

Peer support weekend in Crieff for young people with cancer

The weekend:

Accommodation

The group stayed in self-catering lodges which provided social spaces for the young people to come together to get to know each other and 'chill out'.

100% of the teens rated the quality of the accommodation as high or very high

Food

The group ate all meals together at the various cafes and restaurants in the hotel complex. Teenage Cancer Trust also provided food vouchers to supplement any additional food requirements to prepare meals in the lodges.

90% of the teens rated the quality of the food as high or very high

Activities

Activities over the weekend included tree-top adventure, alpaca trekking, archery, swimming, axe-throwing, golf and horse-riding. The activities allowed the young people to try something new and step out of their comfort zone.

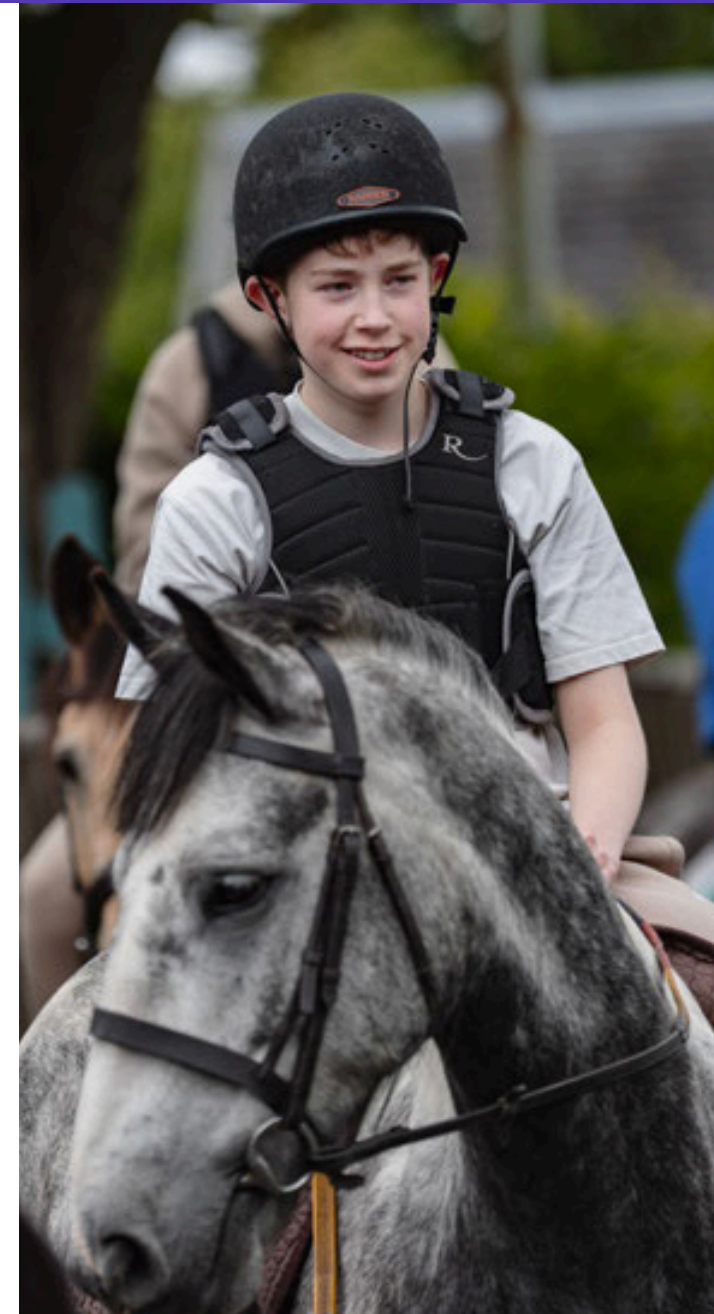
100% of the teens rated the quality of the activities as very high

Background

Young people diagnosed with cancer and undergoing treatment experience many negative impacts to their lives and they often feel disconnected and isolated. Led by Teenage Cancer Trust funded NHS Lothian Youth Support Coordinator and supported by staff at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People, NHS Lothian Charity funded 12 young people aged 13-17, who have been diagnosed with cancer and are treated at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People, to attend a residential weekend at Crieff Hydro Hotel. The trip provided the young people with an opportunity to spend time with others who are in a similar situation, have experiences away from their normal environment and from their families and take part in fun activities. This is the third trip which NHS Lothian Charity has funded.

"Just so lovely to see him do 'normal' things rather than being at home quite isolated as he lost a lot of his friends. Its been great seeing him connect with others his age and enjoy time away from home."

