



Still Listening, Still Learning: Personal Outcomes in 2025 and Beyond

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Story title: A Safe Space to Grow: Co-Creating Support in East Ayrshire
<p>Overview:</p> <p>We have recently been through a difficult but necessary de-commissioning of a residential respite resource in East Ayrshire. The respite facility contacted us because the level of use was not sustainable. When we searched the data we found that a relatively small number of East Ayrshire families were using the facility. It wasn't easy because we knew how much the families valued the resource, but we worked with those families to find other routes. They are still able to access the resource using SDS, and it is also now being used by families from other areas too.</p> <p>At the same time, we are very aware of growing numbers of children with ASN in East Ayrshire, and a key priority is how to reach as many as possible, where there is a need for support. Around the same time as the change in respite, we were approached by a local mothers group who were passionate about developing resources for children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) in East Ayrshire. They wanted to have places where families could go together to relax and play in a safe environment and identified that there was no community based sensory room in the authority. They wanted to work with us to make this happen and so that has been a big focus for us over the two years.</p>
<p>What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?</p> <p>This has involved a new partnership arrangement between the Health and Social Care Partnership, the local independent charity Centre Stage and a local community group. We have worked very closely with the Ayrshire Am-ASN Warriors who have been central to the working group from the start.</p> <p>At an early stage we took the proposal to the senior management team, who agreed straight away. The entire process, from concept and design to completion has been community-driven which has been a rpleasure to support. The HSCP has provided the equipment, Centre stage is where it is housed and the parent group continue to fundraise</p>

to ensure that there are plenty of toys. They are learning with us through monitoring the feedback on the Facebook page about what works and the experience of families.

Has this helped to keep a focus on what matters to people in face of current challenges?



The sensory room provides a place for families to relax and unwind together. It's a change of scene which can work for families with children of different ages and abilities to play alongside each other, listen to music or just enjoy the lights and colours. This includes families where their child does not have a diagnosis, particularly due to long waiting lists at CAMHS.

The development of the sensory room and its use by families is one part of the story. Another part is the continuing partnership between ourselves in the HSCP, Centre Stage and the Warriors group. This group basically consists of local movers and shakers who are closely connected to the community and they are a key go to resource for me now.

What have you noticed in terms of outcomes or impact?

This resource sits well with the idea of short breaks for families, which is becoming a policy focus for unpaid carers in Scotland. Families can take a bit of time out together and

An unexpected benefit has been that through families accessing the sensory room in the centre, they are finding out about other resources and supports for children with ASN, and expanding the range of activities and connections for their children.

The Warrior Mums tell us that they feel their contribution has been valued through this work, and they get a huge kick out of the positive feedback from other families.

One family testimony:

"The love that has been put into the creation of [Mya's room] shines through. We loved looking at all the toys. My daughter loved the sensory drawers with all the toys... I personally loved the spaghetti lights and watching the projector!. But above all I most loved the feeling of being so blessed to have such a safe space for our ASN community to express themselves in a safe way... From one very grateful autistic mum and daughter duo."

How did this make you feel?

As a former practitioner I have loved the relationship building part of this piece of work.

We do try to take a community involvement approach to commissioning in East Ayrshire. We shared another example with a previous story project <https://talkinghope.uk/heart-and-hope-in-east-ayrshire/>

The previous project was about hope and I have to say this is the most satisfying work I've done for some time. Working in collaboration with local people is the most viable way of ensuring that we are focusing on the outcomes that really matter, and that gives me hope.

What have you learned through this?

I've learned so much about the challenges faced by the ASN community, and the extraordinary lengths they go to every day to overcome these. The resilience these families have to develop is humbling.

Anything else you want to tell us?

I've been looking at research recently on the impact of poverty on families with disabled children, which is hard to read. It is a founding principle that this resource should be free of charge to families and that has to remain a priority.