THE EMPOWER PROJECT
STRATEGY 2021-23

COMMUNITY

LEARN

INFLUENCE

Work to diminish tech and online abuse by providing inclusive community spaces and in turn, teach and educate on the impact of gender-based abuse online.

Exist as the lead organisation in Scotland to educate on tech abuse.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change demonstrates the virtuous nature of our work at The Empower Project. By creating an accessible and proactive community, we can learn and share insight and knowledge on tech and online abuse. Through this, we aim to make change by campaigning and shaping policy and law.

COMMUNITY

- Create inclusive community spaces
- Provide a place for solidarity
- Encourage and develop activism

Who for? Members, volunteers, feminists and activists living in Scotland

LEARN

- Share insight and knowledge on online abuse
- Provide tools and resources to inform and educate through training
- Create a positive and safe environment for debate and discussion

Who for? Practitioners, public sector workers (police, youth workers), students and teachers, Government officials and MSPs

INFLUENCE

- Make change through campaigning
- Support and shape law and policy relating to online harms

Who for? Policy-makers, online platforms and MSPs

OUR STRATEGY

This document is a summary of our two-year strategy and highlights how we will work with local communities to make positive change and combat online and tech abuse. It is important to note that going into 2021, the world in which we operate is different to any year before, with the current pandemic.

2020 provided both opportunities and challenges for The Empower Project. As a charity that relies on in-real-life interactions with our community, translating our services to online spaces only allowed us to continue to have conversations and provide vital training. Yet, as so much of our work involves going into community spaces and creating safe spaces, we recognise that for many, talking about online harm in online spaces can be challenging.

Our work over the past two years has demonstrated that engagement with The Empower Project comes in all shapes and sizes: we have trialled programmes specifically focused on young people alongside running engagement events, and training sessions that have had attendees aged 30+.

Online and tech abuse impacts everyone, regardless of age.
Therefore, over the next two years our strategic approach will operate across three key areas: community, learn and influence. Within each area of our strategy, we will focus not on who, but on what people want from our charity.

Through a series of workshops and discussions, our board of trustees and co-directors have agreed to adopt this approach. By focusing on a thematic area, rather than age distinctions, we believe that we can reach more people living across Scotland.

Our strategy details our main objectives across our three key strands of work and what success will look like to hold us to account and to set achievable goals.

Whilst our approach has changed a little, the values of The Empower Project remain true, we will be **bold, proactive and accessible,** in all of the work that we do.

THEORY OF CHANGE + STRATEGY

COMMUNITY
Programmes
Empower Trustees
People

INFLUENCE
Working with
Government
Partnerships

LEARN
Training
Digital

COMMUNITY

The community strand of our work incorporates our people and programmes.

Our key objectives:

- We are a community-led charity that exists to create inclusive spaces for people to learn, resist and party.
- Our people embody and champion our values and are from diverse backgrounds.

Programmes

About: We run programmes to build communities and empower individuals to develop new skills, to network and to further their knowledge of tech abuse.

Action: Establish new programme ideas, secure funding and potentially recruit a part time staff member to manage the programme.

What does success look like?: The Empower Project runs another programme alongside Empower Trustees, managed by a part time staff member.

Empower Trustees

About: Empower Trustees began in 2019 as a programme to train and empower under-represented young women to take up positions as board members.

Action: Confirm funding for 2020/2021 programmes, recruit new participants, link in with other third sector organisations to secure board positions for graduates and support continued work to recruit young women to their boards.

What does success look like?: The Empower Project board is made up of graduates from the programme and/or graduates take up board positions within other organisations. The Empower Project is known as an organisation working within the feminist sector in Scotland to mentor young women onto boards.

People

About: Our board, staff and volunteers work hard to operate The Empower Project. We are currently going through a period of transition with both our board and staff. Our plan is to recruit a new co-director and new board members and we are keen to ensure the people who work within The Empower Project are reflective of the communities we operate in and want to create and represent.

Action: Audit, advertise, recruit.

What does success look like?: Two new board members and one new co-director hired by end of March 2021.

LEARN

The learn strand of our strategy focuses on our training offer and our digital spaces.

Our key objectives:
- We provide high-quality, current training and resources to practitioners, public-sector workers and teachers and students to inform and educate.
- Our website and digital presence is interactive, engaging and provides opportunity for learning.

Training

About: We offer a variety of training programmes which have predominantly taken place in person before COVID-19. We want to improve and further develop our training on four levels: expand the topics beyond what is currently offered, re-design the way in which resources are available online and in person, seek to co-design with young people and target specific groups to do training for.

Action: First, we want to improve and develop our training. Within our current training, we offer a wide range of topics including 'What is Tech Abuse', 'Being a Bystander', or 'Feminism 101'. What was prevalent within our collaboration during our strategy session was a need to extend our topics especially to online abuse and the law. We want our programmes to promote healthy relationships and showcase what consent means in an online context.

Second, re-design the way in which resources are available online and in person. We want to establish new flat rates at which our training resources are available and plan to develop resources for in person and virtual training and self-learning training materials too. Our training should reflect the needs of a variety of audiences within a post covid-19 context.

Third, seek to co-design with young people: We seek the voices and inputs of young people on how they want to talk about online abuse, how they want their parents to talk to them about online abuse, and how healthy relationships and consent can be promoted in the context of new technology.

