

## **Interest Link Central Borders Online focus group – 21.09.20**

A total of 18 people were in attendance on Zoom from 14 different households: -

- 6 members with learning disabilities
- 6 family members/carers
- 3 young volunteers and 3 adult volunteers

Also within the Zoom group were two staff members (coordinator and assistant coordinator).

The session was facilitated by Craig Thomson who has been running online events with Interest Link since April 2020.

### Questions and responses.

1. Is there still a need for the service?

100% of attendees said yes.

Comments included – 'Most definitely'

2. Are you happy with the face-to-face service that ran till lockdown?

'She enjoyed three options – cooking, drama and craft. She changed every term. Absolutely brilliant, never a question about going, never any hesitation about going.' (family carer)

'What I enjoyed was that it was something to look forward to and I would meet with a different group of people than I normally would – I am at school so I would always see my friends but this was a new set of friends.' (YPS volunteer)

My son is homeschooled and the contact and communication with other people out of the house is great for him as he can be quite isolated. He loves coming – it's a good thing for him – it's a big deal. (family carer)

'My son doesn't have language but he really enjoys the cooking groups and they are very good for the social aspect. The face to face contact. Zoom would be difficult for him but there have been competitions on Facebook and the activity bags over the holidays. It's been really good' – (family carer)

'It's the only thing I go to that has continued.' – (member)

3. Are there any improvements or new features you would like to see in the face-to-face service?

'Singing group.' – member (this was planned for this December but is now on hold).

'I had great fun doing the fitness.' (member)

4. Have you been happy with the distance service run during lockdown?

100% of attendees said yes.

5. There's a big difference between seeing people face to face and over Zoom and we would like to understand how people feel about that - Have there been any difficulties with online befriending or is there anything you think could be added in?

'Maybe Whatsapp groups would be a good idea – it keeps chat going during the day' - adult volunteer

'I am proud that I have managed to join in through Facebook and Zoom as I didn't think I could do it' – member

'She likes seeing people but she likes to know the link is still there, even if we don't always use it, it's knowing that it's there. People don't realise how important the psychological thing feels of having that link' – family carer

'She has got a lot out of the zoom meetings as she has missed the group meetings' – family carer – (her daughter) member agreed (Zooming in from different households).

'It was funny for me because I am not the best with tech but I got it sorted with Stef and now it's easy- it is so fab how easily it works' – family carer

'I was tearing my hair out but now that I am on, it's grand' – adult volunteer

'This is an easy way to use technology to see people' – member

'The 1:1 phone calls have been a blessing' – family carer

6. We are proposing to revert to our usual face-to-face service as much as possible. However until Coronavirus is banished, groups may have to be smaller and we will maintain a Zoom social programme for all our services and continue to facilitate 121 phone links for those who wish to have them. We will also continue to engage with as many people as we can on Facebook and Instagram.

Do you think these are good proposals?

'We would hate to think that in the longterm Zoom would replace groups when it is safe to return but it's a good substitute at this time' – family member.

'She would like to keep Zoom' – family carer

'I would like to keep Zoom too – I have gotten a lot from it' – member

7. What else would you like us to offer via Zoom and online platforms? Can you think of any activities you would like us to pilot online for you?

'I can't think of anything that hasn't been done' – adult volunteer

'They cover such a broad range that it's difficult to think of other things' – family carer

'I feel like a lot has been covered – when I got my recent package I thought the ideas were great and I think you are great are coming up with ideas' – YPS volunteers

'I very regularly borrow ideas from you all – there's so many ideas that I would never think of!' – YPS volunteer

'I was so excited when I got my bingo prize' – member

'I loved the cooking' – member