

YMCA Tayside

A Gannochy Trust #CharityStory



As we look to build on the legacy of our founder A.K Bell - one of the great philanthropists of his time – The Gannochy Trust continues to invest in a wide range of local projects that not only address poverty and disadvantage, but also seek to improve wellbeing, health and opportunity, especially for young people.

One such project is the inspiring Universal Youth Work that YMCA Tayside is delivering across Perth and Kinross. The charity received grant funding from The Gannochy Trust in 2019, as part of a five-year Strategic Youth Work Partnership programme that helps young people across the region. This #CharityStory is about a local girl called Abbie whose life was turned around because of the work of YMCA Tayside.

Abbie was originally referred to the YMCA by Youth Services as a young person who has had significant adverse childhood experiences. Following the standard procedure, YMCA allocated a key worker, Matthew Dellaquaglia, who contacted Abbie's mother to offer support opportunities.

It was clear Abbie was anxious, as she struggled to speak to Matthew without her mother present. After several attempts of engagement, Abbie made her first step to a brighter future by saying yes to youth work and agreeing to meet with Matthew outside the family home, within her local community.

Although Covid restrictions made delivering youth work more challenging, the Scottish Government recognised the importance of allowing face to face contact for the hardest to reach and most at risk young people. It was clear that Abbie met these criteria and so Matthew met with her outside the family home. They went for a walk around the local community, with the simple aim of building trust and rapport.

Abbie registered with the YMCA and started meeting with her youth worker weekly in a 1-2-1 setting. She took to the youth work approach well and consistently engaged in her weekly meetings. Abbie struck Matthew as a bright and able young person, who understandably lacked self-belief. Abbie and Matthew developed an action plan focusing on building her self-belief and helping develop employability skills.

Thanks to Abbie's commitment to her action plan, she has made significant progress in her self-development, and really began to believe in herself again. Abbie has started an SCQF Level 4 qualification with the YMCA in Employability skills, as well as agreeing to restart her time volunteering with the Foodbank, which she had given up before starting with the YMCA.

Around this time, Matthew had introduced Abbie to various employment opportunities, as he believed her self-image, self-worth and self-belief had changed so significantly for the better, that she would be ready for work. It was to Matthew's delight that Abbie grabbed this opportunity whole heartedly and applied for the Health and Social Care Modern Apprenticeship with Perth & Kinross Council.

Reflecting on this stage of Abbie's progress, she had recognised in herself the positive steps she had made and appeared truly proud of herself.

During one meeting with Abbie, she had confirmed that her application to PKC was accepted and that she was being progressed through to the interview stage. Understandably Abbie was very happy but also nervous. YMCA had reacted quickly to this exciting news and agreed with Abbie that they would fast track her Employability Skills course to focus on interview techniques, as she had found herself needing this input sooner than expected.

Abbie spent a day with the YMCA preparing for her interview with Perth & Kinross Council.

During one of the YMCA team meetings, Matthew received a call from Abbie where she excitedly announced she had secured the job.

The knock-on effect of Abbie's progress and successful work with the YMCA was shared by her mother who had sent this message:

Hi Matthew, just wanted to say thanks for all your help with Abbie, I'm over the moon for her, she needed this. Thanks again.

As Abbie waits for her start date to become PKC's latest Health and Social Care Apprentice, she remains involved with the YMCA and continues to go from strength to strength. To date she has achieved her SCQF Level 4 qualification in Employability Skills, successfully gained an H15 Award and is working towards a Dynamic Youth Award. She has also enrolled with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and on top of all that, still finds time to volunteer at the YMCA local Foodbank helping others in need.

Abbie is a shining example of not letting the past define your future. She truly deserves all her success as she looks forward to a bright future.

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