p>Contact name</p> <p>Selena Ramsey and Aine Wallace</p>
<p>Contact details</p> <p>Selena.ramsey@northerntrust.hscni.net</p> <p>aine@freshmindseducation.com</p>
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Problem(s) and how you tackled them

<p>What is the context of this study?</p> <p>What was the problem you were trying to tackle?</p> <p>It was becoming increasingly evident that the impact of lockdown was affecting everyone, and within the NHSCT we could see that one group where there was limited support was teenagers/ young people aged 14+. We wanted to help support organisations who work with those most vulnerable and at risk.</p> <p>There was reported evidence of increased anxiety, isolation and MH concerns among this target group. In fact research from the Mental Health Foundation suggests 4 out of 10 young people have felt lonely due to the Covid 19 restrictions.</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Team linked with CYPSP and the council led Loneliness networks throughout the NHSCT area to pool budgets to enable us to purchase 500 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Boxes for</p>

young people aged 14+ which will encourage young people to understand the importance of themselves and self-care.

Please give a brief description of your self care innovation

Aine Wallace from Fresh Minds Education was approached to help design a self-care innovation for this age group. Fresh Minds Education had recently designed the Mood Boosting Box for young people under 12, based on the AMBER Approach and key elements from Fresh Little Minds children's resilience programme. The success of this inspired the idea to look at an older age group and design a self-care response for that could send a positive message, connect young people together, inspire activity and allow a young person to practice self care.

Aine and the Fresh Minds Education team bring extensive creative practice and youth work experience, and absolutely went over and beyond what we had expected.

A key aspect of design was to involve local young people as contributors, they were invited to submit art work, video blogs, writing, lessons and other forms of inspiration that would be shared with the other young people who'd receive the box. Included were pieces about young people's life during lock down, positive messages about looking after your own mental health, video blogs and mini movies, original art work and writing and lessons in baking and yoga.

The #Connections box is designed like a 'workshop in a box', each box contained a series of products that connect with a self-care and the Take Five Step to wellbeing message.

The young people who received these continue to be supported by the workers who have been allocated the boxes so there is a continuum of support.

What challenges or barriers were you faced with?

The main challenge was to meet the demand which we have been faced with. Every application included stories of young people who would benefit from this initiative, and it was challenging to choose one over another.

Other challenges include:

- Devising the content that would be age and gender appropriate and appeal to a wide range of people from different backgrounds.
- Working to scale and a budget in a restricted time frame, developing a response with lockdown restrictions where social distancing needed observed. Shipping and production times across the world have been slowed the pandemic.
- Fresh Minds Education wanted to keep the carbon footprint of the product to a minimum using local suppliers and eco-friendly materials where possible.

How did you solve the problems or overcome the barriers?

We asked people and agencies to identify how many boxes they would need now, and how many could form a waiting list should additional monies become available. In this way we were able to meet the majority of the immediate demand for those who are most at risk.

Fresh Minds Education involved young people in process of developing content for the #Connections Box, they were creative contributors and asked to develop messages could share with other young people, Young people were invited to submit art work, songs, poetry, opinion pieces, vlogs, lessons that would be a connection point with other young people. These would be key content pieces, connecting with the Take 5 theme and allowing conversations to be started about young people shared experiences.

Products were sourced locally where possible, and local artists, designers and firms were involved in the assembling the elements of the box. This also connected with a concern of this ages group, the impact of products on the environment and the planet.

Did you work with other partners or organisations? If so, who were they

The NHSCT worked closely with the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership, the Local council led Loneliness Networks in pooling the budgets to purchase these.

Aine worked closely with other agencies including the EA Youth Service Flare Project and local young people in the development. She also used the extensive Fresh Minds Education contact network to consult with young people and families to gauge the needs of the targeted group. This allowed her to develop products and experiences that would be relevant and impactful.

Each local council also provided a venue for collection of these boxes in times of social isolation.

Impact and outcomes

Who benefited from this initiative?

500 young people from the NHSCT area aged 14+ who were known to a local voluntary service. The agencies will also have benefited as this has allowed them an engagement tool to open up a conversation around MH and the importance of Self Care.

There has also been a ripple effect as the young people who have been involved in creating the boxes will also benefit from this. The families of the young people have also noted some benefits.

Was the initiative directed at a group?

Vulnerable young people aged 14+ living in the NHSCT area.

What were the benefits to the targeted group or individuals?

Our purpose was to let young people know that we know they are struggling, to offer some support and to open a conversation, which can be supported further by the agency who has provided the box, or if necessary to bring in additional supports.

The box focuses on self-care, understanding the importance of connections and each element of the Take Five Steps to Wellbeing. If we incorporate the Take Five Steps to Wellbeing in our lives it will contribute to improving wellbeing in its fullest sense both physically and emotionally. This has been woven through the workshop in a box approach to encourage all of the activities which through self care will include all of the benefits.

- The design of the products and activities in the box involved 7 young people as contributors and co-creators; positively impacting young people during the process. Young people were sharing their experiences of life in lockdown, the impact it has had
- Increases Peer to peer connections and at time when this connection has been restricted
- The box allows for recipients to reflect, get creative, relax and indulge, learn new things and give back, all key actions to help improve and maintain wellbeing.
- The theme #Connections encourages young people to connect with others through their box, by tagging and sharing artwork, notes, doodles or the experiments they made with the Zen pack included in their box!