Family member



How the trip made a difference to the young people who attended:

Improved confidence

The young people were asked to rate their levels of confidence prior to and after attending the trip (1=low, 5= high).

In our pre-event survey only 2 young people rated themselves as feeling "very confident". After the trip, 7 young people rated themselves as having a high level of confidence.

"I feel more confident in myself. I would love to take part in a future trip now that I know what to expect. I think I would enjoy it even more and gain even more confidence."

Young person

"My son had a great time. We were really pleased to see how much he enjoyed it. It has made him more confident to meet new people and try new experiences."

Family Member



100%

of families reported they had seen a big or little improvement in their young person's confidence since returning from the trip



"I feel brilliant because I have never done it before I would 100% do it again it was so fun"

Young person

"I went swimming for the first time since I got my port fitted over 3 years ago."

Young person

"My child found the first day of the trip a little daunting but quickly found their feet and felt a great sense of achievement by the end of the week. It has really helped build their self-confidence. Many happy memories were made and my child has enjoyed telling everyone about the experience with lots of enthusiasm. It has been great to have such a positive and memorable experience to chat about and I know this trip is something my child will remember forever."

Family Member

75% of the young people reported 'trying something new' was one of the biggest impacts of the trip.

How the trip made a difference to the young people who attended:

Improved sense of social inclusion

The young people were asked to rate how socially included they felt prior to and after attending the trip (1=low, 5= high).

On average they answered 3 before and 5 after.

"Its great for them to meet others, have new experiences that they may have missed out on due to treatment and its great for them to get away from home and parents checking on them all the time!"

Family Member



"It has been really great seeing him comfortable meeting new people and talk about wanting to meet up with them. Hearing him talk about the group chat they have was lovely."

Family Member

"Being surrounded by people in similar situations can encourage you to try things you would otherwise have been reluctant / scared to do."

Young person

"They feel happy and relaxed, having had a break with people who "get it""

Family Member

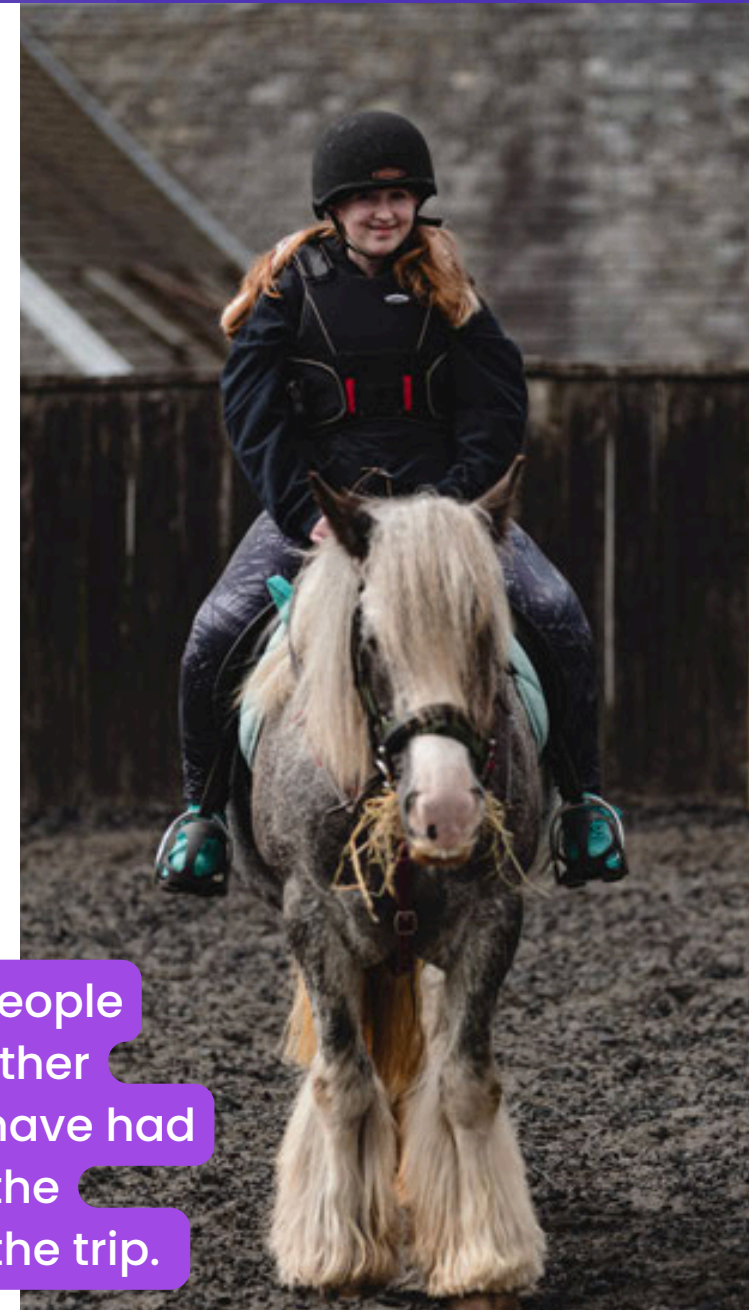
"It is a great way to get out of your comfort zone, try new things, meet new people and to do so an environment which is supportive and where you're not judged."

