



Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative

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Acknowledgements

We would like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people who have supported our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative. Firstly, thank you to all the funded projects for accommodating our work during an extremely challenging period and also for supporting us to adapt our approaches.

Thanks also to our evaluation panel from Year 1. The work carried out by Chloe, Fraser and Siobhan has informed our final analysis and identified key issues that matter to people with experience of care.

Finally, thank you to the Life Changes Trust for flexibility and support in delivering the evaluation over the three year period. This has allowed us to adapt to the ever-changing situation with the Covid-19 pandemic.

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.

The Life Changes Trust was a charity set up in 2013 with a National Lottery endowment of £50 million. The organisation ran for nine years, closing in March 2022. Its work supported three main groups: young people with experience of being in care, people living with dementia, and unpaid carers of those with dementia. The Home and Belonging initiative focuses on young people with experience of care. The Life Changes Trust has now ceased operating, with its functions being transferred over to a number of legacy organisations.

1.1 What is 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 projects ran during the three years of the fund and one project only ran in Year 1. A range of project activity was conducted through the Home and Belonging initiative with the aim of identifying new and innovative approaches to providing support and improving care leavers' experiences. We provide more detail on the Home and Belonging funded projects on page 8.

The initiative aimed to:

- Increase wellbeing for young people with experience of care
- Create positive experiences of home
- Create feelings of belonging and connection in the community
- Support positive experiences of transitioning from care placements.

Children in Scotland's evaluation of the Home and Belonging initiative was designed to draw learning and evidence of impact from across the 11 projects.

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.

1.2 Final evaluation

This report brings together evidence from all three years of our evaluation of the Home and Belonging initiative and builds on interim reports submitted to the Life Changes Trust in October 2020 and November 2021. Over the first two years of the project the evaluation team developed a thematic framework for analysing the impact of the fund. This report evaluates the initiative in relation to the key project outcomes and provides recommendations for policy and practice

Lived experience has been embedded throughout the evaluation. In Year 1, we were supported by a team of three peer evaluators. This group helped shape our thematic framework and their views continue to be represented in this final report. In Year 3, evaluation activity has been supported by a Project Assistant with experience of care. These were all paid positions that allowed people to develop new skills and experiences as well as providing valuable support and input into the evaluation. The analysis of the peer evaluators in Year 1 has also directly informed our final evaluation.

1.3 Context

Scottish Government statistics show that 14,458 children were in care or 'looked after' in Scotland on 31 July 2020.¹

We know that young people with care experience can be resilient, ambitious and vibrant individuals. Unfortunately, while outcomes have been slowly improving, the data tells us that many still have poorer educational outcomes than other young people their age. They are also more likely to end up unemployed, homeless or in prison.

Adults who work with young people with care experience have been particularly concerned about the impact that 'transitioning' from care can have.^{2,3,4}

Scotland has a history of progressive policy and legislation in relation to housing and homelessness and more recently has significantly improved laws relating to care leavers. Recent policy developments such as Staying Put Scotland, Local Authority Housing Protocols and the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway have seen the care sector come together to create change for young people.^{5,6} There has also been the development of three local house projects in East Dunbartonshire, Fife and Fife.⁷

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2019-20/pages/3/>

² <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Publications/Publication-3908.aspx>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2017-18/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-outcomes-looked-children-2018-19/>

⁵ <https://www.rocktrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Youth-Homelessness-Prevention-Pathway-Care-Leavers.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.carereview.scot/>

⁷ <https://thehouseproject.org/local-house-projects>

Despite this, youth homelessness remains high and continues to cast a shadow over our ambitions for young people.⁸

We know it is vitally important that young people are supported to leave care when they are ready and that the ability to keep their relationships with their care givers can help support them through this transition period.⁹

The Life Changes Trust identified the positive impact high quality housing can have on people as they leave care, and the importance of young people developing connections within their community. The Life Changes Trust believes support with these issues can increase young people's chances of good health and wellbeing and help them to have better experiences as they leave care.

The Home and Belonging initiative was set up to help organisations and young people develop innovative housing and community-based projects to support care leavers. It has provided £3 million across 11 projects to work directly with young people with care experience to find new ways to create a sense of home and belonging.

Covid-19

The Home and Belonging initiative, as well as our evaluation, has operated almost entirely in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected the funded projects, our evaluation work and the lives of young people with experience of care.

Organisations that work with young people with experience of care such as Staf and Who Cares? Scotland have highlighted the range of ways that Covid-19 has affected young people in this community.^{10,11}

They have identified issues such as isolation due to social distancing measures and poorer mental health as young people struggled to access support from services and family or friends. Organisations also identified increasing financial issues due to delays in Universal Credit or insecure employment. Many of these issues were also highlighted in engagement we carried out with the funded projects in Year 1 of the evaluation.

Because of pandemic-related challenges, some projects have experienced significant delays in setting up and delivering their activities and have been granted extensions to continue to deliver their work beyond the period of our evaluation.

⁸ <https://www.rocktrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/YHPP-4-All-YP-Digital-Version-FINAL.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/supporting-positive-relationships-children-young-people-experience-care>

¹⁰ <https://www.staf.scot/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9822be5f-8855-4e7d-be08-ab380962f4ab>

¹¹ <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Summary-version-of-Covid-19-Recovery-Report-Feb-21.pdf>

Recent policy change

The Home and Belonging Initiative has also taken in the context of increasing focus on the work of The Promise Scotland. The Promise Scotland has been set up to deliver the recommendations from the Independent Care Review, to make sure the needs of young people with experience of care are met and that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

The work of The Promise Scotland is taking place between 2021 and 2030, and this activity will be broken down into three-year periods. In 2021, The Promise Scotland released its Change Programme One report, outlining the first three-year plan (covering 2021-2024).¹²

Publication of our final report coincides with an increased level of focus on a Guaranteed Income for Care Leavers. In February 2022, the Welsh Government announced that it would provide a guaranteed income of £19,200 per year for all care leavers aged 18-20.¹³ In Scotland organisations such as Staf and Aberlour have been working with young people with experience of care to consider whether such an approach should be taken in Scotland.

¹² <https://thepromise.scot/change-programme-one-pdf.pdf>

¹³ <https://gov.wales/wales-pilots-basic-income-scheme#:~:text=From%201%20July%202022%2C%20more,the%20transition%20to%20adult%20life>

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.



Homepointr

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: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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 Methodology

This section provides a brief overview of how we gathered data across all three years of our evaluation of the Home and Belonging initiative.

We adapted our approach to data collection in response to Covid-19 restrictions and to ensure meaningful involvement from young people with care experience. The findings presented in this report draw evidence from across the three years of the evaluation, bringing together data from all the data collection methods outlined below.

If you are interested in finding out more information regarding the detail of our methodology, please contact pppteam@childreninscotland.org.uk.

Year 1: 2019 - 2020

In Year 1 we worked with an evaluation panel of three young people with experience of care. They worked with staff from Children in Scotland and Staf to explore the 11 different projects.

To gather information, the evaluation panel used the following methods:

- National Stakeholder Interviews: April – July 2020
- Coronavirus Focus Groups with staff from funded projects: May 2020
- Funded Project Staff Interviews: July – August 2020
- Activity Packs for young people: August – September 2020.

The Year 1 evaluation plans were significantly affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It was not possible to deliver in-person evaluation activity so our engagement work took place online, via telephone or through using an activity pack.

Project team members delivering in-person session at Impact Arts



Year 2: 2020 - 2021

In recognition of the challenges many projects were facing as a result of the pandemic, Children in Scotland Staf took a sensitive approach to evaluation activity in Year 2. As such, our direct evaluation activity with the funded projects was limited.

Three main data collection methods were used in Year 2:

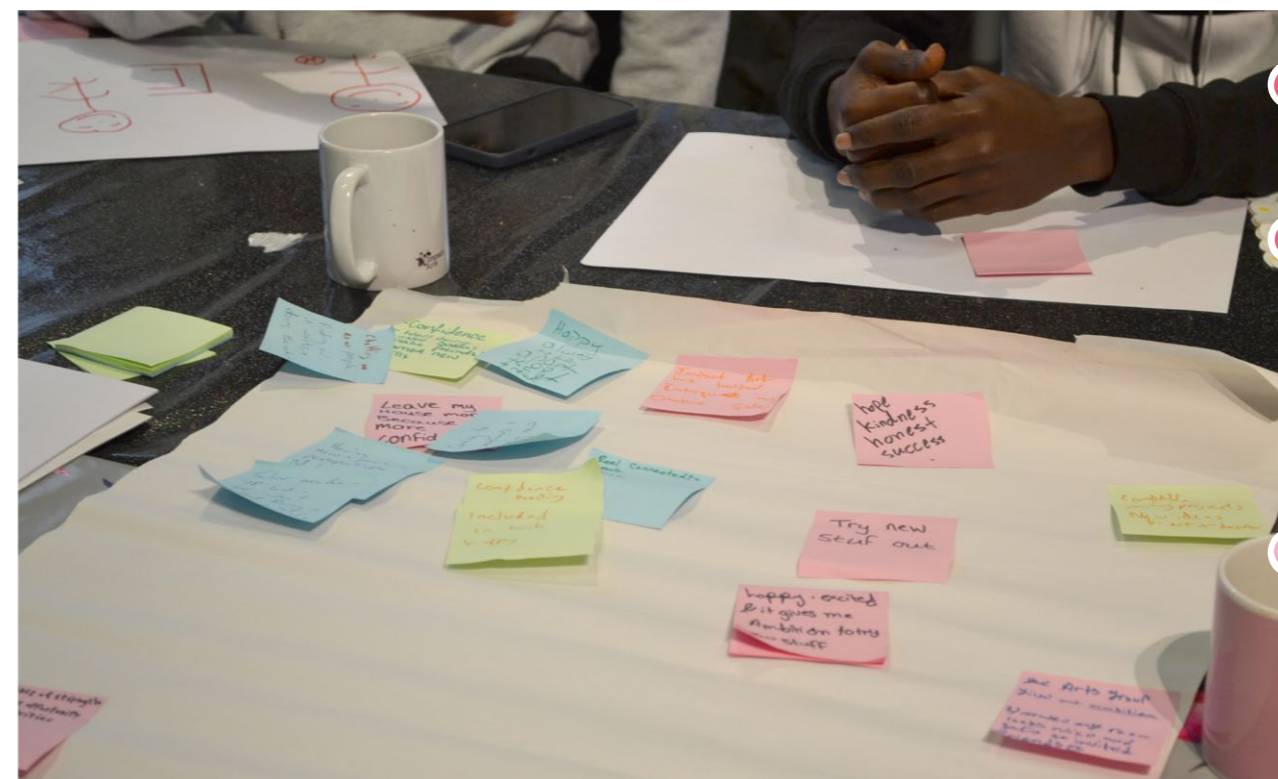
- Year 2 Monitoring Forms: April 2020 – March 2021
- Photo Diaries: January 2021 – June 2021
- Postcard activity for young people: April 2021 – June 2021.

Year 3: 2021 - 2022

As restrictions eased in Year 3, we were able to plan some face-to-face evaluation activity with the young people involved in the projects. As we were unable to visit all the funded projects, a number of other opportunities were provided to allow young people to engage with the evaluation. We continued our analysis of the project monitoring forms and ran sessions for staff to reflect on the projects over the three years.

- Year 3 Monitoring Forms: April 2021 – March 2022
- Engagement with young people: May – July 2022
 - In-person sessions
 - Activity Pack
 - Survey
- Staff Engagement Sessions: June 2022.

Flip chart paper from in-person session at Impact Arts



Case studies

We have created four case studies which share stories from across the Home and Belonging initiative. These case studies were written by the project team during Year 2 and Year 3 and have been based on information provided by staff and young people at the funded projects.

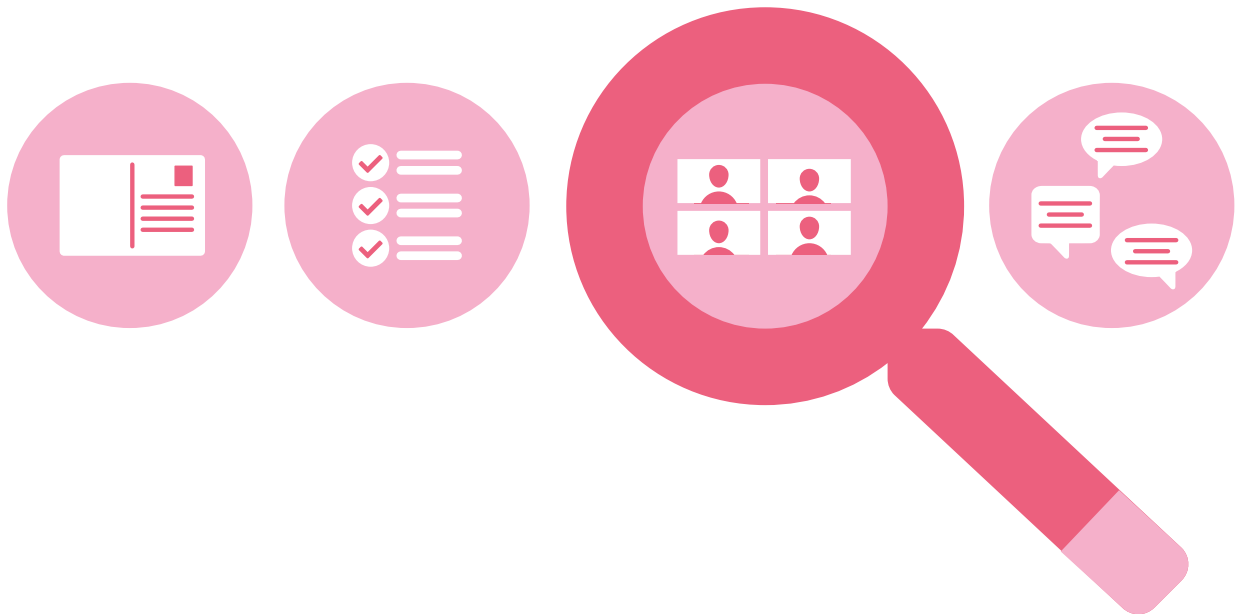
They have been compiled into a separate document which can be accessed here: childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Home-and-Belonging-Case-Studies.pdf

Limitations

Our evaluation has had a number of key limitations. Firstly, as we have previously reflected, several projects have secured extensions beyond the life of our evaluation. As such we have not been able to give a full assessment of the initiative as a whole.

The pandemic has also affected our work greatly. We had originally intended to visit all 11 funded projects to conduct face-to-face evaluation activity. Due to the pandemic, we have only visited two projects in person. As we have adapted our methods to respond to the pandemic, we have become more reliant on self-reporting. Although we have worked hard to gather the views of young people accessing the funded projects and received some important information about their experiences, our evaluation activity has been more limited than we would have hoped for.

Despite this, we are confident in our approach and believe we have an accurate picture of the fund as a whole.



4 Participant data

Across the three years of our evaluation, projects have had a range of ways of sharing their views and experiences with us.

This section details levels of engagement with the evaluation across each of the three years. We have not provided final totals for engagement as it is highly likely that we heard from the same people at different stages of the project.

Year 1

Coronavirus focus groups with funded project staff: May 2020

We heard from 11 staff from 10 of the funded projects as part of three small group interviews we conducted looking at the impact of coronavirus on the different projects.

Funded project staff interviews: July – August 2020

We conducted videoconference interviews with staff at all 11 funded projects across 13 interviews. In total, we heard from 41 members of staff involved in the projects at this stage. The peer researchers led nine of these interviews.

Activity Packs for young people: August – September 2020

We received submissions to the creative activity from eight funded projects. We followed up with all sites but did not receive any responses. In total, 37 young people completed these activities.

Year 2

Year 2 Monitoring Forms

All 10 funded projects submitted monitoring forms to the Life Changes Trust in Year 2.

Nine of these were annual monitoring forms and one was a six-month report as the project started at a different time. Children in Scotland and Staf conducted a thematic analysis of monitoring forms from all 10 funded projects.

Photo Diaries: January 2021 – June 2021

Six projects submitted photo diaries across the period of the evaluation. In total, we received 55 photo diary submissions.

Postcards: April 2021 – May 2021

We received 21 completed postcard activities from young people in total. Postcards were received from six different funded projects. Several projects also got in touch to confirm that they would not be able to take part in the postcard activity due to situations that took priority at their project.

Year 3

Year 3 Monitoring Forms: April 2021 – March 2022

In Year 3 we received monitoring forms from all 10 projects. Nine of these monitoring forms were end of year or end of project forms. One was a six-month monitoring form for a project on a different reporting cycle.

Engagement with young people: May – July 2022

In total 23 young people engaged in the final year of our evaluation.

Thirteen were involved in our direct visits. Three completed the activity pack, while seven completed an online survey.

Staff engagement sessions: June 2022

We delivered three separate engagement sessions with staff in Year 3 of the evaluation. In total, 11 staff participated in these sessions from eight projects.

5 Findings and progress against outcomes

This section explores what we have found across the three years of our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative.

It is worth reiterating at this stage that many 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 these outcomes is made. Children in Scotland and Staf plan to continue to discuss how this progress can be shared.

It is also important to recognise that many projects were aiming to shift how services were delivered and evidence of the impact of this will take time to be realised.

However, despite these limitations we are confident in our assessment of progress against the outcomes at this stage. Each outcome includes an assessment of progress and identifies findings under key themes

5.1 Outcome 1: Assessing the effectiveness of the initiative in increasing the wellbeing of young people with experience of care, particularly in relation to:

1.1) Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences of their home environment

1.2) Whether young people with experience of care have feelings of belonging and connection to their communities

1.3) Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences transitioning out of their care placements.

Our evidence shows clear progress towards supporting the wellbeing of young people with experience of care. This has been noticeable across all three sub-sections of this outcome. We have seen how the funded projects have provided significant support to young people and improved their wellbeing.

We have seen how young people with experience of care have been able to have positive experiences of their home environment and experience feelings of belonging and connection to their communities. This has been evident across all three years of our evaluation activity.

Increasingly, we have seen how young people with experience of care are having positive experiences of transitioning out of their care placements. This has become more apparent in the final year of our evaluation.

Ultimately, we conclude that there has been positive progress against this outcome. However, we also must highlight that the Covid-19 pandemic has limited the impact of the Home and Belonging initiative. We have little doubt that if the funded projects had been operating in a different context, that they would have made further impact against Outcome 1.

Below we have detailed progress against a number of key themes for this outcome. This provides a clearer illustration of progress.

Health, wellbeing and relationships

Supporting health, wellbeing and relationships has been a key focus for all the Home and Belonging projects. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought this area into an even sharper focus with projects providing a higher level of crisis support than was originally intended within the aims of Home and Belonging. Projects have adapted their approaches accordingly and ensured they could meet the needs of young people.

We have seen evidence of projects supporting young people to access specialist health and wellbeing services and others providing more holistic support for their wellbeing. Young people involved in the projects have highlighted how this support has made them feel more confident and motivated. They have also spoken about how it has put them in a better position to move into their new home. Ultimately, our findings confirm the benefit of having different support for different people that can be accessed based on their needs.



Young people and staff visit IKEA with Impact Arts



Two young people hugging lambs on a relative's farm

“
Doing Make it your Own has really made me more motivated to keep the house nice. It feels like home now.
Young Person, Monitoring Forms”

“
A safe space where there are people who I trust and care about me or where I can feel safe to think and be quiet. No judgement or questions just a cuddle and they are there if I need them.
Young Person, Survey”

“
Brought me out my shell more – more motivated to do stuff in general outside of the house. In quarantine I was unmotivated, not even getting out of bed some days. Now I'm excited to get up and start the day, and feel like I did before lockdown ever happened. I feel more like me again.
Young Person, photo diary”

There is also evidence from across all projects of young people forming meaningful relationships with staff and with other young people. The importance of supporting, trusting relationships and the impact of relationship-based practice has been well documented.¹⁴ Through the Home and Belonging projects, we have seen how relationships have supported young people with experience of care to discuss issues they are facing and identify the best course of action. We have also seen the projects increase people's opportunities to socialise with peers and in some cases the support helping foster positive, ongoing relationships with family. Many young people told us about positive group dynamics or seeing their projects as a second family.

“
All the staff talk to you – makes you feel more confident
Young Person, Monitoring Form”

“
It is like a family – people get me
Young Person, creative activity”

“
My favourite part of the project was that it led to communication with others in the group workshops
Young Person, Monitoring Forms”

¹⁴ <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/supporting-positive-relationships-children-young-people-experience-care>

Ultimately, we have no doubt that the resource invested through Home and Belonging has improved experiences of their home environment for many young people who have accessed the projects, and put them in a better position to maintain their tenancies, and in the longer term, transition from care.

“
It's been really good for us, we are working as a team (with her partner) to get the house nice instead of just staying in bed or watching telly all day, now we are looking at what we can do to make it nice.
Young Person, Monitoring Form”

“
I've struggled for years with the idea of a home and safe space, but I am trying my hardest to get into a healthier mindset and here was me happy to be home after a big abroad trip. Didn't think I'd be this happy to see my house but we have made such an inclusive family who have helped me through so much!
Young Person, Activity Pack”

We have also been interested to see how some projects have ended up working with unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking young people and adapted their approaches to this group. This was not an expected area of work for the initiative, but it has been positive to see how projects have been able to tailor approaches to suit different needs.

Skills, learning and employment

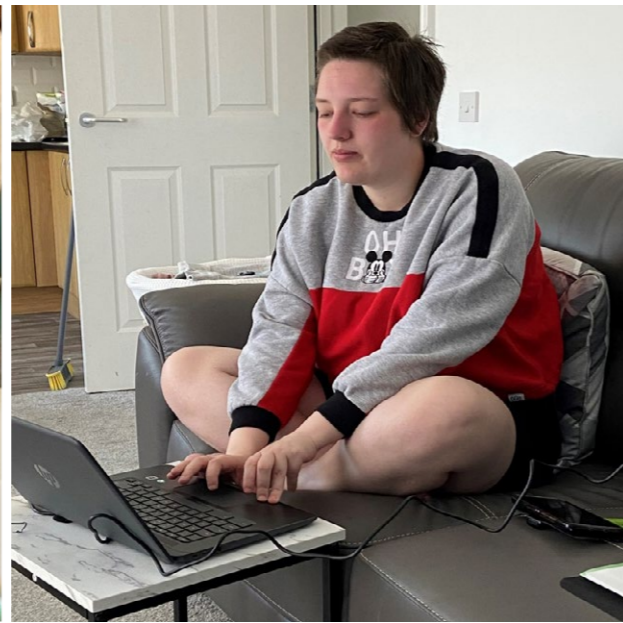
Across all three years of our evaluation we have seen how the projects have supported people to develop their skills, access learning opportunities and receive support to get into employment.

Some projects have provided support for people to develop independent living skills that will help them in the immediate future as they move into their new home. This has included cooking, cleaning and budgeting skills.

Several projects have also supported people to develop their creative skills, such as gardening or upcycling furniture, which have helped young people to personalise and have greater 'ownership' of their homes. Furthermore, creative writing projects have supported people to understand themselves and what they want in life. Getting support to work on this has improved people's confidence and self-belief and has helped their progress in school or college.



Young person learns how to make décor for their house



Young person sits with laptop

“
I forgot how creative I can be and Make It Your Own [MIYO] has reminded me of my skills. MIYO has exceeded my expectations.
 Young Person, Monitoring Form”

“
Starting to do gardening started as more of a hobby, then I realised I can make money from something I enjoy so much. That's been great for my mental health. It's so fun and therapeutic and something I really enjoy - I have the motivation to do it since doing MIYO. I hope to someday get some funding to continue a career as being a self-employed gardener/landscaper.
 Young Person, Monitoring Forms”

We have also seen young people accessing support to get into employment, including receiving help with writing CVs, taking part in mock interviews and doing career-matching activities. Young people have also received support to identify, access and engage with college courses. Longer term, it is hoped such activity will support people to access stable employment and ultimately should put them in a better position to maintain tenancies.

“
The MIYO staff helped me create my CV and I didn't know I had half the qualifications I had, I had done much better than I knew. Uploading the CV got me an interview.
 Young Person, Monitoring Forms”

Several projects identified the benefits of providing practical learning opportunities, offering young people the chance to learn through doing, often in group environments where young people could build friendships at the same time as learning. One project found that class-based learning opportunities were not as well attended or received as practical sessions. We have also seen how urban outdoor opportunities worked well during Covid. While this may not work for all young people, it is important to consider how a range of opportunities are available to people to access learning and skill development in ways that work for them.

Home environment

Supporting people to access a high-quality home environment has been a key success across the three years of the Home and Belonging initiative and has positively benefitted the wellbeing of young people assessing the projects. Young people have been able to access secure homes with support from staff at the funded projects to settle in and make their own mark on their home environment. Several projects have provided financial support for people to buy new household furniture or items which has given them choice, agency and control about their surroundings. Others have worked with young people to decorate and furnish their flats. This support has helped young people to value their tenancies and emotionally connect with their living spaces.

“
My home ... makes me feel safe, relaxed and comfortable. Home and Belonging has made me realise what a home actually is. It's not just a building, but it's how it makes you feel and about the good memories that you make.
 Young Person, Activity Pack”



Young person's bedroom



Living room with Christmas décor



A piece of upcycled furniture

“

I am happier to have people coming in now because it's more comfortable and we have stuff to do now

Young Person, postcard activity

”

In some cases, young people would have been moving into unsuitable accommodation (eg poorly furnished, lacking white goods etc) and support from the funded projects has helped to tackle this. Our engagement work with project staff highlighted that there is a lack of appropriate housing stock in many areas of the country. The importance of having a good home environment was highlighted as a key factor in helping young people move forwards positively.

“

I think for me the key success... is the impact that it has on somebody's home environment and the thing it allows them to then go on and do once the home environment is dealt with and not the big stressful issue in their life anymore

Staff Member, Staff Interviews

”

As we have identified, young people have received support to upcycle furniture for their new home to help personalise it and put their own style onto it. We have also seen how young people have been able to decorate their homes in the way they want to. Many projects told us how having opportunities to decorate their house themselves has increased young people's ownership pride in their living space and strengthened their sense of home and belonging.

“

I put things up in my house – I am confident to have people round as I have nice furniture

Young Person, Direct Engagement

”

A key success in this area has been where projects have given people access to an individual budget to buy new furniture or items that they needed. This has given people choice and financial freedom to get the things for their house that matter to them. This demonstrates the impact that having access to an income stream can have for young people with care experience. It also shows that, with the right support, young people can be trusted to make positive decisions for themselves.

Despite the successes experienced, it is important to recognise the impact of the pandemic on how effectively the Home and Belonging initiative has been able to support young people to experience quality home environments. The impact of Covid delayed the authorisation of planning permission on some projects and adversely affected building work at others. It also slowed down various other processes (eg sign-off of HMOs, SSSC registration), which has affected how many young people with experience of care have been able to move into new homes.

Belonging and stability

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a big impact on how much projects have been able to focus on work to support young people with experience of care to settle into the communities that they live in. Many community-based resources have been closed due to government guidance and this had impacted on what people could engage with in their local areas.

However, it is also clear that there has been a range of positive work on this theme. We have heard about projects supporting young people to move from their homes when people felt unsafe and helping them to identify new housing options. We have also seen projects provide a range of support to young people to build and maintain relationships with neighbours.