Were there benefits to you, your colleagues, your organisation or to a wider area such as the NHS? If so, what were they?

I found it had a great sense of job satisfaction for me, but I know that Aine went so far over and beyond the proposal, to make the most impact. Other organisations have been doing something similar adding leaflets and a few free gifts in a bag or box, but nothing like this has been done that I could find for teenagers.

I think it also was positive to be responding to an identified need with something practical which will make an impact. This will have benefited all of the 40 organisations who received a quota of the boxes who now have an engagement tool for the young people they are working with. Our relationships have been strengthened with each of them and local councils, and other local networks. This will help further partnership working.

- There have been benefits to young people who've contributed to the making of this box. They have described increased confidence seeing their work distributed to hundreds of their peers.

Evidence

If possible, please quantify potential benefits

Over 500 young people have received these boxes. They were collected by the organization supporting them and delivered personally. Everyone has noted the benefit of being able to reach out and connect again with the young people they are supporting.

There were over 40 different organisations who received these boxes, from a wide variety of backgrounds. They include youth service, voluntary youth sectors, schools, community groups, Youth Justice Agency, Surestarts and Action for children. Each of these organisations were using these to target the young people they are working with who are most vulnerable.

Potential benefits are endless, however as always it is difficult to prove the benefit of something and its role in preventing something which didn't happen 😊

Do you have formal or anecdotal evidence of success?

(e.g. qualitative, quantitative, informal feedback?) Please attach supporting information

Feedback from Organisations:

'The Positive Mental Health Boxes are a fantastic way for Start360 to further support the young people we have been working with through Covid 19. A great resource which again highlights the opportunities that can be made real through collaborate working'. (Gerry McVeigh, Assistant Manager YES Project)

'My youth loved their boxes. All of them had been isolating so hadn't seen their friends for months. A few got together to open theirs and do some of the activities together. The boredom in a remote rural location was extremely hard. Moneydig rural network worked hard trying to provided entertainment through out the crisis whilst adhering to the social distancing rules but still wasn't the same as the youth getting together and having fun. Thanks so much for the boxes and what a great idea.' (Patricia, Moneydig Community Association).

'Our school was able to avail of several Well-Being Boxes to distribute to some of our students who struggled during lockdown. We have several LAC children, ASD children and students who would struggle with poor mental health. We could easily have used ten times the amount of boxes we received but decided to distribute to those we felt were lost in need. As a teacher it is very distressing to know one of

our students is struggling and we can do nothing to bc support them. Some of our students reported that they felt forgotten or struggled to sleep and felt more anxious than usual. These boxes have meant that the students don't feel forgotten; they make them feel valued and important and for some it was so important to know they were important enough for someone to arrange a little gift. Thank you to everyone involved who made this support possible.' (Kathy Anderson, Dominican College).

'The children and parents who have collected them have been so appreciative. Many parents have reported how their children have suffered since school ended due to the lack of contact with friends and teachers and the lack of structure. The fact that someone had thought of them, to allocate one of these boxes to them, meant a surprising amount to these kids' (Alana Hughes, St Piuz, Magherafelt)

'On behalf of Newmills Girls Friendly Society we want to thank all involved at Fresh Minds for their thoughtfulness in making these so appreciated boxes and their lovely contents. Its been a while since I have seen such big smiles on our teenagers faces.' (Pamela Simpson, GFS President)

Feedback from Parents:

'was a lovely surprise - nice to think of the kids for a change'

'I know my daughter was struggling but it is so hard to help them when they wont talk, this seems to have given her some joy and hopefully she can link into some of the stuff that will help her more.'

Feedback from Young People:

'love the box. Like the treats in it.'

'enjoyed the ice cream sundae. Was a nice surprise.'

'It was really nice to get the gift box. I read through the inspirational quote cards and will stick them up on my bedroom wall. I hope they will help me feel better. I particularly loved the shower bomb and chocolate stirrer! Thank you'

"I'm all chuffed with the box and showed my friend, I liked the things that look like sticky notes (affirmation cards) and have them up on my room walls'

'Thank you, I have not liked lockdown and this helped a bit. I am going to use some of the stuff as mantras'

What was the cost of this initiative in terms of time, money, or other resources?

We purchased 500 boxes at a cost of £18 per box, which came to a total of £9000.

Aine has worked with young people who volunteered their time in the planning and development of the boxes. Their time has not been included in the total cost.

And, finally...

Are there any lessons you learned or top tips that you would like to share?

I have learned the importance of being creative, the importance of thinking outside the box (excuse the pun) to develop something which will make a difference. Bringing other partners along has increased the impact as it has increase the number of boxes we were able to purchase. Working alongside the agencies who will receive the boxes for the young people they are working with, means they can refer back to the contents in the future as they continue to support them.

Did you use any of the Self Care Forum or other organisation's resources? If so, please specify

Not to date this is the first I have been aware, however I will use in the future.

Why do you think this initiative deserves to win the award?

This initiative responded to an unmet need using a partnership approach to maximize the impact for local young people. Aine went over and beyond in the development of the boxes to create something completely unique that has been designed by young people for young people.

The box looks at improving emotional wellbeing by purely looking at self and what you can do to help yourself and what you can continue to do, using practical advice and tips which will last much longer than the products in the box do.