

National Leadership Network

Young People with Care Experience

So hi, I'm Chris and I am part of the [National Leadership Network](#).

I'm Gary Brown. I'm the National Leadership Network Development Coordinator. And Chris, and I'm here today to kind of talk about five questions around participation that we have been asked to consider so Chris and I are both going to do that from our own perspectives.

Gary: Okay, can everybody hear okay? Yeah. My name is Gary Brown. I'm the National Leadership Network coordinator. This is Chris Marshall. Chris has been working with the National Leadership Network, as a consultant initially, and also as a member of our interim oversight board, which has been an important part of our journey so far. So what we're going to try and do is both just talk a bit about the National Leadership Network with these five questions, which we were asked to consider so that's what we're going to do. But if any of you know me and Chris, a couple of enthusiastic blethers doing this in 10 minutes, we'll do our best. So The National Leadership Network is a Life Changes Trust legacy project. So that's really important. It's, it's one of a few legacy projects, there's Care in Creativity, The Learning Channel, and Digital Skills. The National Leadership Network is the main legacy project from Life Changes Trust. So hopefully everybody knows about Life Changes Trust and what they what they did over the last 10 years. What was identified, one of the main themes moving forward from all the work that was it, there needs to be a focus on leadership. And there needs to be a focus on leadership in a way that people define leadership themselves. So the National Leadership Network was born out of the legacy. So what were the original aims of the project. So there's quite a few aims, there are some up here: to build on Life Changes Trust funded work, and to make sure people were cared experience, were involved in all aspects of what we're doing that we have an inclusive approach. So by that we mean - it depends what kind of words or language you're using, but seldom heard voices or quiet voices. I suppose what we're trying to do in the National Leadership Network is just try and go out and speak to people and get to know people in places that everybody should be going to speak to people. And it's all about personal and professional development, amongst many other things in a leadership context. I suppose the main thing that we're trying to do is go out and see what people want to do in a leadership context all over Scotland. So we're in the process of doing that just know there is myself, Lisa, can you give away Lisa? So Lisa and me, we are the staff attached the full time to the national

network, but the the most important thing is we've got lots of young people working for the network, we've got lived experience. So, we're trying to go find out what people want to see happen in Scotland. And then hopefully provide that with the aid of our host organisations who if you can see our banner there, they are all mentioned: The Resilience Learning Partnership, Columba 1400, CYCJ, Staf and Who Cares? Scotland. So with those organisations, we find what people are wanting and we bring the information back, share that with all our partner hosting the young people will work with, and projects will hopefully be identified and be funded within the money that we got from Life Changes Trust. So the second question we got asked, how did it start? Basically, we're given a blank sheet of paper, when Lisa and me started from day one we asked, "So where is the National Leadership network?", and we were told by Life Changes Trust, "it doesn't exist yet." So we were like, Oh, right. But then that was really good that Lisa and I had so then just I suppose we were want to make sure was that young people were care experience would be involved. So every process that we'll have to go through like we need to get young people in paid roles, that's what we've done, the decision making process in the National Leadership Network, whatever the decision making processes are, people with care experience will do that.

Chris: With a lot of this it has been us doing it – Gary and Lisa have been just sitting back with their feet up. So we have done all of the hard work and you guys have typed it up and made it look nicer.

Gary: It's like Chris says, he's like, I'm your and Lisa's boss. Aye you are.

Chris: The whole group is and that is what has been good about this whole process, and it's working out good. We have been through two rounds of it, we had a chat and if you guys and we decided that we want more people, and we've got the funding and we got quite a lot of people, some who have been consultants in the past and but that's not about the money, but the experience that is behind it. So instead of me having a degree in care experience, I have come with that experience, but that's not a label, that's just my experience throughout life. And I think that's what's missing in quite a lot of places at times, is the fact of people with experience have more experience than people with degrees. And that's what needs to be recognised and that's what the Life Changes Trust recognised and The National Leadership Network.

Gary: Definitely. And there's a whole thing there about power imbalance and stuff like that, I was talking to John about that earlier and often when Lisa and I and other people in spaces, we need to be talking about power, power imbalance. And just exactly what Chris said there, you know, and I suppose it's like what Chris was saying, as well. Yeah, Life Changes Trust said, when we were getting a group of people together to decide who will be the hosts and be the main kind of partners on this project. We say that, you know, if you maybe get three young people on board. We got 10. And then we asked two people to be consultants, and we were like, it's got to be young people's voice. It's not about our voices, it's not. So I suppose one of the things that Lisa and I've been keen to do is kind of challenge Life Changes Trust, initially if we think it's the right thing.

Chris: We challenged the whole system. They've not made any decision making processes, that's been us as a group. So any decisions that have been made has had to come through us as the interim

oversight board, and it's been the group of young people who have been steering this for the last year and a bit now, so these have not been Gary and Lisa's decisions, they're not allowed to make decisions. It has to be through our board meetings it has to be through us meeting every couple of weeks that meet and it has to be thought out. And if we don't agree with it. That's, that's it, it doesn't go through.