Some projects have supported young people to find out what resources they can access in their community and meet and connect with other people locally who can support them to feel at home. Our evaluation activity has highlighted the importance of people and relationships to young people's feelings of belonging and stability.

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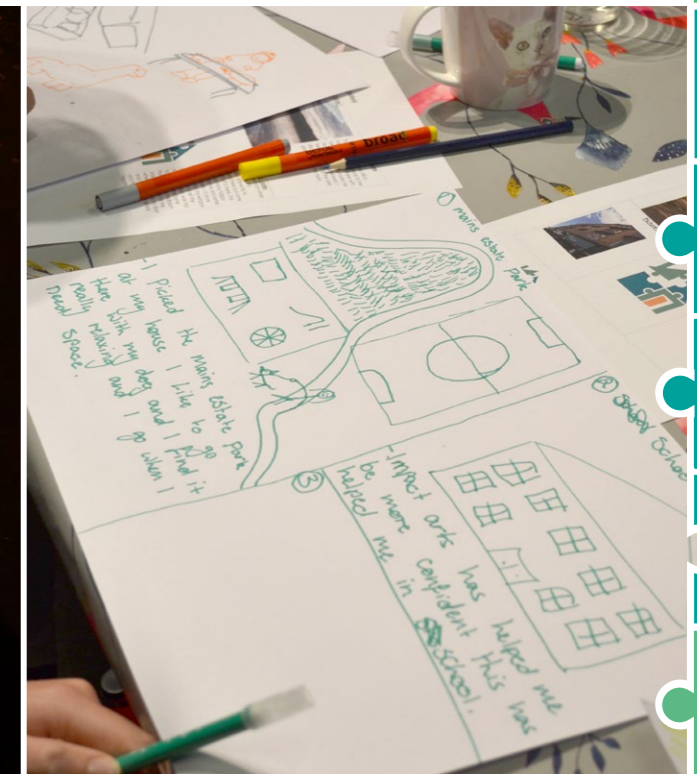
This is my house. I have recently moved in and feel very cosy when I go inside. It's all new ... but I already feel like I'm at home, I feel welcomed into the community and get on with the neighbours very well

Young Person, Activity Pack

”



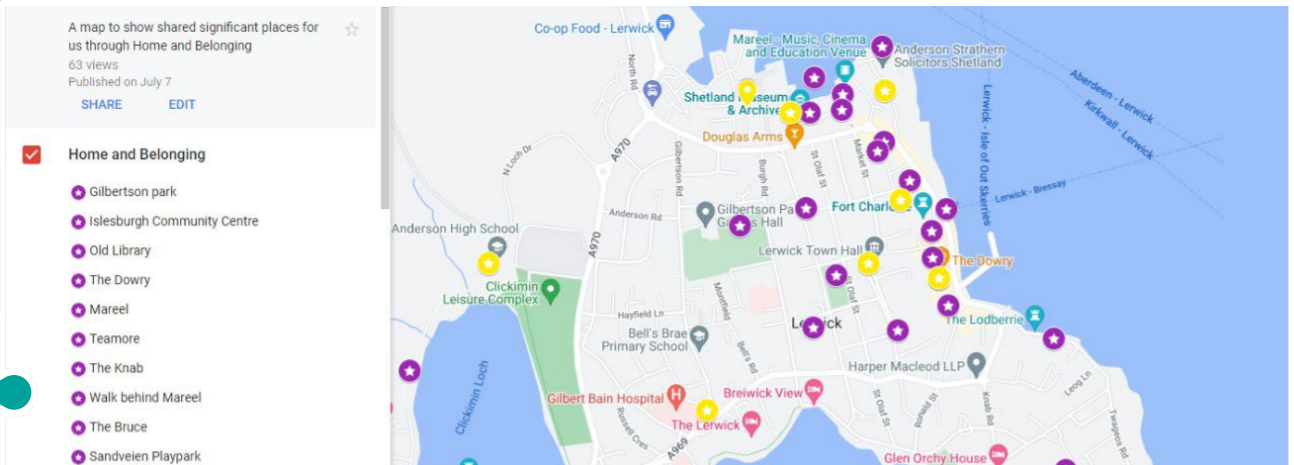
PowerPoint saying "I like to keep smiling on my darkest days" (#ShetlandCrew)



Young person completing activity at in-person session

“
Home isn't about objects, it's about people ... the people who make you feel loved, valued, respected, worthy, and powerful!
 Young Person, Activity Pack

There are also a range of positive examples of where projects have developed new spaces for young people with experience of care in the community. This has given young people a place to go, which they can treat like a home environment, and offers the opportunity to see peers, build relationships with professionals and access a range of support and other opportunities. Having these shared spaces in the community was something that young people valued. This approach is discussed further in Outcome 3.



Transitions out of care

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the way in which the Home and Belonging initiative was able to meet its aims relating to transitions from care. Our work in Years 1 and 2 identified only a few examples where young people had been able to transition away from supported accommodation. It is also important to recognise that referrals to many projects have ended up with them working with young people who had already left care but were identified as needing support.

However, in Year 3 we have begun to see evidence of the Home and Belonging initiative funded projects supporting more young people to transition from care. Projects have identified examples of people moving onto independent living with a period of transition support. Others have told us about how they feel the work they have done with young people to develop their skills and support their wellbeing has put them in a better position to move onto more independent living when they feel ready.

As identified above, there have been examples where young people had already left care but were referred into Home and Belonging projects to get support. This has shown how the initiative has been able to support people who may have been struggling as they left care.

It is hard to pinpoint why there has been an increase in evidence of people transitioning from care in the final year of our evaluation. However, the lifting of pandemic restrictions feels like it is a key aspect. One project highlighted how they were more able to move people into independent living because more housing options were becoming available. However, other projects identified that backlogs in housing continue to limit opportunities for some of the young people they work with.



Young person standing outside their new home

Covid-19 and return to face-to-face activity

As is clear from across the themes in Outcome 1, Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the delivery of the Home and Belonging initiative. In particular, it forced a lot of project engagement work online as meeting in-person was restricted under the coronavirus regulations. It was evident that projects developed a range of flexible ways to maintain support during periods where restrictions were tighter.

The initial engagement from young people with online work was high as many young people valued the opportunities to access support and socialise. We will discuss this in more detail in relation to Outcome 2 and new ways of working.

Young people from Barnados project meet up after lockdown



In-person session with Impact Arts young people



However, it is clear across our evaluation activity in Year 2, and particularly Year 3, that getting back to face-to-face delivery has hugely benefitted the funded projects. Many projects have used a range of creative ways to get back to in-person delivery (including taking youth work outside) as they have adapted to varying levels of restrictions and government guidelines. We have seen how projects have been able to revert to more group-based work, and have delivered more work focussed on engaging with the community which people live in. We also heard how the return to face-to-face activity has supported the relationship-based approaches adopted by many of the projects.

