

Youth Scotland: youth participation opportunities

Hyper Cyber is a Youth Scotland member based in Blantyre. A youth worker explains: *'I was a young person when Hyper Cyber started, it was due to a lot of antisocial behaviour within the area, there was... gang fights and things like that, particularly on the main street... it was getting pretty violent.'* Generation CashBack (GCB) supported Hyper Cyber to deliver diversionary summer activities and GCB Development Officers visited to deliver programmes and supported young people to join national events. For this case study we spoke to Laurie, who first engaged with GCB through a Young Grantmakers programme, and has since participated in four further Lead opportunities.



CASE STUDY

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Laurie is 15 and studying at school – *'quite stressful now with all the exams and all that'*. They joined Hyper Cyber age 7: *'Outside of Hyper Cyber I really don't think there is a lot for young people... There's a lack of social connection with young people and all that... they're bored and cannae really do anything so they end up, like, it goes to lead onto like them doing quite dangerous things...'*

Laurie's worker encouraged them to get involved with 'Lead': *'She [youth worker] knew that sometimes I wouldnae go and do certain stuff because I always worry or panic like something bad is gonna happen, that's why I've always stuck to that social area I was in. But she was saying 'this is something brand new and you'll love it' and I thought 'yeah you know what I'll do it!'*

Laurie arrived at their first Young Grantmakers residential feeling nervous to the point of once being physically sick: *'It was a big first step for me. I never really knew there was more [than Hyper Cyber]... I was absolutely petrified!... When we started working in different groups, like I was away from my group, it started slowly growing on me like 'they're feeling the same way as well' – Now it's built up to having new relationships and still talking to them now!'*

As the weekend went on, Laurie enjoyed it more and more: *'I even learned more about myself, like personal development, more skills... and friends I met. It really gave me a boost, it made me feel great about myself, to know I was feeling heard.'*

At the next opportunity: *'I saw myself without hesitation actually go in, be confident, speak to people, and all that. Obviously I was still a bit nervous at some points but for the rest of it... I felt great... even getting an interest in talking to other youth groups... I felt like that was something special, like I'm building a greater social circle.'*

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Laurie's youth worker has seen a change: *'The projects that they have been involved with... they have really given them confidence and given them the opportunity to meet young people that they would never have met... You have quite a good relationship with [young person from other youth group] who also identifies as non-binary, so that was really good.'*

Laurie identified confidence, communication and leadership as the key skills they have gained from taking part in GCB: *'Leadership skills, when I even did some activities and other people weren't sure what to do I was like 'you know what, I'll start, I'll lead the conversation' and it went up from there...'*

Involvement with GCB has changed Laurie's aspirations for the future: *'Yeah it's changed a lot... me finding my interests with young people and how you all work... It's changed the way I want to see myself in the future. I'd be choosing between teaching or youth work because in either way it's something that I'm passionate about. I would love to continue on to more volunteering, doing more youth work sessions and workshops with Youth Scotland. I feel like I could still learn more, and I feel very encouraged to do that as well.'*

Laurie is passionate about the value of youth work: *'[without youth work] It would be so different... It's that way, when I've seen like, new young people come in, you can see what they were. Sometimes it's their mental health, sometimes it's their social interaction. I think if we didnae have [youth work], we wouldnae have these opportunities, we would stick to a cycle that you were always being in... It opens up many, many opportunities for young people... Especially in areas like mine... this is something that we really need, everywhere, for every young person in Scotland.'*