

# Care-experienced young people get active with #YouCan

A new project, #YouCan, that will improve the lives of care-experienced young people, was officially launched at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena: Ratho on Friday.

#YouCan, delivered by Edinburgh Leisure, through funding from Life Changes Trust, who are funded by the Big Lottery, will empower 14-26-year old care experienced young people to lead more active, healthy lives and develop new skills through physical activity.



Photo credit Chris Watt

Thirty young people enjoyed getting active in activities including Clip 'n Climb, abseiling, fitness classes and the gym, while stakeholders, partners and dignitaries, including the Lord Provost, Frank Ross, learned more about the positive impact the project will have on the lives of care experienced young people in Edinburgh.

Care experienced children and young people and care leavers are some of the most vulnerable in society. They have become looked-after for a range of reasons and may have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma before becoming looked after.

Tommy George, Community Development Manager explained: "Care experienced young people face considerable health and social inequalities that affect them throughout their lives. Significant barriers to taking part in regular physical activity include: limited access to facilities because of cost; not having the correct clothing or equipment to take part in activities; not having someone to support them to participate and achieve through physical activity and sport; lacking the confidence to participate in activities as they don't have the physical ability or social skills to thrive; low motivation and lack of experience in trying different physical and sporting activities.

"As a result, 34% of care experienced children and young people don't achieve the physical activity guidelines set out by the Scottish Government and are generally less active than their peers. This puts them at risk of living sedentary lifestyles which increases their risk of long-term health conditions and premature death. They also miss out on the well documented mental health benefits which physical activity and sports bring.

"#YouCan will use one-to-one motivational support to help young people identify activities that suit their needs and interests, provide them with emotional support to take part in these activities and provide practical assistance such as

getting the right kit and paying for sport club memberships so that they may continue to be active independently when they are ready.”

Heather Coady, Director of the Trust’s Care Experienced Young People Programme said, “Care experienced young people have often told us that they would love more opportunities to be active and have fun, developing their interests and trying out new things in areas such as music, art, sport and crafts. Research shows that these activities can actually support a healthy lifestyle, and help to improve physical and mental wellbeing. Care experienced young people don’t often have ready access to opportunities like these, and thanks to Edinburgh Leisure, we very much look forward to watching them flourish and enjoy having fun.”

The project will support 125 care experienced young people, aged 14-26 years over the course of the three-year funding, to build regular physical activity into their lives to improve their physical, mental and emotional health.

It also aims to grow the knowledge of parents, carers, residential unit staff and social workers in how they can support their young people to live healthier, more active lives. This will be delivered through educational training days every six months and will include opportunities for carers to gain nationally recognised qualifications.



Photo Credit Chris Watt

#YouCan will work in partnership with carers, third sector organisations, NHS Lothian, Social Work including Through Care, After Care and residential units to identify and refer young people who are most in need and ready to take part in this project.

Edinburgh Leisure is a charity dedicated to creating opportunities for everyone to lead more active, healthy lives. They do that by running over 30 sports and leisure facilities across the city and deliver their Active Communities programme, which helps improve the lives of people affected by health conditions, poverty, inequalities and disabilities.

Edinburgh Leisure currently offers care experienced children and young people free access to their centres and work closely with the City of Edinburgh Council's social work teams, children's units and foster carers in Edinburgh to encourage and support them to get started in physical activity and sport. In the last six months (April – September 2018), Edinburgh Leisure's Active Communities programmes have helped

9,010 people get active, with 72,989 visits made to Active Communities programmes of which 3,091 referrals were received from health & social care professionals. Every penny Edinburgh Leisure's customers spend with them is used to further their work and their Active Communities programme, which relies on fundraising to help them reach more people that need their help.

For more information: [www.edinburghleisure.co.uk](http://www.edinburghleisure.co.uk) / [www.lifechangestrust.org.uk](http://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk)