

2. What made New Belongings successful?

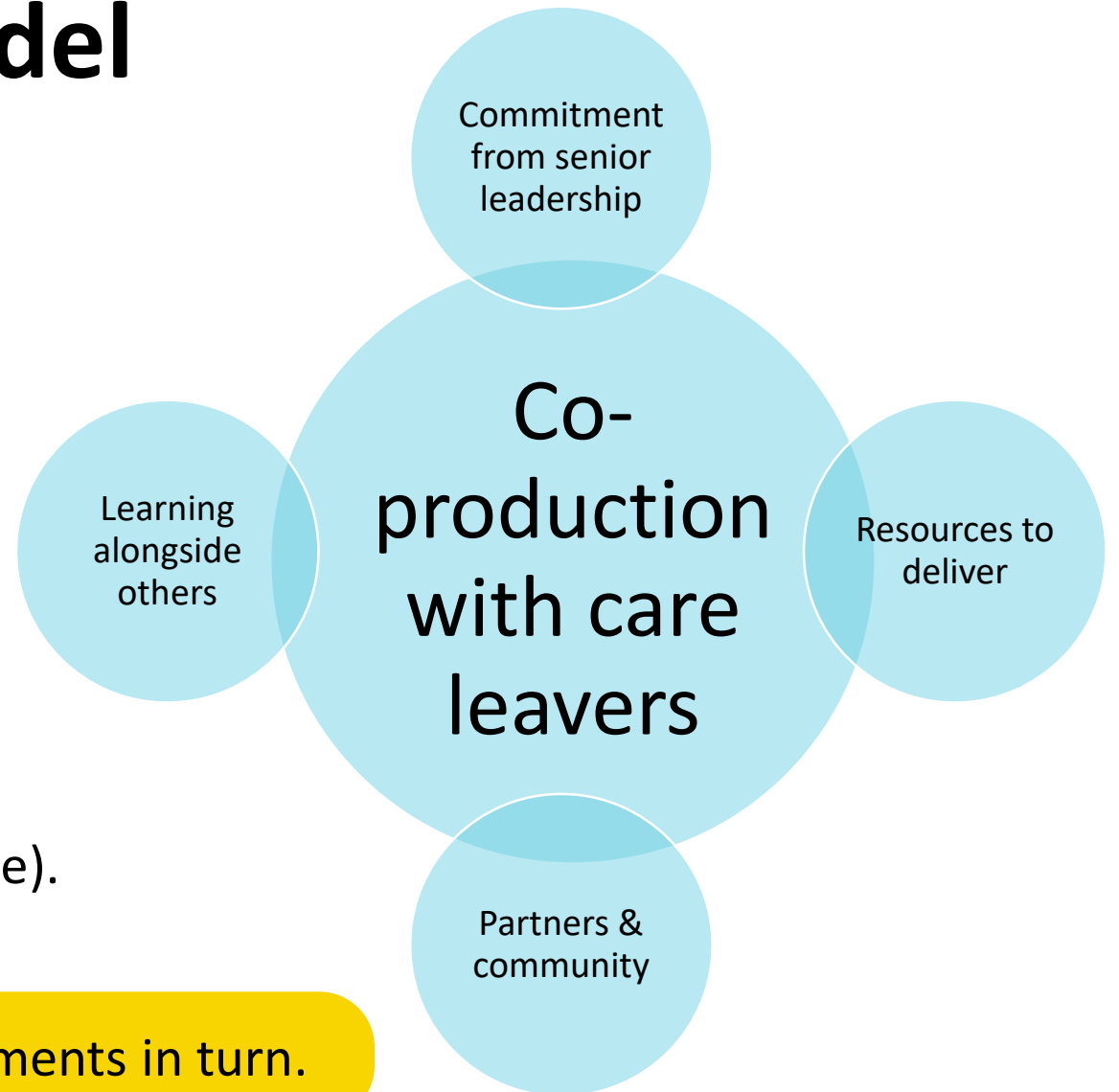
We identified 5 cornerstones to make the NB approach successful:

- (1) Co-production;
- (2) Senior leadership commitment;
- (3) Resources to engage and deliver
- (4) Partnership working, and
- (5) Peer learning.

The work was supported by 2 key tools (survey & self-assessment) to help local authorities understand how they and their care leavers were doing currently and inform the development of action plans to improve support for care leavers.

Core elements of NB model

1. **Co-production** with care leavers – making sure offer a varied menu of participation options.
2. Commitment from **senior leadership** to drive change (political & executive).
3. Resources **to meaningfully engage and deliver** (programme lead / staff time).
4. Whole system approach - **engagement of partners & wider community**.
5. **Learning alongside others** (peer learning & 'critical friend facilitation role' from Coram Voice).