In general, young people have been keen to get back to face-to-face work, although many projects have provided support for young people with anxiety about getting on public transport or returning to group settings. Blended approaches have also been used to manage the transition, with some young people continuing to engage in online work as the projects go back to working face-to-face.

It is also important to recognise that for some projects online approaches have continued to have benefits in increasing the geographic reach of their work and the number of young people who can access it. However, increasingly this has been delivered alongside a primarily face-to-face model.

5.2 Outcome 2: Assessing the extent to which working in collaboration, using co-design principles, has led to culture change within and across organisations

Across the three years of our evaluation we have identified a number of key areas where working in collaboration using co-design principles has led to culture change within and across organisations. However, it must be recognised that Covid-19 has limited opportunities for projects to work with partner organisations and potentially affected how project staff have taken forward co-design work.

Ultimately, we have seen a range of positive practice in this area which can be learned from, alongside identification of challenges that have emerged.

We will discuss each of the key themes below.

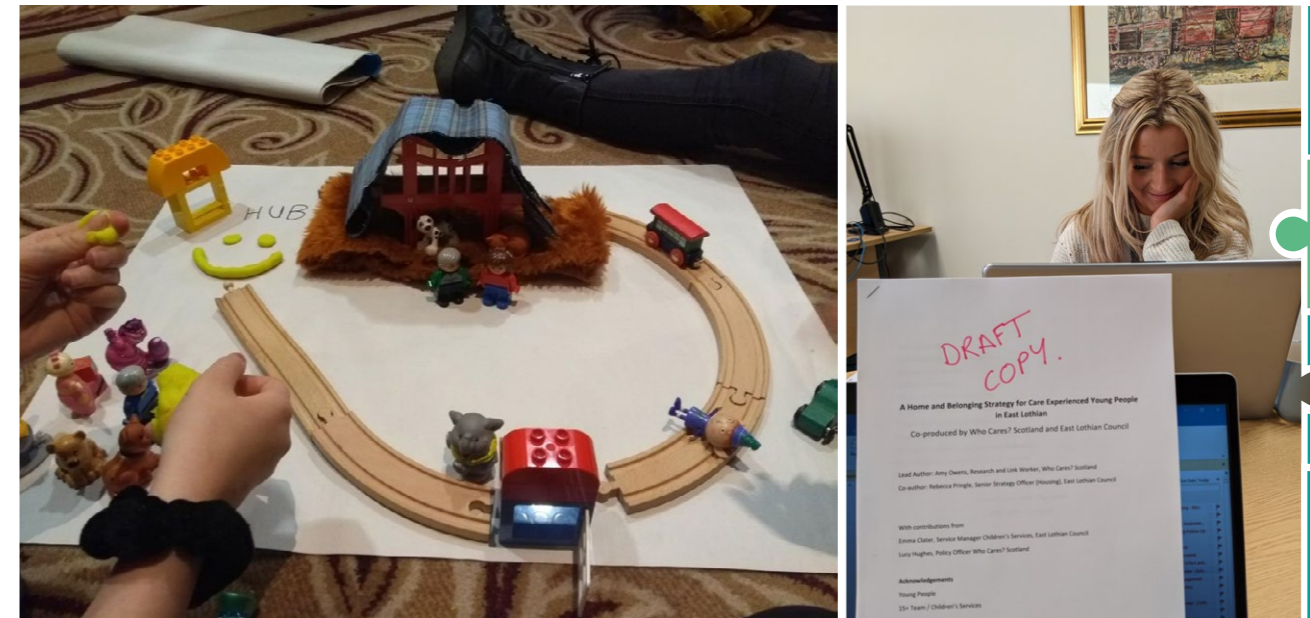
Engagement and co-design

Across the Home and Belonging initiative we have seen some positive examples of co-design and engagement work. Projects were clearly committed to this approach and many staff identified that they are keen to work in the spirit of The Promise. We have seen positive examples of co-design work being embedded in project planning and everyday practice.

We have seen how young people have been involved in identifying new spaces for the projects to be delivered and in redecorating these. We have also seen how some projects have used their new spaces as places where young people could engage with corporate parents. This has given young people ownership of these spaces and, within the context of the Home and Belonging project, feels very important. We would encourage future work with young people with experience of care to learn from this.

There have also been examples of young people being involved in recruitment processes and projects changing how they deliver young people's reviews to make these more young person-led.

The University of the Highlands and Islands and Who Cares? Scotland project has been a leader in progressing work in this area. Their work on the Tending the Light festival allowed young people to develop a festival which shared their views on home and belonging. This culminated in an online event where young people engaged with key decision-makers including Scottish Government ministers.



Young people prototyping new hub space

Draft of co-designed document with young person sat opposite

“ It's just so good to see the “higher ups” actually getting involved, getting their feet in and just viewing what care experienced people have to go through and actually taking an interest and listening to our stories and then actually helping us to change. **”**

Young Person, Festival of Care Video, #ShetlandCrew

The project has subsequently used learning from the festival to support with strategic change in the area. They have worked with the local authority to change how their corporate parenting board works. The Shetland Crew group now has an influence over when the group meets, who is involved and what they talk about. In the long term this gives young people with experience of care a role in dictating the support that is available to them and is an example of meaningful co-production. We have also seen projects talking about how learning from the project has pushed them to now consider how they can move towards more meaningful co-design approaches.

However, we also believe that there could have been greater progress in embedding co-design approaches. Many projects had bold ambitions in this area which they have not fully been able to realise. The impact of the pandemic appears to have played a key role here. Many projects have focussed on ensuring young people had access to the right support. The pandemic and the ongoing restrictions also may have made facilitating co-design work more challenging or impacted on key activity that would have allowed for young people to take a lead. Hot Chocolate also highlighted that delays to their project have made it hard to retain ongoing engagement relating to their Home and Belonging work.

Changes to process, policy and procedure

We have also seen across the projects how collaborating with partners and with young people with experience of care has supported organisations to change the way that they work.

A number of projects have explored how to take more trauma-informed approaches to evictions and to adapt how they allocate houses to support young people with experience of care. In particular, the East Lothian project has implemented an 'elastic tolerance' approach where those accessing the project received more support to work through issues and challenges rather than simply being evicted. This identifies ways in which local authorities can adapt how they work to take more trauma-informed approaches and will be discussed more in Outcome 3.

There has also been evidence of projects developing more trauma-informed approaches to how they support their staff. We have seen how at Hot Chocolate they are now working with a consultant clinical psychologist to ensure that staff have the right support. We have also seen how reflecting on trauma informed practice has become part of support and supervision processes. This is also a practical example of where trauma informed work can be embedded in day-to-day-work.

It is worth highlighting that some projects felt that changes to policy and practice can be more challenging when working within local authority structures and systems. Staff working within the third sector felt they had more flexibility to be creative and adapt their ways of working. If we are to continue to build on the work of the Home and Belonging initiative and fully take forward the principles of The Promise, there needs to be greater flexibility in how services are provided and the policies that underpin these. Policy, processes and practice ultimately need to be person-centred and about improving outcomes.