Gary: Yep. So where are we now? So, we have an interim oversight board. So we've got four people with care experience, who are people who helped us and were paid to choose the host organisations. And they are on board, steering us every stage and the way we've got our hosts who you can see there, but we've also met lots of people, me and Lisa in the first year, when we were trying to find our feet we've met lots of people from the care experience community and in the leadership community, and got a really good working relationship, with loads of people and ended up on the steering group for the Participation Network and things like that. And it's really good so we kind of feel we've got quite a positive reputation so far. And I think maybe that's primarily just because we have those young people or people with care experience, front and centre. And the way we've done that people seem to be liking that. We kind of feel but just at the start and line now. We've got the hosts, we've got our money, we're going out to try and speak to people in the community, what do you want to see happen?

Chris: More importantly, how would you want to see it happen. It is not just about us just saying we have got money, It's about saying what do you want to do, and how are you going to make it happens? It is about giving young people and adults with care experience, the sort of opportunity to gain life experiences as well. It's about, what is your process? How is your idea? How are you thinking about it? How are you going to do it? And it's not us leading them to do it, it is how can we work with you to do it? How can you work with our partners to do it. It's about making sure everyone's working together and not just like, here's some money, go do it.

Gary: Yeah, the people who picked these organisations, when they went through the process, I think maybe there was a thought that maybe one or two organisations would support the whole National Leadership Network, but the young people were like, "Resilience learning, that's all about trauma, so we need them. Columba 1400, leadership programmes, we need them, CYCJ..." It was about that things that these organization could do, and they were like, we want all of them. So we were like, alright, we need to go back to all these organisations and say, the young people were saying, You, like should work together for the next five years. And that's what we did. We just went back and said, This is what people are saying. And thankfully, all the host organisations got together. And I've started working with us.

Chris: It has not been easy. We've had many challenges, especially ourselves, sitting on the consultants board or meeting with Lisa and Gary and trying to get everyone on track in the way that we wanted it to work and it was very challenging for the first couple of weeks. It was a couple of times when as a chair of the board I would have to bring them back and then go well, we're thinking about this, but we're not there yet. But we have to start from the very beginning. And I think that's something – a new concept for these organisations that are part of that is the fact of we have not come in with any policies in place, procedures in place. We've just come in as ourselves, and went, this is how we want

to do it. And that's been really difficult. But we're now at a stage or that's the norm and we are starting to move forward like that.

Gary: So we want the National Leadership Network to develop with the voice of care experience, but we also like partners and allies, people in this room we want it to be everybody's thing so that it can be shaped by everybody. So yeah, some of the learning so far. A lot of this stuff here is what people with care experience have been saying, not us. The care experience community is large and complex, there's lots going on lots of people doing lots of different stuff. Lots of people in this room, what does everybody do? You know, people are like there is almost too much going on. Are we speaking the same language? When we started talking about leadership, when me and Lisa were speaking to people we were very aware that people think leadership means lots of different things. So, we can define that, leadership has to be what people want it to be. Transformational change, you know, we use these words, is everybody talking the same way? Another thing that a group of young people I was speaking to, they were talking about the communication that goes on in the care experience community. There's loads going on, how this everybody gets to know about it? What's paid, what's not paid? If it's paid, how's that supported? Are people been supported properly, when they're working for local authorities? There's a lot of questions coming up. What's been really good is the big thing with Life Changes Trust was about relationship based practice, there's nothing more important than relationships, that came loud and clear from 10 years of Life Changes Trust, and I suppose, I think most people in the room will agree that that's super important.

Chris: So if you are on a project always make sure that you have a healthy relationship, always check in. It might not all be about work, but always check in with each other. And I think that that's what it's important right now as about doing work all the time on Zoom and MS Teams, we are bored of it, getting tired of it., . Or if they want to zoom in teams before developer getting tired of it. It's about having a check in to see where people are at, and just moving forward. Sometimes that's all we need. And that's what's right.

Gary: And I think the whole thing about partnerships, days like this are really important and when this event was getting put together, I was saying to Paul and Rosie what it feels like as a big care experience community team in Scotland talking openly, working together. And you know, not being about our own little places where we work it's about talking to each other, being open and honest and sharing the good and the bad. I think I think that's what we need to keep doing and 10 minutes isn't very long to talk about something that we're trying to do and build over five years but me Chris and Lisa are here all day. So if you want to come and talk to us want to get involved with anything want us to come in, you know just we're here we want to talk or want to listen, we want to learn.

Chris: So if you want to speak to us about coming along and hearing more about us, you can do that. We can come to you, you can come to us, let's get the conversations going.

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