



# Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative

## Key Findings

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Children in Scotland and Staf  
September 2022

# 1 Introduction

In 2019, Children in Scotland and Staf (Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum) were appointed by the Life Changes Trust to evaluate the Home and Belonging initiative.

Home and Belonging is a fund that was originally managed by the Life Changes Trust aimed at supporting young people with care experience as they move on from care and into their own home.

In total, 11 projects were funded through the initiative. Ten of these projects ran across the three years of the fund and one project only ran in Year 1. Projects conducted a range of activity through the Home and Belonging initiative with the aim of identifying new and innovative approaches to providing support and improving outcomes in the ongoing journeys of young people with experience of care.

## Our evaluation had the following three key outcomes:

- Assessing the effectiveness of the initiative in increasing the wellbeing of young people with experience of care, particularly in relation to:
  - Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences of their home environment
  - Whether young people with experience of care have feelings of belonging and connection to their communities
  - Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences transitioning out of their care placements.
- Assessing the extent to which working in collaboration, using co-design principles, has led to culture change within and across organisations
- Determining whether or not there are particularly strong practices that have the potential to be adopted more widely.

This document lays out key findings from the report and highlights our recommendations.

 **If you want to find out more you can access the main report here.**

A number of the Home and Belonging funded projects are continuing to deliver work beyond the life of the evaluation. This will inevitably mean that further progress against project outcomes is made. Children in Scotland and Staf will continue to explore how this progress can be shared.

# 2 About the funded projects

Eleven projects were funded through the Home and Belonging initiative to support young people with experience of care. Ten of these were delivered across all three years of our evaluation. The eleventh project only ran for one year and finished in 2020. All projects have been testing new approaches to supporting young people with experience of care.



**Name of project:** Oor House  
**Project Lead:** Stirling Council  
**Location:** Stirling  
**Project End Date:** February 2023

The Oor House project provides a safe space for young people with experience of care to learn new skills and get support to prepare them to move into their own tenancy. The project is underpinned by relationships and works very closely with Stirling Council's Champions Board.



**Name of project:** Forever Homes  
**Project Lead:** Barnardo's Scotland  
**Location:** North Lanarkshire  
**Project End Date:** September 2022

Barnardo's Scotland supported young people with experience of care across North Lanarkshire to access a permanent home. The project provided support for 12 months to help people settle into their property and integrate into their local community.



**Name of project:** Home and Belonging  
**Project Lead:** Helm Training  
**Location:** Dundee  
**Project End Date:** April 2023

The Home and Belonging Project run by Helm and Hillcrest aimed to develop 20 - 30 new homes for young people with experience of care in Dundee who will be transitioning into their first tenancy. The project has been youth-led with young people with experience of care working on the staff team. Building work on the project has been delayed by the pandemic.



**Name of project:** MoneyPointr  
**Project Lead:** HomePointr  
**Location:** Edinburgh  
**Project End Date:** March 2020

The MoneyPointr project aimed to support young people with experience of care to manage their money and their new home. They are trying to help people become more independent so that they can manage their tenancy. This project centred on an app through which young people could get information and develop skills.



**Name of project:** Supporting our Young Adults  
**Project Lead:** LinkLiving  
**Location:** Edinburgh  
**Project End Date:** June 2022

LinkLiving provided a number of newly decorated and furnished houses for young people with experience of care to move in to. They have developed a model for doing this with young people to make sure it meets their needs, including support for young people to redecorate when they move in.

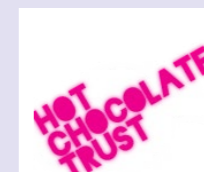
They also provide a range of support to the young people through a hub that the young people can access.



**Name of project:** Make it Your Own  
**Project Lead:** Impact Arts  
**Location:** Glasgow, Edinburgh, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire  
**Project End Date:** May 2022

Impact Arts worked with young people with experience of care to make items for their new home. The project supports people to make and upcycle items and furniture that suit their interests. It also aims to help people develop skills they could use in their own home.

They worked with young people in a mix of group and one-to-one settings and also provided support in other areas like health, wellbeing and employment.



**Name of project:** Home Fae Home  
**Project Lead:** Hot Chocolate Trust  
**Location:** Dundee  
**Project End Date:** December 2022

Hot Chocolate is working with young people with experience of care to redesign the space where they have their sessions. They are trying to explore how they can make a physical space that can help young people deal with trauma and stress. They are working with a designer to develop the space and the young people are also leading on some action research.



**Name of project:** Home and Belonging  
**Project Lead:** University of the Highlands and Islands  
**Location:** Shetland  
**Project End Date:** June 2022

The University of the Highlands and Islands worked with Who Cares? Scotland to deliver an arts-based research project. The project explored/will continue to explore the concept of home and belonging for young people with experience of care in the context of island communities. They aim to use the ideas developed to shape future services and spaces.

The project worked with a range of creative practitioners including filmmakers, poets and writers.