We have also heard consistently from staff at funded projects how various permissions and registrations required to deliver new types of work have delayed their activity. Several projects involving building work experienced significant delays to receiving planning permission, for example. We have also seen how registering to provide Houses for Multiple Occupancy or registering with the SSSC also took projects longer than expected. Across these projects there was a feeling that they would have liked to have known more about how long these processes would take. There would be value in considering how such processes can be streamlined to ensure faster pace of change in supporting young people with experience of care.

Partnerships and collaboration

Partnerships and working in collaboration have brought much of the key success from Home and Belonging projects. However, it is also clear that this has proven challenging for many projects. It is worth highlighting once more that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on partnership working, some project partners were not able to deliver services as planned. It has also proven challenging to get people from different organisations together and to work collaboratively while remote working has been necessary.

However, we have seen positive examples of the projects opening up networks for discussion. For example, we heard how working collaboratively across the local authority had identified new routes for financial support for young people with experience of care. We have also seen how partnership approaches have allowed challenges with neighbours to be dealt with and also to support transitions out of Home and Belonging projects into more independent living arrangements.

“
Can I just add a small thing? I'm glad that X is here today because I've never been part of a project that has open clear communication links with the housing officers.

Staff Member, Staff Interviews

We have also heard how projects have worked in partnership with Throughcare and Aftercare teams to improve referral processes. This has allowed young people to access the support available through Home and Belonging when they needed it. As highlighted above, projects have found changing processes involving local authorities challenging. Slow or inappropriate referrals were an issue for some projects in the earlier stages of Home and Belonging. However, collaborative, partnership-based approaches with the appropriate departments has shown that this can be improved.

Beyond this we have seen how the Home and Belonging funding has supported projects to work with new partners with different skill sets such as volunteer organisations, creative practitioners and psychologists. Work with creative practitioners appears to have been particularly beneficial and successful. This appears to have provided an opportunity to bring new skills and approaches into the workforce.

It is important that more is done to ensure partnership and collaboration is not only supported but actively encouraged. We did hear from funded projects about concerns that initial moves towards good practice in this area during the pandemic have subsequently dropped off as people move to their old ways of working.

Impact of Covid-19 and online engagement

The pandemic and the requirement for projects to move work online has also stimulated culture change. Digital approaches have been used to continue partnership working and to support ongoing engagement with young people even when there were restrictions in place.

Projects offered a variety of support online including group sessions, one-to-ones and online courses. They have identified a range of ways in which they have adapted their approaches. This has allowed them to expand the reach of the projects and meant they could provide vital support during the pandemic. As a result, projects have identified that they now feel more confident to switch between online and in-person work because of the new skills they have acquired.

5.3 Outcome 3: Determining whether or not there are particularly strong practices that have the potential to be adopted more widely

We have seen a range of strong practices across the Home and Belonging Initiative that have the potential to be adopted more widely by decision makers, funders and practitioners. These include innovative methods of providing support and ways that organisations could change how they work. It is clear that the initiative has succeeded in making progress towards this outcome. As well as identifying new practices, it has also provided further evidence to practices that we already know work well.

Support and relationships

The Home and Belonging initiative has continued to emphasise the importance of meaningful relationship-based approaches and shown their value within a housing context. Feedback from across the projects has shown the importance young people place on these. Project staff have also consistently reflected on the impact that forming relationships has on young people's ability to engage with services and 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.

“
I have been walking a lot and the staff come with me sometimes. I have found it easier to open up and speak about things when we're out walking
”
Young Person, Postcard Activity

Funding streams, commissioning of services and day-to-day practice must reflect this and allow for relationship-based practices to become the norm.

We have also seen a number of innovative approaches to providing support to young people and embedding relationships within housing support which we will discuss below. Both models should be considered when developing future housing-based support for young people with experience of care.

Peer flatmates

Young people engaged in East Lothian's Home and Belonging project appear to have benefitted from the peer flatmate approach. This involved young people with care experience living alongside a trained volunteer. The peer support the flatmate provided helped the young people to learn new skills and become part of the community and has supported them with relationships in their homes. If this approach is to be shared more widely it is important to make sure that young people can maintain these relationships or are supported when the peer flatmate moves on.

“
In one flat in particular, the peer flatmate has been able to build up really good relationships with the two young people [...] I would say they speak fairly highly of the peer flatmate because she makes herself available.
”
Staff Member, Staff Interviews

Life coaching

The life coaching approach adopted by Quarriers offers one-to-one support, where young people work with a life coach to identify strengths and values that are important to them. The support is intended to help young people make positive life decisions in future.

It was clear for our work that the Life Coach provided a central point of contact for the young people involved. It has given young people support to think about current and future decisions and put these in context.

“
I think there's really positive relationships with the young people. I think the thing is because we're not going in and treating them like children and we're not telling them what's going to happen, the decisions are very much in their hands as to when I meet them, how often I meet them
”
Staff Member, Staff Interviews

Trauma-informed approaches

In Outcome 2, we highlighted how projects have taken different approaches to embedding trauma-informed practice and policies. We believe that two examples of this have the potential to be embedded more widely.

In East Lothian, the elastic tolerance approach 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. This approach takes account of the evolving competencies of young people with experience of care and allows them to develop their understanding of how to maintain their tenancy. 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. Embedding this approach would involve good partnership work between different departments in the local authority and other external partners.

We have also seen several projects such as Hot Chocolate and Link Living 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. It is a tangible example of embedding this in day-to-day work.

Financial support

Several projects ring-fenced budget to provide direct financial support (eg 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.

“

My new flat will be much nicer because of being able to buy nice things for it

Young Person, Creative Activity

”

Going forward, policymakers must consider this learning and identify the best routes for ensuring financial support for young people as they transition from care.

Engagement and co-design

As highlighted in relation to Outcome 2, we identified fewer innovative approaches to engagement and co-design than we had anticipated. However, the University of the Highlands and Islands and Who Cares? Scotland project highlights clearly what is possible in relation to co-design. We would encourage other organisations working with young people with experience of care to explore how they can learn from this.

The project 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'¹⁵ based on the work with the Home and Belonging project.

This demonstrates how significant changes in governance and approach can ensure children and young people's 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 the feeling that they are heard. Ultimately, much of this is about a willingness to give up power and control to young people and to value their opinion and experience. People do not need to necessarily follow the exact model used in Shetland but instead to take a lead from a willingness to put the lived experience of young people with experience of care at the centre of decisions about their lives at a strategic level.

¹⁵ Meids is a Shetland dialect word for a method of navigation at sea, at the suggestion of the #ShetlandCrew' (UHI Monitoring Form)

The projects delivered by the University of the Highlands and Islands and Impact Arts have also shown the value of creative approaches to engaging young people. Impact Art's use of creative methods to upcycle furniture helped people identify new skills and supported people to feel a sense of self-worth. We also saw examples of people using the skills learned to support their employment opportunities. Beyond this it proved a valuable route into relationship-based approaches as it has helped break down boundaries and open up conversations.