The following sections describe each of these elements in turn.

2.1. Co-production with care leavers

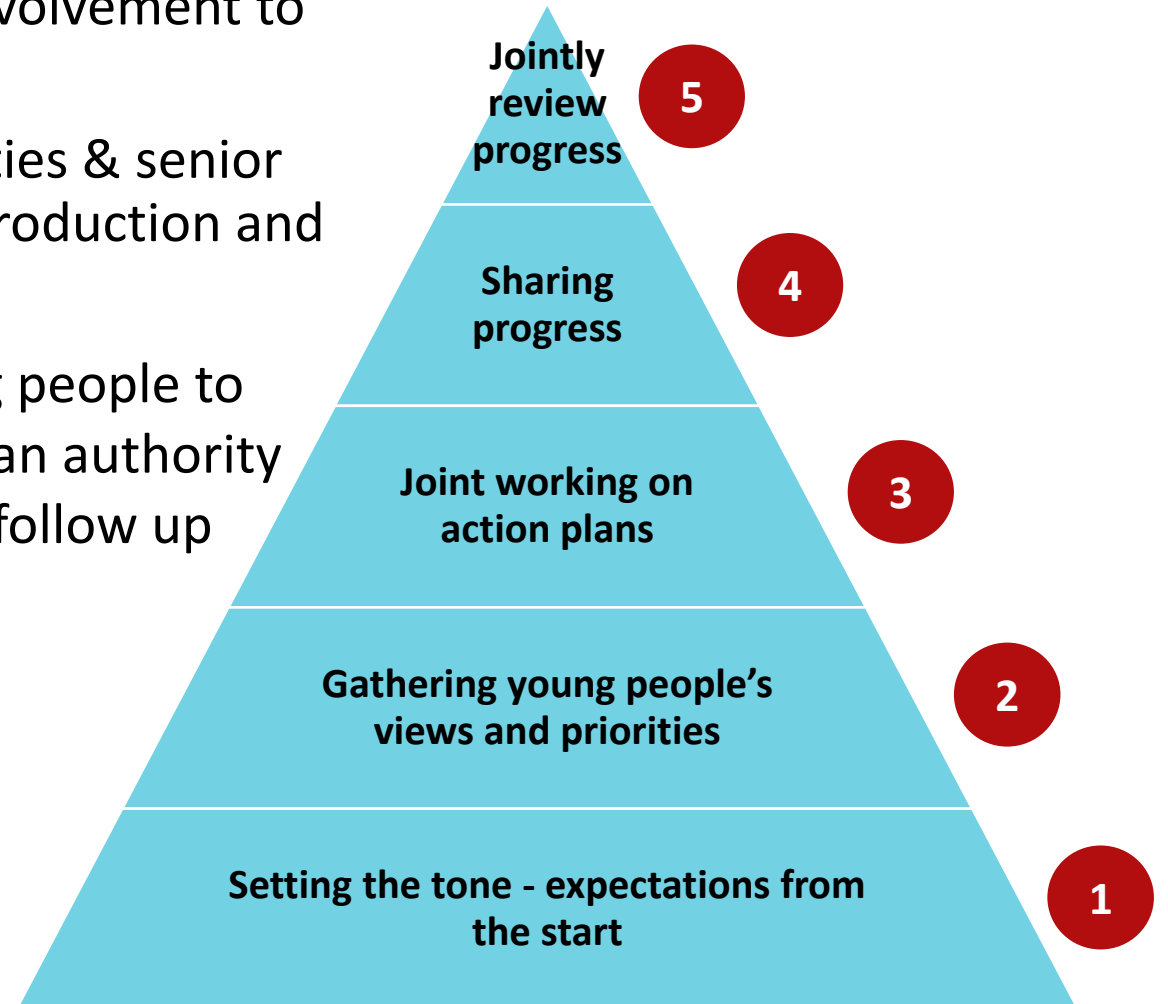
Developing services based on the views and experiences of care leavers is central to New Belongings. How local authorities listened to their young people and worked with them has developed and changed over time to reflect the reality in each authority and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this section we describe the different arrangements for supporting care leavers' involvement in New Belongings and explore models of participation and engagement.

Co-production process

We developed this triangle of young people's involvement to reflect the work of the 8 authorities.