Young person

100%

of families reported they had seen an improvement in how socially included their young person felt since returning from the trip

100% of the young people reported 'meeting other young people who have had cancer' was one of the biggest impacts of the trip.



How the trip made a difference to the young people who attended:

Improved self-esteem

The young people were asked to rate their feelings of self-esteem prior to and after attending the trip (1=low, 5= high).

On average they answered 3 before and 4 after.

"On the first evening I was really stressed because there were lots of things I needed to organise for myself that either would already be in place at home or something that my parents would help with. However, throughout the trip this got easier and by the end I was quite proud of myself."

Young person



"My child went swimming twice on this trip, they have not been swimming at all since they were diagnosed because they were so self-conscious about the port in their chest."

Family Member

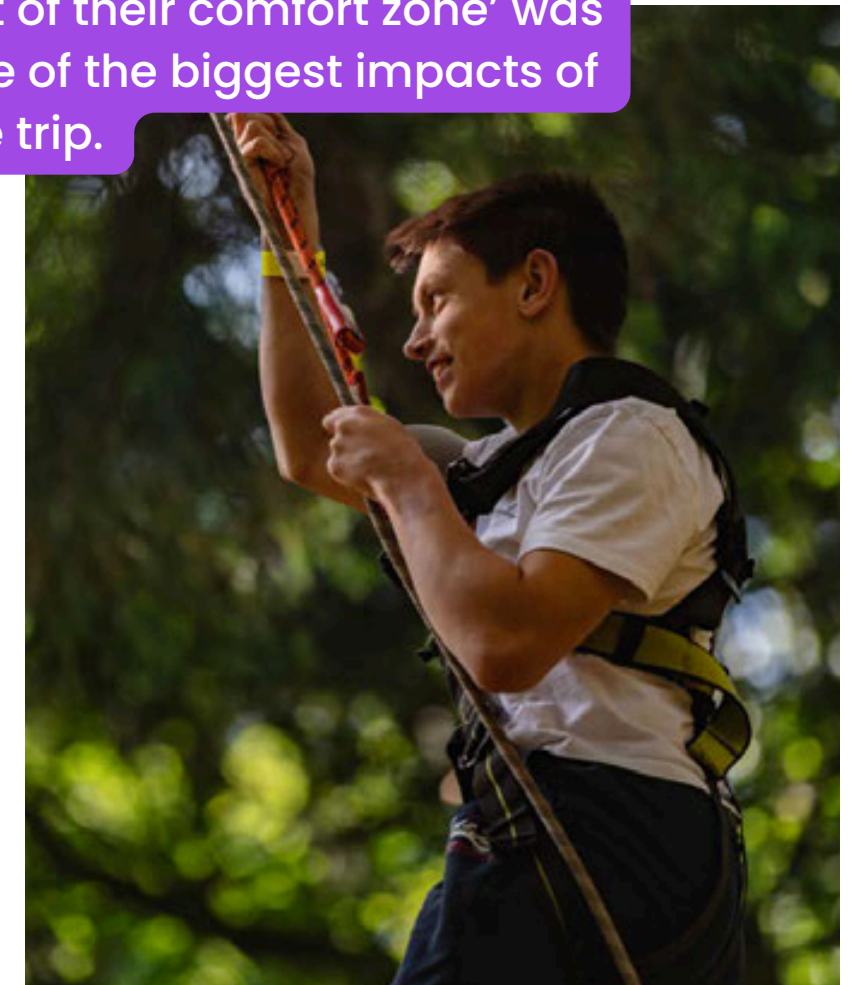
100%

of families reported they had seen an improvement in their young person's self-esteem since returning from the trip

It helped them realise that they are physically able to do quite a bit more than they had been doing prior to the trip. It helped them to gain some independence and recognise that they had become quite dependant on mum and dad and are actually able to do more things for themselves now which has been great for their self confidence. Since returning from the trip they have been more willing to give new activities a try and move out of their comfort zone a little more and be less isolated.