Finally, target specific groups to do training for: we want to link up with various groups to provide a bridge between young people and adults within their social field. We aim to link up with teachers' unions and provide resources for parents to resonate the voices of young people and older generations.

What does success look like?: We have sought the voices of young people to inform our new topics and created new training resource packages for a variety of people. We have established online rights into existing programmes and have developed a new programme specifically targeting online rights and online consent.

Digital

About: Our digital presence - across our website, social media and other digital outputs - must be current and reflective of who we are as an organisation and what we stand for. We must be bold, proactive and create an inclusive space for our community to interact.

Action: Create a simple digital strategy document that will serve as a guide for our digital activity and post on social media and update our website regularly and consistently with high quality content. Recruit a number of digital/social media volunteers to support our digital output on a rotational basis and to consider giving the power back to the community for social media takeovers (which also takes pressure off internal capacity). Undertake an audit of our website, establishing what works, what doesn't and what needs to change. Undertake user research with members of our community to establish what they are looking for from The Empower Project's digital presence.

What does success look like?: Have a consistent digital presence that is support by volunteers and members of our community. Establish a new or refreshed website that reflects our digital audit and user feedback.

INFLUENCE

The influence strategy focuses on how we engage with Government and decision makers to create change.

Our key objectives:
- Using our community-led insight, we make change at a Government level.
- Establish new, diverse partnerships to engage new groups and promote opportunities and amplify voices.

Working with Government

About: Acknowledging that to achieve our vision of being the lead organisation in Scotland to educate on tech abuse we need to have the skills, reputation and knowledge to inform at all levels. We aim to be recognised by the government as the lead organisation on tech abuse; to be the source of knowledge on tech abuse; to represent our community; and to be considered a partner to inform on any issues to do with tech abuse in Scotland.

Action: Build on existing relationships with government and reach out to new contacts, talk about our updated strategy and policies.

What does success look like?: Being invited to any committees/cross party groups on relevant issues and being asked to consult on any relevant legislation.

Partnerships

About: We recognise that to achieve our vision on becoming the lead organisation in Scotland to educate on tech abuse, we will need to work in partnerships with a range of individuals, groups and organisations. At the heart of The Empower Project is the commitment to reflect the lived experiences and voices of those affected by tech abuse.

We understand that those most affected are the experts in their own experience. All of our work is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion and diversity which we view through the lens of intersectionality. In order to meaningfully engage and reflect **ALL** voices we will need to work with people who experience multiple barriers to having their voices and experiences heard and acted upon. As a result we are keen to work collaboratively with expert organisations. To support this we will tailor our approach to the needs of the individuals, groups and organisations we work with. As a result, we will offer tiered ways of engaging with our organisation with an emphasis on co-design and co-production.

Action: Build our profile externally with identified groups and organisations. Explore developing an expert advisory group (reflecting both professional/lived experience) to guide our work (could be organisation wide or possible project specific). Develop formal partnerships with diverse organisations to work on specific project/training based work.

What does success look like?: We have established formal partnerships with at least 2 organisations reflecting diverse voices (people who have experienced poverty, care experienced young people, people who are LGBTQI or POC). We are being approached by diverse organisations to consider partnership working. Our engagement offer is clear to Individuals and organisations on how they can engage with The Empower Project (project work, training, Empower trustees, advisory groups).
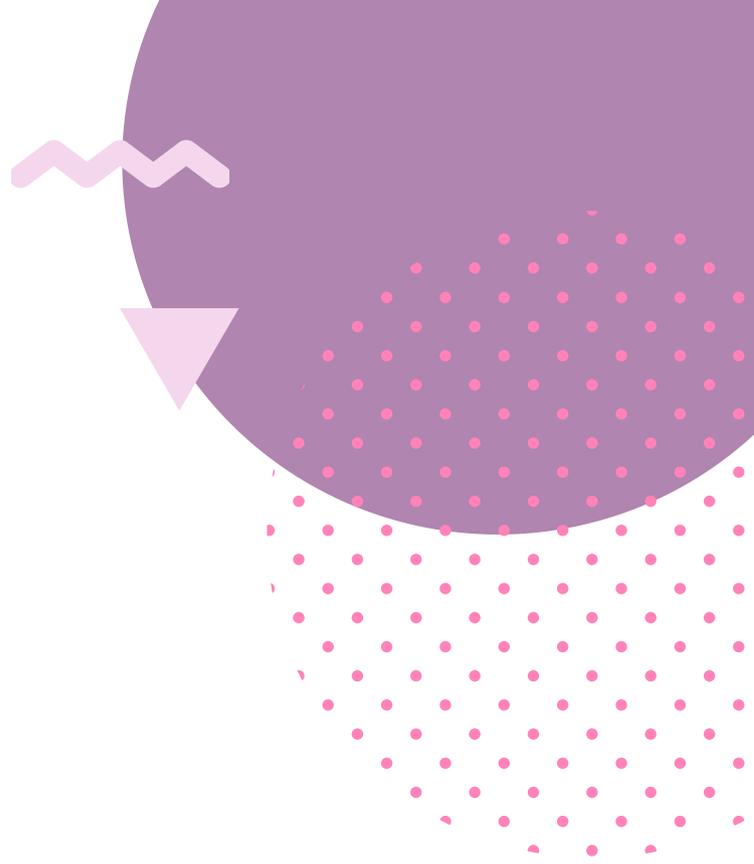
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