

Supporting Young Carers: Learning through Leadership-in-Action

I spent 6 weeks across August to September working with Windschatten Berlin, a non-profit organisation supporting young carers in the city. My project focused on contributing to the organisation's existing youth work programmes alongside supporting preparations for Germany's first International Young Carers Conference.

By Ava Byrne,
University of St Andrews

1. Supporting the International Young Carers Conference

During my placement my contribution focused mainly on communications and outreach in the run up to the event. I managed Windschatten's social medias (Instagram and LinkedIn) for the six-week period, creating and scheduling over 40 posts surrounding individual research from the conference. The social media outreach extended beyond Windschatten's existing audience, with graphics reposted multiple times, allowing information about the conference to circulate through different networks and multiplying the reach.

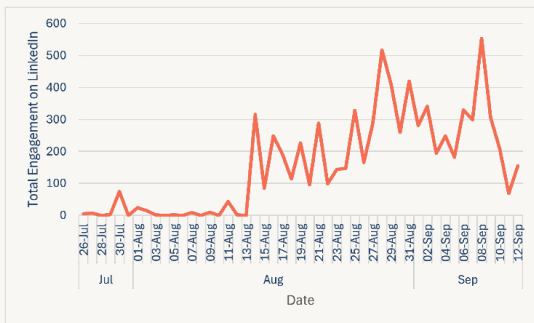


Figure 1: LinkedIn engagement over the period from one week before the start of my placement to my final day at Windschatten Berlin.

Supported young carer activities and contributed to the autumn programme

2. Contributing to Activities for Young Carers

In August, I supported planned activities for young carers, including a creative, a sport, and a life-skills event, helping with the delivery of the programme and participating in activities alongside the organisation's team. As week as supporting the summer programme, I was involved in discussions about the drafting of the autumn programme, giving me experience in planning future provision. The programme included planning around staff availability to consider how to offer a wide variety of events and planning possible accommodations for the young people.

Extended conference reach through targeted social media outreach

3. Developing Accessible Resources

My final goal was to create resources to support the conference and Windschatten's outreach, ensuring that these were both accessible and engaging. My main work for this centred on a guide for young carer conference attendees travelling to Berlin. This guide was designed to provide practical information to help attendees prepare for their visit and get the most out of their conference experience, including information about activities designed for them specifically and general advice on navigating the city. This was created to complement wider conference communications and to address that many young carer participants may not have attended a similar event before.

Created an accessible attendee guide for the International Young Carers Conference

From SMART Goals to Outcomes

My original SMART goals provided a framework for my placement, where I developed them alongside needs and responsibilities identified by myself and Windschatten, aiming to contribute where I could be of the most help rather than focusing on completing every aspect of my goals independently.

What Changed Through My Time There?

Greater engagement

Social media outreach helped to generate interest in research projects at the conference.

Stronger programme planning

Supporting activities and contributing to the autumn programme gave me practical insight into how youth programmes respond to participant needs.

More accessible participation

The Berlin guide will provide young carer visitors with practical information to help them feel prepared and confident at the conference.

Looking Ahead

My placement took place during the run-up to the conference, thereby focusing more on the preparation and engagement rather than delivery. I will return to Berlin in October to support Windschatten with the conference and will see the results of the work undertaken during my placement.

Acknowledgements

I am incredibly grateful to the team at Windschatten for allowing me this opportunity and being such a wonderful support throughout, and to the young people they support for letting me into their lives for a brief period. I would also like to thank Lord Laidlaw and the team at St Andrews for their work in facilitating the programme, alongside Campbell MacPherson who kindly gave me an introduction.

