

The evaluation of the “Young Adults Project”

Summary of findings

The young adults reported enjoying and benefitting from the project. However, they differed in what they valued and gained most from the project.

The project encouraged the young adults to take a lead in deciding on and planning activities and events the group would do. The young adults found this challenging and it took time for them to positively want to do this. It worked best when they had a shared interest or cause. When this happened, the group worked together in creative and productive ways. Towards the end of the project there was clear evidence, to a lesser or greater degree, of personal growth and increased confidence. In addition, the group had become close knit and supportive of each other and were planning to find ways to continue meeting.

Staff working on the project found it both rewarding and challenging. The main challenge for children’s hospice staff was learning to work with the group in a different way to when the young adults came for short breaks at the hospice.

Finally, the project raised the profile and understanding of life as a young adult with a life-limiting condition among a number of different groups. These include staff working in an adult hospice, the public (via a public exhibition and items in regional news programmes) and NHS England.

Key lessons from this evaluation on how children’s and adults’ hospices can best support young adults as they transition from children’s services, and into adulthood, include:

- During short-breaks, children’s hospices should work with young people in ways that encourage and provide opportunities to experience independence and promote self-confidence.
- Hospices should be aware that supporting young people and young adults’ personal development and social skills is a complex process and may be very different to providing short-breaks. Hospices wanting to engage in this sort of work may therefore need to review staff skills and bring in specific expertise.
- Hospices should also be aware that, compared to their peers, young adults with life-limiting experiences may have had fewer opportunities to make their own choices, and to take part group activities or collective projects. It may take time for young adults to get used to, and thrive, in these sorts of situations.

A full report of the evaluation has been submitted to Together for Short Lives and Transition Programme partners. Learning from all the projects funded by the Transition Programme will inform the future direction of transition support and young adult provision provided by children’s and adult hospices and the wider sector.