The University of the Highlands and Islands project used theatre-based methods to reframe care experience in the local community and to support the engagement between their group and the local authority corporate parenting board. This approach allowed the group to tell stories and share experiences in a powerful manner. It facilitated discussion and ultimately has led to change.

We believe that these examples further lend weight to the value of creative approaches, particularly with young people with experience of care where it can support them to learn new skills and build their confidence. Taking part in creative activities has also helped young people to develop relationships and share their stories. However, delivering creative sessions requires time and skilled staff. We would encourage further partnership work to embed these skills in the sector. There also needs to be a commitment to try new ways of working that will allow these types of creative approaches to flourish.

Space in the community

We have seen how several projects, including in Stirling, Highland and Dundee (Hot Chocolate), have begun to develop physical hubs for young people with experience of care to access in their communities. These have provided places to learn, socialise and, crucially, to feel a sense of home and belonging. They have also provided important 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 they felt ownership of these spaces and that 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. These should be youth-led spaces with opportunities for the care-experienced community to take the lead in designing and decorating.



Partnership working

Learning from across the funded projects has continued to show the value of partnership working. As discussed above, we have seen positive examples of this in relation to organisations adopting more trauma-informed approaches.

However, we have also seen positive interaction between third sector projects and local authority throughcare and aftercare teams. This has allowed for more streamlined referral pathways to ensure people receive support when they need it. While this does not seem like a radical or new idea, it highlights how stakeholders working together effectively can improve experiences for young people with experience of care transitioning to their first independent tenancies.

Funding

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.

Funders and commissioners should learn from this example and consider how they can implement more flexible approaches to funding. This allows projects to work in a more person-centred manner and to adapt to the changing needs of the people accessing them.

6 Conclusion

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.

Drawing on the evidence gathered through the evaluation, we conclude that the initiative has been broadly successful against its stated aims, while recognising 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 to the situation 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. We have also seen how positive approaches to tackling challenges can help young people maintain tenancies as they leave care.

The funded projects were given an opportunity to test new approaches. However, we must recognise that the initiative has reinforced the importance of much of what is already considered to be good practice. It has highlighted similar findings to previous Children in Scotland work such as Beyond4Walls and work conducted by Staf such as the evaluation of the Local House Projects.^{16 17} Our evaluation identified the clear benefits of focusing on relationships and trauma-informed practice in relation to housing provision and support, for example. Decision-makers must consider how they can support relationship-based and trauma-informed approaches in all work with young people with experience of care. We have made a series of suggestions and recommendations in this area below.

As outlined in Outcome 3, funded projects have delivered a range of positive work that should be shared to inform planning and decision-making, funding decisions and day-to-day practice. These include approaches like the peer flatmate and life coaching initiatives; meaningfully embedding trauma-informed practices in policies through an elastic tolerance approach; building spaces in the community specifically for young people with experience of care; and learning from innovative work to embed the views of young people with experience of care in decision-making processes. The findings have also shown the value of supporting young people financially as they transition from care and the benefits of creative activities in day-to-day support work with young people.

¹⁶ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Beyond4Walls_Report.pdf

¹⁷ <https://thehouseproject.org/local-house-projects> (Staf evaluation not yet publicly available)

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 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.¹⁸

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 highlight areas for improvement that could advance The Promise's aims. For example, further work to upskill the workforce on co-design approaches and embed co-design within planning systems is required. There is also clearly work needed to embed trauma-informed approaches into local policy and procedures.

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.

Housing options

Our work has highlighted that further progress is needed around provision of high-quality housing options. This was a significant challenge for many projects. 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. Furthermore, it has highlighted the extent to which housing policy takes account of trauma and the wider impacts of experience of care. While the projects have made significant efforts to tackle these issues, we know there is still work to be done and these problems are likely to be reflected in other areas of the country.

Moving forwards, there must be a wider range of housing options for young people as they leave care and a change in how these are delivered to make the experience less transactional. Housing must have the essentials and be in a decent condition when people move in. Young people should also have a choice about where they live, the opportunity to personalise their space, and the option to have pets. There must then be appropriate, person-centred, relationship-based support available as people move. This should be underpinned by trauma-informed policies that do not punish people and push them into more challenging situations.

¹⁸ <https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24-pdf-spread.pdf>

Legacy and sustainability

As we have highlighted throughout this report, there is clear learning from the Home and Belonging initiative. This evidence base will continue to develop as several projects enter their final stages. Several projects have identified new sources of funding to continue their work, while others have built spaces in the community that will continue to be available to young people. For others, learning will be embedded across their organisational culture and inform future work.

The project has highlighted the importance of getting things right as young people transition from care into their first home. However, as the initiative finishes, approaches that have worked well may no longer be available for young people and this could leave them without support at the key transition stage. This lends further weight to the need for longer term funding cycles to truly embed these ways of working.

It is extremely positive that the findings from the evaluation will be hosted on Staf's learning channel. We will continue to work together to disseminate the findings and influence decision-makers.

To support learning from the initiative as a whole, we have compiled advice and recommendations for decision-makers and practitioners and organisations working with people with experience of care. These have been developed from across our work evaluating the initiative and include views from the engagement with staff at the funded projects in the final year of our evaluation.

Funding

Our evaluation provides insight for organisations that provide funding to organisations working with young people with experience of care. Firstly, it has been obvious that the flexible approach taken by Life Changes Trust has been valued by the funded projects. It has allowed them to adapt to both the pandemic and their understanding of the needs of the young people they work with.

We have also identified a range of practices that funders should consider in future work. It would be of value to consider how funding can be used to provide direct financial support for young people with experience of care or how it can be used to support organisations to develop spaces for them in the community. We would also encourage funders to consider how they can continue to support relationship-based practice and trauma-informed approaches to be embedded.

Lastly, the project has lent further support to the need for longer term funding approaches. We know what works and funding should reflect this. 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.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings from our evaluation work, Children in Scotland and Staf have identified a range of recommendations for national decision-makers, local decision-makers and people working directly with young people with care experience.

National decision-makers

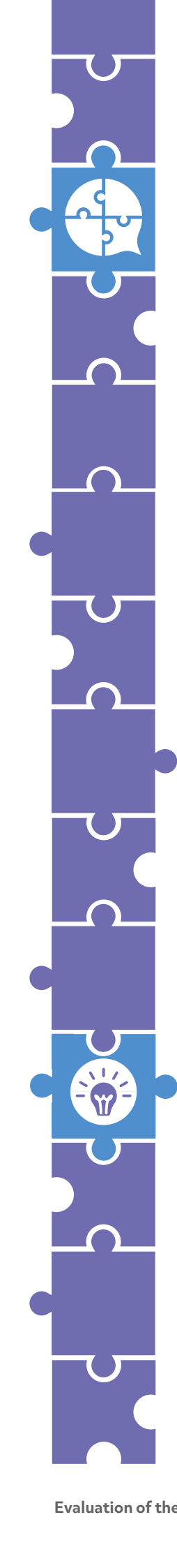
National decision-makers should:

- 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 a 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.