Family Member

60% of the young people reported 'pushing themselves out of their comfort zone' was one of the biggest impacts of the trip.



How the trip made a difference to the young people who attended:

Improved ability to share their experience with cancer

The young people were asked to rate their ability to share their experience with cancer prior to and after attending the trip (1=low, 5= high).

On average they answered 3 before and 4 after.



"Being surrounded by people in similar situations can encourage you to try things you would otherwise have been reluctant / scared to do."

Young person

"I was surprised on the way home when my child told me about all the kids that were there and what type of cancer they had had, This was great to hear because my child doesn't speak about their cancer or the impact that it has on them with any of their friends, or really with our family so I think they must've felt very comfortable knowing they were surrounded by people who would totally get what they were going through."

Family Member

"It has made me more confident to speak about cancer with my peers."

Young person

"It is good to talk to other who have or are going through similar things to you."

Young person

75% of participants said that meeting other young people who have had cancer was one of the most important aspects of the trip for them



How the trip made a difference to the staff who supported the trip:



"On the first day I spent some time with 2 YP who were discussing diagnosis, treatment and then current situation. It was lovely to hear the YP talk about it openly not feeling as if they needed to shy away from anyone. I think overall this trip was a massive success, there have been memories made for a lifetime and the YP were equally sad to be leaving on the last day which is testament as to what an enjoyable time they had and the value they experienced from the trip."

Staff Member

Volunteering as an Occupational Therapist with Conor and the Teenage Cancer Trust during their residential week at Crieff Hydro was an incredibly powerful and uplifting experience, both professionally and personally. It gave me a renewed sense of purpose and reminded me of the fundamental impact that occupational therapy can have, even outside traditional clinical environments.

Staff Member

100%

of staff said they had observed significant change in young people's level of confidence and ability to talk about their experiences with cancer

100%

of staff said they would recommend taking part in a similar trip to other staff

The impact on the young people was striking. Many arrived feeling uncertain or hesitant, but over the course of the week, I witnessed incredible growth in confidence, self-expression, and peer connection

Staff Member

Helpful to get time and perspectives of young people without their parents and in more natural environments. Definitely builds up trust they have in me as a professional.

Staff Member

How the trip made a difference to the families of the young people who attended:

"My son really enjoyed the trip. More than he thought he would. He has made friends and is keen to attend further trips. He found it helpful to meet others with cancer and talk about shared experiences."

Family Member

"I think it did us both good to have some time apart. I felt really happy with them being away with Conor and Zoe because I know my child really enjoys their company, and I trust them so I was able to relax."

Family Member



100% of families said they would recommend this experience to other young people

100%

of families surveyed said they had noticed an improvement in their child's confidence, self-esteem, social inclusion & ability to talk about their journey with cancer



"It was really good for the whole family. As parents we were able to spend time with our other children doing activities that we would not usually be able to do. We also had time as just a couple as grandparents spent time with our other children for a day - a first since diagnosis almost 2 years ago!"

Family Member

"Really I would just like to say thank you, this was a great trip which my child thoroughly enjoyed, I enjoyed them being away doing something different in a safe environment. Our whole family benefited from the trip."

Family Member

Legacy:

100% of the young people, their families and NHS Lothian staff reported they would recommend this experience to other young people who have experienced cancer, with nearly everyone sharing how 'fun' the experience was.

70% of the young people reported that going the trip has motivated them to take part in other group activities/clubs.

"I was surprised on the way home when my child told me about all the kids that were there and what type of cancer they had had, This was great to hear because my child doesn't speak about their cancer or the impact that it has on them with any of their friends, or really with our family so I think they must've felt very comfortable knowing they were surrounded by people who would totally get what they were going through."

Family Member

"I would love to take part in a future trip now that I know what to expect. I think I would enjoy it even more and gain even more confidence."

Young person

Thanks to feedback from the young people, their families and staff from NHS Lothian who attended the weekend this report illustrates the impact of the trip and how it supports NHS Lothian Charity to meet a number of its strategic outcomes and objectives which contribute to the final goals of 'Enhanced experience and care for patients in hospitals and their communities' and 'Have a positive impact on health in the Lothians'.



Thanks to Teenage Cancer Trust, NHS Lothian staff and all the young people and their families who took part in this evaluation. Visit NHS Lothian Charity website to find out more about the projects we support - www.nhslothiancharity.org