



European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION

I2I Project

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Cover Sheet

Evaluation - Abertay Carers Hub

Abertay Carers hub developed a longitudinal collaboration model enabled by the I2I project engage to work with SA around loneliness. A mentor scheme for students and student carers in HE/FE was developed. This resulted in promotion of mentoring between deferent year groups to reduce isolation.

Abertay carers hub: Dundee Carers and Abertay has worked with the Student Association (SA) to implement a Carer Hub at Abertay. The team undertook data gathering to understand number of carers at Abertay and related policy initiatives and their link to current student retention strategies. A student survey was created and distributed. There were also meetings with Student Services manager to discuss new student carer policy and Carers trust recognition award and to add interventions to student benefit support package (micro-credential well-being tips and tricks, wellbeing app).

This was an innovative project that established a working group to develop new student led processes to widen participation and relationships which required working across typical subject areas within the university and external organisations. The group included the Student Services Manager, Student's Association, Central Services, Higher Education and Further Education institutions, Dundee Carers and Local Authority, and student carers. Abertay project activities have contributed to stimulating the public sector to generate innovation demand and innovative solutions for improving public service delivery by exposing them to new approaches to develop service to address isolation. This has been through the use of QH co design across the development of all interventions, use of online 'Miro' boards to enhance collaboration between key stakeholders and the use of digital technologies to raise awareness of isolation.

- Existing services have been improved and new services have been developed based on these i2i approaches. Student Carer Working Group – Abertay cross divisional (Student and Academic services, Communications, Admissions and Recruitment Office), including students association staff and students.
- Dedicated Student Carer Advisor – to answer any queries and signpost to all support measures available.
- Student Carer Ambassadors – student carer learning experience led issues and solutions for an under-represented cohort of students.
- Dedicated Student Carer Web portal covering a range of services – first line support (dedicated contact, support plan etc.), finances and funding, mental health support, employment and careers, useful links (regional care centres, current initiatives – discounted gym etc.)
- Training video for Abertay staff to raise the profile of student carers and their unique challenging circumstances.

Abertay now collect student numbers. Annual review / analysis of this information will provide useful information to assist with trending datasets year on year, particularly Student Carer retention and dropout rates. This information may also provide data to assist with targeting vulnerable year groups that require particular attention by the working group. Continue cocreation sessions with existing student carer volunteers and new volunteers to capture thoughts and ideas as the interventions created via this project become embedded in the Abertay student carer experience.

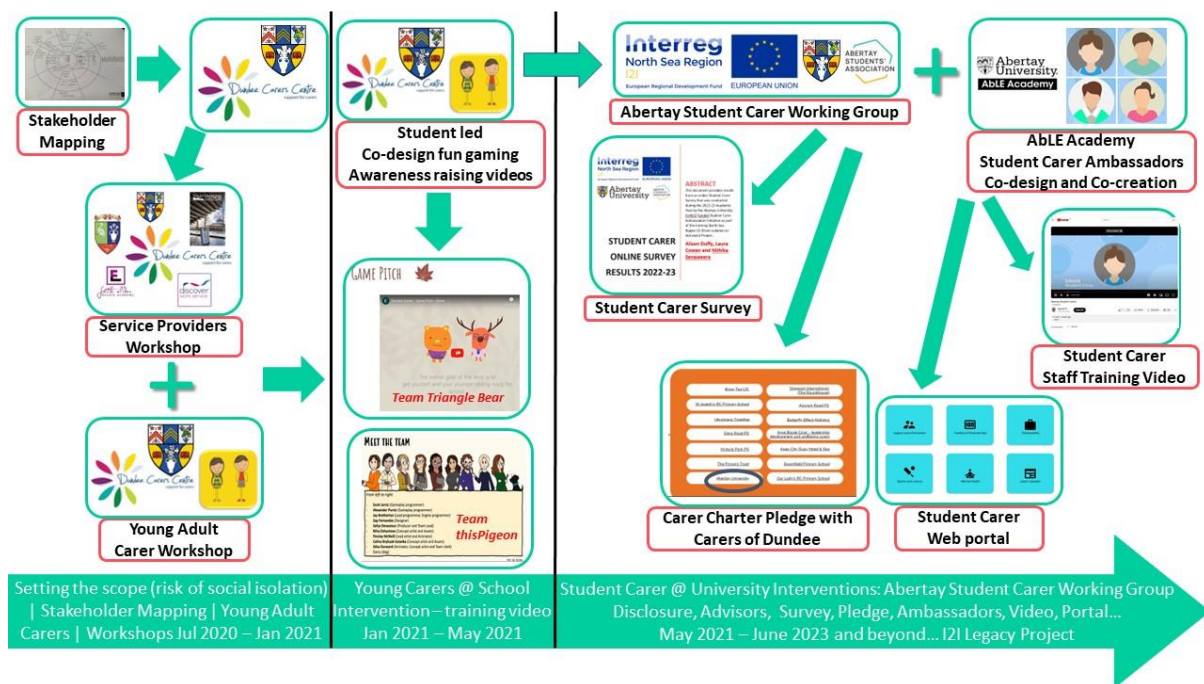


Figure 1 Development of Student Carer Working Group

Interviews were held with key stakeholders in the Abertay Cares Hub, these were asked whether I21 had helped them innovate and create new ideas and working methods. They agreed that:

- Working together on the I21 project has provided ideas for new and innovative activities.
- Bringing together expertise during the project development, cocreation phases enabled a more creative culture to develop. This overcame one of the main barriers facing Abertay as an organisation, due to the hierarchical nature of the provision of several student services in different departments across the University.
- The link with external organisations made them innovate and change the support they offer. This is due to the training and support offered from external organisations.

The Baseline Survey which undertook an inter-agency stakeholder workshop (7 stakeholders - 2 x Dundee Carers, 2 x secondary school, 2 x Dundee City Council, 1 x independent business). The survey had 12 questions related to Oslo Manual for Measuring Innovation Criteria. Individual responses indicated that ensuring essential services / working with vulnerable groups was paramount – staff across sectors were employed to ensure continuation of these services and also staff development to build digital skills indicating that the organisations may be more responsive to implementing change in the future – an example of shock change for improving services.

The qualitative interview findings cannot be directly compared with the 2020 baseline as a different group of stakeholders were interviewed. However, respondents confirmed that for each of the questions the felt positive direction to improve innovation capacity of the partnership to innovative solutions and to reach or exceed the 10% target.