

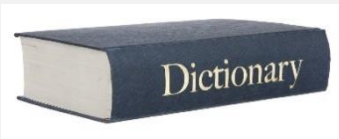
# Encouraging Resilience in Young People with Additional Support Needs in The Usual Place

Introduction: What the Project was about



The report was written in May 2022 by:

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- Paul Barbour (The Usual Place, Dumfries)



They wanted to research 'resilience'.

Resilience means being able to cope when things get tough.



The Researchers worked with a Social Enterprise Community Café in Dumfries called 'The Usual Place'.

The Usual Place enables young people with Additional Support Needs to develop employability skills.



The project looked at how The Usual Place encourages resilience within Trainees who work there.

The researchers wanted to answer three questions:



- 1) How is 'resilience' thought about at The Usual Place?
- 2) What things happen in The Usual Place that affect resilience?
- 3) What things happened at The Usual Place during the COVID-19 lockdown that affected resilience?

## What does Resilience mean?



This report uses a description of resilience by a Canadian researcher, Dr Michael Unger. He says you need three things for resilience:

- 1) Navigation:** Knowing where to find the things you need to enable wellbeing and resilience.
- 2) Negotiation:** Make sure that support meets the needs of each individual.
- 3) Tensions:** A person's ability to navigate their own environment.

### Tensions are:



- **Access to material resources** – for example: money, education, medicine.
- **Relationships** – for example peers, family, community
- **Identity** – for example: sense of purpose, aspirations, beliefs, and values

- **Power and Control** – Ability to make change in your life
- **Cultural Adherence** – Following your culture's, practices, values, and beliefs
- **Social Justice** – Having a role in your community. Being socially equal
- **Cohesion** – Being part of the wider community

## How the research was done?



The researchers wanted to get answers to their three questions by doing practical things.



They did this by **interviewing** lots of different people in The Usual Place.

They are known as the **Participants**.

### The Participants were:



- 1) **5** people who do not work at The Usual Place, of which:
  - **2** were parents of Trainees, and
  - **3** were people The Usual Place work with
- 2) **5** people who work at The Usual Place, of which
  - **3** were senior staff members, and
  - **2** were Mentors

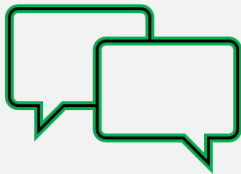
### 3) 7 Trainees who work at The Usual Place

#### What was found out from Participants



What participants thought about resilience:

- Having tough times is unavoidable.
- Having to be resilient is something that everyone has to do sometime in their lives.
- Resilience is about being able to handle difficult times or situations.
- And be able to 'bounce back' if you have a setback.
- Resilience can be a positive thing
- But we need to support people to develop it.
- People need the chance to experience some hardship so that they can learn from it.



#### Things people said about resilience:

"I always visualised resilience as being a kind of bendy tree in a big storm, so when the storm comes, you're being battered about but actually afterwards you're still standing"

"I suppose...it kind of means that they have the ability to bounce back in adversity".

People think that 'resilience' comes from something **inside us** but also pressures from the **outside world** that we live in

### A member of staff said:

“I think that’s a self, an inner thing that builds up resilience. And I think in a way some of the youngsters have to learn a coping mechanism [...] and we are here to help them face the big world if you like. So, we go on to try and build that and give them encouragement to be able to do that. Do you know yeah you make a mistake; you’re allowed to make a mistake”.



### Resilience is created by:

- the strengths that people have themselves (like **“flexibility”**, **“coping”**, **“confidence”**, **“self-esteem”**).
- as well as **support from people around them.**

## Things that the Usual Place does to support Trainees' resilience



- As a whole organisation, The Usual Place gives Trainees the feeling of being in a ‘safe space’.
- The Usual Place gives personal support to Trainees to enable them to do the practical jobs they need to do.
- It also helps them through difficult times.



This helps develop confidence in doing things the Trainees have **not been able to do before**. For example, a Trainee said:

“It was my first time on Drinks and Cakes, and I was like, I’m not coming back here, but [my mentor] kept putting me on it and she was like, ‘I know you don’t like it but it’s training’, and then I just like it, and it’s alright now ... I’m getting used to it”.



Promoting resilience is seen as an on-going, long-term **process**.

Trainees can **gradually** progress at their own speed.



This development of resilience in Trainees was supported by:

- **‘peer’** support (their friends/colleagues in the café)
- and **‘community’** support (the customers)



People said that this help was **not overdone**, **not** “molly-coddling”, “smothering” or being “wrapped in cotton wool”.



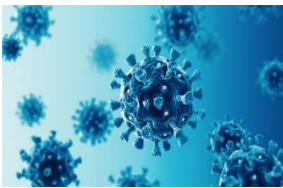
Helped by the fact that The Usual Place is a **business** that must keep high standards in serving its customers and high **‘professional’** expectations of Trainees.





This enables Trainees to “break through their comfort zones” through “tailored exposure”. Trainees get both ‘**support in**’ and ‘**exposure to**’ difficult situations.

## COVID-19 and resilience



COVID-19 and the lockdown had a big impact on the Trainees’ wellbeing.



Trainees reported a loss of “**normality**” and feelings of “**never coming back**” and “**feeling lost**”.



Many felt that other services that the Trainees depended on took away their care. But The Usual Place **carried on providing support** – by simply “being there”.



This was done best by weekly **Zoom meetings** where many different tasks were set.

## What the Researchers want to do next



Look in more detail at how The Usual Place develops resilience as an organisation.



Look in more detail at how Mentors enable Trainees to develop resilience **day to day** – especially managing to balance ‘support’ and ‘exposure’.



Look to see if what The Usual Place does, can be transferred to **other places like schools and workplaces.**



Look to see if what The Usual Place did during the COVID-19 lockdown might be transferred to **emergency responders and emergency services.**