**Name of project:** Home and Belonging  
**Project Lead:** Quarriers  
**Location:** Renfrewshire  
**Project End Date:** March 2023

Based around a life coaching approach, the project aimed to support young people to make their houses feel like home. All the young people involved in the project receive £2,000 to spend on their home and on accessing support.

The project has also brought together a collaborative of organisations who support young people with experience of care to make sure the young people have access to a range of support and opportunities.



**Name of project:** HasAnswers  
**Project Lead:** Highland Council  
**Location:** Highlands and Islands  
**Project End Date:** December 2022

The HasAnswers project brought together Highland Council's Champions Board and the Calman Trust to develop an app that will support young people with experience of care. Young people will be able to access information and request support through the app. They are also able to receive face-to-face support at Clachnaharry, where the project runs group and one-to-one sessions.



**Name of project:** My Place  
**Project Lead:** East Lothian Council  
**Location:** East Lothian  
**Project End Date:** July 2022

The My Place project purchased a number of properties for young people with experience of care in East Lothian. Each flat had space for two young people with experience of care and one peer flatmate who would provide support and advice. The houses are managed by East Lothian Council, and housing support is given by the Rock Trust.

A care-experienced Research and Link Worker was recruited in Year 1 to support the set-up of the project and co-produce a Home and Belonging Strategy for Care Experienced Young People in East Lothian.

# 3 Key findings

**Our evaluation of three years of the Home and Belonging Initiative has shown a range of positive ways in which young people with experience of care can be supported as they move into their first home.**

The initiative has been broadly successful against the stated outcomes that we have outlined above. However, we must recognise that progress across all three outcomes has been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The funded projects should be applauded for how they have adapted during the pandemic and continued to deliver vital support to young people with experience of care in extremely challenging circumstances.

Our findings have shown that, with the right support, young people with experience of care can have access to safe and welcoming homes and can engage with their local community in positive and fulfilling ways. We have also seen how positive approaches to tackling challenges can help young people maintain tenancies as they leave care.

We have identified a number of key areas of success and progress below.

## Relationships

The Home and Belonging initiative has emphasised the importance of meaningful relationship-based approaches and shown their value within a housing context. We have seen from young people and staff, the impact that forming positive relationships has on young people's ability to engage with services and to maintain tenancies. Young people appeared to value having a pool of consistent staff and being able to access support throughout the day, seven days a week, rather than at allotted days and times.

In particular, peer flatmate and life coaching approaches appeared to work well in supporting relationships within a housing context. You can find out more about these in the main report.

## Trauma informed practice

We have found a number of projects taking innovative approaches to embedding trauma-informed practice and policies.

An 'elastic tolerance' method appears to provide a trauma-informed approach to supporting people to maintain their tenancy. It allows people to make mistakes and receive support with less fear of eviction. Punitive approaches to evictions and a lack of support for young people mean their wider experiences are often not acknowledged or understood. We believe more supportive approaches could help more young people to maintain tenancies.

We have also seen several projects build trauma-informed work into their support and supervisions and wider staff reflective practice. This has provided space for staff to consider the impact of how they work and whether they are working in trauma-informed ways.

## Housing quality and availability

We heard how there was a lack of appropriate housing stock across several areas of Scotland. It was also clear that without the funded projects there would have been examples of people moving into housing that lacked basic essentials (properly furnished, white goods etc). Furthermore, the report has highlighted the extent to which housing policy does not take account of the impact of trauma and the wider impact that experience of care can have.

Moving forwards there must be a wider range of housing options for young people as they leave care. Housing must have the essentials and be in a decent condition when people move in. Young people should also have choice about where they live, the opportunity to personalise their space as well as have pets.

## Financial support

Several projects ring-fenced budget to provide direct financial support (e.g up to £2000) to young people with experience of care to decorate or furnish their house or to access resources in the community. This has supported people to take pride in their home and to engage with their local community and feel a sense of stability. It has also provided a sense of agency and control as young people have been able to choose the things that they want to buy with their money.

## Co-design

We heard about some positive examples of co-design including involving young people being involved in choosing and designing new spaces for project activity and with young people being involved in recruitment processes. However, although there were many positive examples of young people having their voices heard, it is clear there is still work to do embed this at planning and strategic level.

The University of Highlands and Islands and Who Cares? Scotland project had particular success in this area. It focussed heavily on supporting young people to engage with their corporate parents. This has resulted in changes to the Corporate Parenting Board. This group now works directly with the project's Shetland Crew group to set the Board's agenda and identify relevant people to attend meetings. The name of the group has also been changed to 'Meids'<sup>1</sup> based on the work with the Home and Belonging project.

<sup>1</sup> 'Meids is a Shetland dialect word for a method of navigation at sea, at the suggestion of the #ShetlandCrew' (UHI Monitoring Form)

This demonstrates how significant changes in governance and approach can ensure children and young people views and best interest can be placed at the centre of planning and decision making. It shows specifically how this can be done to support feelings of home and belonging, by giving young people a sense of control over the area and to feel like they are heard.

