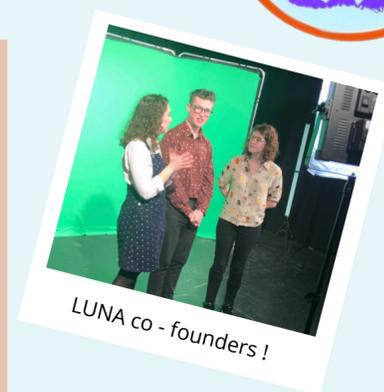


The LUNA Project



The LUNA (Learning to Understand Needs and Abilities) Project was started in the summer of 2019 by a group of three friends, two of whom have a long term health condition. We knew that statistically we weren't alone in the experiences we were having, even though sometimes it felt like it, so we started to talk about them! These conversations resonated with others and we are now **a team of 20 core volunteers, with a community that includes hundreds of other people**. Our work is now based around supporting and raising awareness of young people with long-term health conditions/disabilities. We believe a big factor in the well-being of young people with long-term health conditions is positive friendships. **The support of friends can make all the difference - but even having conversations with friends about how they can support you can feel impossible**. Our core mission is to support and raise awareness of young people with long-term health conditions/disabilities and to allow open and transparent conversations with friends about how they can support their friends. **We aim to empower young people to make it possible.**



Events!

We are keen to bring people together and share skills, and events are a great way to do this! One of our favourite events was a **"Dear NHS" writing workshop** in April 2021 where we came together as a community and one of our volunteers led a workshop to get us started writing our Dear NHS letters (which are for another LUNA project). Many of our events also involve bringing in people external to the organisation - such as our **Science Communication project launch**, where Dr Bob Phillips and Dr Carolina Kuepper - Tetzl (both experts on science communication in different ways!) came and spoke to our group of almost 100 students.

Doing this looks like (lots of different things) ! ...



Our Workshop and Ambassadors Schemes!

These are our education branches! The workshop scheme is designed to **start conversations about disability in a positive way** in a classroom environment, with a focus on friendships. These have been delivered to over 300 students. The Ambassadors Scheme is designed to run with Year 12 and 13 pupils to give them the tools to become **better advocates** for disability positivity in their school environment.

Creating Resources!

One of the main things we do is create resources on a range of different topics and conditions that we (as young people with long term health conditions) wish existed! These include a variety of topics, everything from **appointments and transitions, to medical racism, to accessible self care, to science communication**. We work alongside young people with lived experience of different long term health conditions to create specific resources - for example our **"From Me and My Friends to You and Yours"** series, which looks at the social impact of different long term health conditions and the way friends can help. All of our resources are easily accessible on our website.

Our Social Media and Blog!

Our blog is set up to be a platform for young people to feel empowered to **share their experiences** ! These have included an incredible **range of topics** - from experiences of school, independence, through to looking at the intersections of sexuality and gender identity and chronic illness. To date we have had over **70 blogs written by over 50 different people, and over 11,000 views**. Our social media is also a space for people to share their experiences - which we do through sharing the blog posts, resources, and **"Takeover Tuesdays"** on our Instagram where young people share a day in their life.

Most importantly, this looks like COMMUNITY !

At our core, we are a community! We were founded by and are run **by young people for young people**. We are a team of 20 volunteers, all of us young people with lived experience of long term health conditions - whether that be having a long term health condition, or being a friend or family member of someone who does! Being youth led means that our work is constantly evolving and changing, guided by what we, as young people with lived experience, and other young people with lived experience believe is needed. As well as our core team, we have a wider LUNA community who are an amazing group of people who are involved in many ways - such as writing blog posts, working with us on resources, and getting involved in challenges.



Community in decision making ...

We believe that everybody who wants to have a say should be able to be involved in decision making in LUNA. We enable this in a number of ways including;

- A **yearly AGM** open to anyone interested in what we do, where we brainstorm ideas for the year and seek feedback.
- Having **working groups** which focus on different areas, and allowing volunteers to join whichever they would like
- A **wider LUNA community** who we involve in everything from big decisions about general direction, to the details such as topics for blog posts and format for resources.
- A **non-hierarchical structure** where everyone fulfils different roles and takes responsibility for leading different aspects
- We aim to foster an **open atmosphere** where everyone feels comfortable talking and are given the platform and support for them to carry out ideas which they have had.

Making a difference to young people ...

Our project empowers young people to have **conversations about their health** with their peers, showing that health issues in young people are something to be normalised. Our work in schools **introduces the topics of accessibility and disability at a young age** in the hope that these conversations will remain in youngsters heads as they grow up and navigate the world and relationships. Our project also educates children and young people of all ages about important topics, health conditions and how they can support their disabled and chronically ill peers. It also impacts older young people by giving them a **platform to talk about THEIR experiences** and topics that are important to them. We hope that all of this will breed a **more tolerant society** that is more aware of the needs and abilities of those with disabilities. We also hope that it will begin to **break down the stigma** surrounding health conditions in young people and if we have made just one person a little less afraid to talk to their friends then that is a success!

Get in touch!

If any of the work we do resonates with you, or if you would like to find out more, or access our resources, please do get in touch!

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