- 1 Setting expectations** by asking local authorities & senior leaders to set out their commitment to co-production and involving young people from the beginning.
- 2 Young people's priorities** - Work with young people to identify what is important to them through an authority wide survey (Your Life Beyond Care) and by follow up work to identify their priorities for action.
- 3 Working together to develop and deliver action plans** with suggested changes.
- 4 Continuously sharing progress** with staff, young people and others.
- 5 Staff and young people jointly reviewing progress** and develop further plans.



Placing young people's voice at the heart of decision-making

What is co-production?

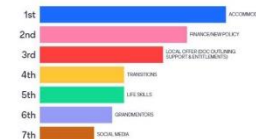
- The voice of lived experience is central to co-production. It places lived experience on an equal footing with professional opinion and academic research.
- “Co-production is an approach to decision-making and service design, rather than a specific method...The term co-production refers to a way of working where service providers and users work together to reach a collective outcome. The approach is value-driven and built on the principle that those who are affected by a service are best placed to help design it.” (Involve)

<https://involve.org.uk/resources/methods/co-production>

Participation in the time of Covid and Beyond

- The original New Belongings (NB) plan set an expectation that local authorities would have care leaver forums through which they would engage young people. However, with the pandemic this did not prove possible.
- Instead LAs adapted their practice and developed different arrangements for supporting care leavers to take part.
- In 4 LAs the participation or youth service were involved in the NB work (in 2 of these LA there were contracted arrangements with voluntary sector organisations – in this model leaving care workers from the LA also supported the work)
- In the other 4 LAs the leaving care service and its workers took the lead.

Please rank which action areas are most important to you?



Lundy model

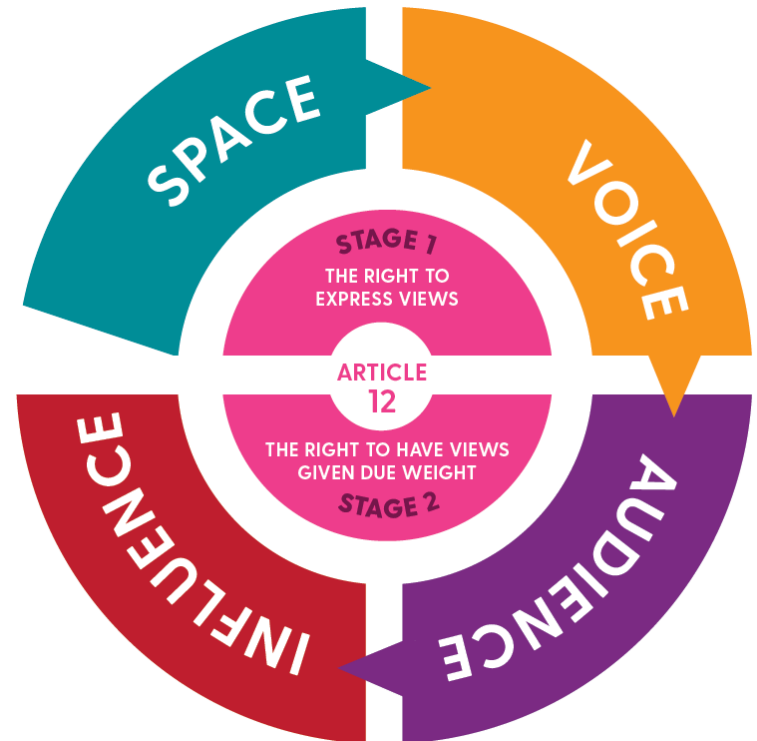
Lundy's model of how to support young people's right to express their views and be listened to sets out some core principles that can help staff and individuals ensure all participation, whether through surveys, one-to-one interactions, group work or activity, is meaningful for all involved. This model seemed most relevant to guide our work to engage young people in the New Belongings Programme.

Young people were given opportunities (**Space**) to have a say and were given the information and supported to express their views (**Voice**) through the Your Life Beyond Care survey and ongoing engagement.

Professionals, including senior managers, got together with young people to listen to what they had to say (**Audience**). Action plans were based on what young people said was important and they were involved in designing solutions (**Influence**).

Lundy Model

This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC. It focuses on four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. The four elements have a rational chronological order.



Further reading: <https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>

Tools to create opportunities using the Lundy model

We benefited from some great guides to help both organisations and staff to create opportunities for young people to get involved including:

- Everyday spaces checklist
 - <https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-everyday spaces checklist-2.pdf>
- Planning Checklist
 - <https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-planning checklist.pdf>
- Evaluation Checklist
 - <https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-evaluation checklist.pdf>
- Participation People's summary
 - <https://participationpeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Compressed-PP- -Lundy-Model-Explained-2.pdf>

Evaluation Checklist

This checklist is a guide for the self-evaluation and external evaluation of policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level.



