

Interns with Impact: Team Jak Children, Young Person & Family Seasonal Impact Support Worker Emma King (Summer 2024)

TEAM JAK



Team Jak provides emotional, social and practical support for children and young people age 0-25 with cancer and related illnesses (warriors), their siblings, families, friends and those bereaved (angels) throughout Scotland, through Jak's Den HQ in Livingston and Jak's Den Aberdeen and via pop up Dens in Fife, Glasgow, north of Scotland, at home, online and via hospital support.



When Allison Barr, CE of Team Jak was approached to consider taking on board an IWI internship she was immediately enthused and within a short period of time a job description and person specification was presented to the Careers team.



The internship student was to play an active role in the set-up, delivery and development of creative and recreational activities, in line with the organisation's values, aims and policies at Jak's Den Aberdeen with the families who engage with the Den.



Candidates were expected to have experience in working with children and young people in a group setting, initiative, communication and leadership skills and an awareness that working with children and young people with cancer could involve highly emotional situations and sadly sometimes bereavements.

13
students



applied for the role mainly from the Schools of Psychology, Social Sciences, Law and Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History. Four in total were shortlisted for interview and three were able to attend on the day.

Roy, Chief Operating Officer came from Livingston and undertook an individual interview with each student, whilst Tiffeny and Sarah the Aberdeen Den team asked them to show what they had prepared related to the 'Bag of Worries' that they work through with children.



Emma King, a third year MA Psychology with Counselling Skills student shone through during the task and in her interview. Emma has experience of working with 10-18 year olds through Sea Cadets, has worked in a care home, in retail and displayed excellent communication, creativity and compassion.

Emma had previously applied for another ABDN Internship in Spring 2024 with Grampian Hospitals Art Trust but didn't make it to interview and was advised by the Careers team it was due to her CV. This spurred her to attend a CV workshop which resulted in her being shortlisted for Team Jak.

She was inspired to apply as she wanted to work with people in a different setting, particularly to gain more experience working with children. She didn't apply for any of the other IWI internships as she 'didn't want her CV filled up by experience that wasn't me'. During the interview she admitted to the team that she had limited cancer journey experience and was nervous about working with Angel families which reassured the team she would fit in well as this is perfectly normal and advice and support would be given.

Emma had her induction with other IWI internship students at the University of Aberdeen to help her prepare for internship. This was followed when she started at Jak's Den with a thorough induction to the service in addition to specific training on health and safety, first aid, food handling and child protection. Sarah also recommended some books to read to help her understand the cancer journey that families go through and the language they use when referring to this.

She met the key team at Team Jak Aberdeen including the counsellor and music therapist and visited Jak's Den Livingston a couple of times, most recently when she underwent a session on anticipatory grief with a Psychotherapist.

Emma worked a variety of shifts, including evenings and weekends due to the nature of the services at Jak's Den including evening walking, yoga, craft sessions and at weekend 'Big Breakfast' and 'Teen Social'.



"Emma has been amazing, she's always got a friendly and enthusiastic manner and blended in really well to the fun and safe atmosphere in the den, she also always was fully engaged and listening to what people were saying, 'and always seemed willing to learn about peoples experiences' and asked good questions when appropriate. It's been good for me personally to have someone at the den close to my age, but I've seen she's been great with all ages and can adapt really well."
Meaghan

At the start of the internship Emma's aim was to be 'accepted into people's space, not directing anything, just being part of the environment'. One of her first tasks was meeting an Angel family who had never been before which was new territory for her but she handled it well and reduced the anxiety for mum and her toddler.

Throughout the summer programme working with the families, Emma had a creative input to sessions by initiating and developing themes the children would recognise and enjoy. Whilst she engaged with the children creatively, it gave Sarah more time to talk more in-depth to families and Tiffeny more time to work on the necessary administration it takes to run the Den and plan fundraising activities.

Tiffeny echoed these sentiments adding that from a practical perspective, the summer programme could not have run potentially at all, and certainly not to the same extent it did so Emma's input was vital for the smooth running of the Den.

Emma was a pleasure to work with, Tiffeny commented '100% never have to ask Emma to do things.... something needs done, she just does it', an example being a time when an Angel mum conversation got difficult, Emma could see where the dynamic was going and just 'scooped up' her toddler and took him off to play.

Emma also assisted with evaluating sessions externally via a local authority survey and internally via an 'evaluation tree' that children could add to.



The impact that Emma made is summed up by Allison:

Emma has been an absolute superstar and has made such a huge difference to our families this summer planning sessions, supporting our young people with cancer, and remaining professional at all times. We have had a great summer thanks to the impact Emma has made in ensuring our families feel supported on their journey and have hope through the activities Team Jak have provided. Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity with the best intern ever!

This was reinforced by Roy:

We have been delighted with the impact that Emma has brought to us at Team Jak. Emma has brought a freshness and energy to her role, and we have been delighted with her understanding and consideration to the families and children that visit us here at TJ.

Out with Jak's Den, Emma was key to fundraising activities such as bag packing at a local M&S store and a Ladies Day at a local hotel. She took part in a Celebrate Aberdeen parade and helped families work on their stars and hearts for the Glow Gold Childhood Cancer Awareness tree at Seaton Park.



Emma has enhanced her confidence 'by miles' according to Tiffeny in the context of 'we are about to have Emma's final Angel event and the biggest one of the year and she is not phased by it, compared with how nervous she was ten weeks ago'. Her activity development skills are excellent as she has learned to personalise activities to families e.g. if someone is going through treatment, they may prefer quiet time instead of a busy task and is intuitive to how they are feeling.

Emma is reassured now that she can work with and interact well with children and hopes to focus on this after her final year at university by progressing to an MSc in either Psychotherapy or Interactive Therapy Art/Play. She is delighted that the Psychotherapist who works at Jak's Den Livingston is happy to help her choose correct accredited courses and if the course requires students to fulfil counselling hours this could be achieved via the Den also with a supervisor connected to Team Jak.

For the next year, Emma is returning to university, back to her studies and honours dissertation. At the end of her internship Emma had confirmed that she would keep volunteering at Jak's Den, however a week before university recommenced has been offered a part-time position within Team Jak Aberdeen; she has gladly accepted as she 'just loves it, and now the connection has been made with the families she doesn't want to leave'.