

Wish fulfillment experiences deliver enormous benefits for children with life-limiting conditions

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Credit: University of Hertfordshire

Increased confidence (70%), self-esteem (76%), feeling empowered to achieve life goals (73%) and developing new skills (61%) are the key impacts wish fulfillment experiences can provide to children and young adults living with life limiting conditions, The Muscle Help Foundation has found.

The study, conducted by the University of Hertfordshire, is the only known research in existence to robustly investigate and validate the transformational impacts that highly personalized dream fulfillment experiences, such as taking the controls of an aircraft and experiencing level flight, enjoying the thrill of a passenger ride in a high-performance racing car or meeting a sporting hero, can have on the lives of those living with conditions such as Muscular Dystrophy.

The study, which analyzed data from 82 individual wish-fulfillment experiences delivered by [The Muscle Help Foundation](#) covering a six-year period, as well as wider qualitative data from 152 participants analyzed to understand more specifically what it was about the experiences that was described as valuable or transformative, offers analysis on the impact of the experiences both from the perspective of the young person and the wider family. The study found that wish-fulfillment experiences:

- enhance quality-of-life
- allow recipients to realize their potential, develop new skills and grow confidence
- are important in facilitating ongoing engagement and preventing isolation
- provide meaningful time away from the day-to-day challenges associated with living with a life-limiting condition

The research also highlights the need for ongoing efforts to create a society where disabled young people can have access to recreational activities and can live fully as citizens in their communities without disability being a barrier.

Dr. Lizette Nolte, Principle Lecturer and researcher on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology programme at the University of Hertfordshire, said: "The research robustly demonstrates the positive and lasting impacts on

'confidence', '[self-esteem](#)' and the 'restoration of hope' for beneficiaries and their families of these personalized experiences, as well as helping to counter experiences of social exclusion. Such experiences provide accessibility and participation to anyone with a disability, especially children, in a way that is often not possible in everyday life."

Michael McGrath, CEO of The Muscle Help Foundation, said: "The whole ethos of the charity is rooted in the idea that well executed experiences that fulfill a young person's dreams and aspirations, can be powerfully transformative to their lives; and I speak from experience when it comes to that.

"Now that we have strong research that validates just how life enhancing such experiences are, it reinforces the need and urgency to deliver even more, so that the lives of more young people can be further enriched. Knowing that such interventions deliver hope, confidence, new skills and empowerment as well as joy, are immensely powerful impacts for children and [young adults](#) living with a disability."

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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