It is clear that further emphasis needs to be given to co-design approaches and investment in the workforce is required to upskill them to deliver it.

## Space in the community

Across several projects including Stirling, Highland and Hot Chocolate we have seen how they have begun to develop physical hubs for young people with experience of care to access in the community. These have provided places to learn, socialise and are important to feel a sense of home and belonging. They have also importantly provided opportunities for young people with experience of care to engage with support workers and decision makers.

The projects have highlighted the importance of community spaces for supporting young people with experience of care to feel a sense of home and belonging. Staff and young people told us how they felt ownership of these spaces and it helped them connect with people with shared experiences and friendships with peers.

We would encourage those working with young people with experience of care to consider whether similar approaches could be taken forward in their area.

## Keeping The Promise

Much of what we have found out across the three years of our evaluation activity aligns with work currently taking place to the deliver The Promise. The Home and Belonging projects have helped to progress work in key priority areas of Plan 21-24, particularly supporting the workforce, building capacity and planning.<sup>2</sup>

However, we also know that to date implementation of The Promise has been challenging, with systemic change proving difficult. Our evaluation has shown that systemic issues relating to planning permission, policies that are not responsive to trauma, and a lack of access to appropriate housing stock have impeded the work of the Home and Belonging funded projects. This further highlights the systemic barriers which can stifle progress towards improving outcomes for young people with experience of care.

Our findings also continue to highlight the need for further urgency at all levels to implement The Promise and meaningfully improve outcomes for young people with experience of care.

<sup>2</sup> <https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24-pdf-spread.pdf>

## Funding

Through our work we have also seen the impact of flexible, longer term funding arrangements.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, many Home and Belonging projects have received funding extensions and have been able to adapt their delivery plans to the evolving situation. This has been supported by the Life Changes Trust and this flexibility from the funder has been highly valued by projects throughout our evaluation. The approach has allowed the projects to provide effective crisis support to young people, trial new approaches and take risks. Adapting in this manner is not always possible with stricter funding criteria.

Longer term funding would also be a key way to embed relationship-based work by allowing organisations to offer longer term, more secure contracts and maintain staff.

Funders and commissioners should learn from this example and consider how they can implement more flexible approaches to funding and how they can implement longer funding cycles.



# 4 Recommendations

## National decision-makers

### National decision-makers should:

- Embed the principles of The Promise into national policy, in particular ensuring this supports ongoing, meaningful relationships
- Take steps to ensure appropriate housing stock is available across all areas of the country
- Consider how national policy and guidance can be used to ensure housing is of high quality and that all housing has access to basic essentials when people move in
- Also consider how national legislation, policy and guidance can support people to access secure tenancies as they leave care
- Consider options to increase income and financial security of young people with experience of care once they leave. This should include giving consideration to the value of a Guaranteed Income for Care Leavers and mechanisms to implement this
- Develop specific training and learning offers to support workforce knowledge of co-design
- Increase the pace of action to meet the recommendations contained within The Promise and consider how the learning from Home and Belonging can support this.

## Local decision-makers

### Local decision-makers should:

- Ensure there is a diverse range of housing options within your local authority
- Ensure housing options available are of high quality and have basic essentials when people move in
- Consider how you can embed elastic tolerance approaches to housing policy to ensure trauma-informed options
- Ensure that trauma-informed, relationship-based approach is available for young people with experience of care as they move into their first home
- Ensure that clear, accurate information on housing options is actively disseminated to young people with experience of care through a range of networks
- Develop collaborative approaches across the local authority including:
  - Ensuring close working practices across local authority departments, particularly between social work and housing departments.
  - Developing close relationships between third sector providers and throughcare and aftercare teams to ensure appropriate support for young people as they transition from care
  - Developing shared practice networks around housing support for young people with experience of care

- Learn from the approach taken in Shetland to reform their corporate parenting board to ensure meaningful opportunities for participation in decision-making for young people with experience of care
- Consider how spaces can be set up locally for young people with experience of care that are explicitly focussed on connection and belonging. The purpose and design of spaces should be led by young people who will use them.

## Practitioners and organisations working with young people with experience of care

### Practitioners and organisations working with young people with experience of care should:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of housing options and support locally and discuss these with young people with experience of care as they approach the stage of moving to their first home
- Embed relationship-based practice in your work by ensure appropriate CPD opportunities are available. Also ensure your service delivery model embeds relationship-based approaches by offering longer term contracts and by utilising the following principles
  - Young person-led
  - A range of relationships available
  - Seven days a week, throughout the day
- Develop trauma-informed approaches including embedding this in support and supervision for staff – ensure they have appropriate training and knowledge
- Embed opportunities for meaningful co-design into organisational housing policies.
- Contribute to local networks and share good practice
- Consider how to develop workforce knowledge and understanding of co-design and embed this within day-to-day life of your organisation
- Consider how you can offer longer term contracts to staff to support relationships with young people.

### Further Information

If you want to find out more information about our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative, please contact [pppteam@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:pppteam@childreninscotland.org.uk)