Flexible approach to voice and influence

What we learned through the New Belongings programme was the need to be flexible in our approach to engaging care leavers.

- As more staff, services and organisations seek to ensure young people's voice is at the heart of decision making, we see more staff that don't fit the traditional "youth/participation/rights worker" role wanting to do more to hear the voice of their young people. This is positive because it provides wider opportunities for influence and voice.
- Some authorities supported care leavers by offering them paid opportunities – as sessional workers or as apprentices.
- It is important that anyone who works with young people are supported with the tools to engage well and that activities are meaningful for young people, avoiding engagement becoming tokenistic.

Challenges to co-production

- The aim of New Belongings was to support the 8 authorities to co-produce changes to services with their young people. All of the actions in the local authority plans were based on what is important to young people, and their priorities for change, but in reality young people were not always involved in implementing changes
- About a quarter (27%) of the actions the authorities identified in their plans appeared to involve young people – when young people were not explicitly engaged there seemed to be 4 main reasons for this:
 1. **The nature of the change** – many of the actions included in the plan were about changes to internal administrative processes.
 2. **Insufficient resources** - co-production required resources and time from authorities and the capacity of authorities varied.
 3. **Young people's interest & availability**– authorities did look to engage young people in co-producing changes but young people's involvement varied depending on the specific project and young people's interest in it, changes in young people lives affecting their priorities and availability.
 4. **The understanding and capacity of partner agencies** to engage with care leavers.

We have worked with Local Authority staff to identify the places/spaces and ways in which young people are currently interacting with the local authority and help them to identify ways to ensure young people are able to have a say and participate in a way that best suits them. For example:

**Practice
example**

- In **North Tyneside** Personal Advisers contacted young people individually to tell them about the survey findings and get their views/feedback/ideas.
- In **Stockport** the senior management spoke to a number of care leavers to gain a better understanding of a particular issue - why care leavers did not always feel safe where they lived – and to explore their ideas to tackle their concerns

Over time we saw more innovative practice amongst staff and confidence growing around what good participation can look like. Whilst Covid derailed earlier plans laid out by some local authorities it also strengthened personal relationships between workers and young people and made participation and being able to “have your voice heard” more accessible.

Supporting local authorities to spot the opportunities for participation has created more avenues for young people and is pushing local authorities to think about the space, voice, audience and influence they can create with and for young people.

How the NB adapted to support participation and engagement

- We gave “permission” and recognised that engagement and participation could take different forms, acknowledging that young people may only want to have their say on one part of the action plan.
- We reduced the emphasis on local authorities needing to have a New Belongings group of young people that remains constant throughout the process.
- We placed a bigger emphasis on ensuring all care leavers hear back about the action plan, and further opportunities to engage – closing the ‘feedback loop’ for young people and sharing the various opportunities for young people to be involved.
- We recognised this was a different area of work for leaving care workers and they did not necessarily have that youth work experience. To help with this we hosted peer learning sessions on online engagement, sharing tools, tips and platforms that can make sessions more engaging for young people as well as encouraging staff to “play” and gain confidence with these different ways of hearing young peoples views.

Tools for voice and influence

Through the NB programme we reflected on what worked well in our engagement through lockdown, shared learning through a participation lead peer learning group and pulled together some useful resources to help staff get the most from their interactions with young people.

- Add-on's that you can use in online meetings to make them more interactive - <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/online-tools-for-workshops/>
- Top tips for Facilitators in online sessions - https://campaignbootcamp.org/blog/2020/going-virtual-top-tips-for-trainers-and-facilitators/?mc_cid=eccd6b7e7a&mc_eid=b78ff1c5b9
- Different modes of online youth work, a look at some of the options you have available and different ways to reach young people - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvCp8S-IQZo>
- Framework for Human Connection (the importance of creating human connection in online spaces and some tips and activities included on how to do this) - <https://www.deepr.cc/framework>
- Up skill yourself in Digital youth work - https://digipathways.io/content/uploads/2019/11/Training_Toolkit_Skill_IT.pdf
- Included: Practical tips for online engagement <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/news/included-practical-tips-for-online-engagement/>
- Lots more ideas and info can be found on this padlet - https://padlet.com/dan_moxon1/codesign

Reflections on virtual engagement during Covid-19

- Working online meant that some local authorities were engaging more young people in 'participation work' than they would have previously, e.g. young parents, care leavers studying further afield, care leavers with social anxiety which meant meeting new or large groups in person was difficult.
- Sometimes participation and engagement is more open and diverse online, there are not as many gate-keepers or existing cliques of young people as a barrier to new young people becoming involved.
- Work outside of groups with individuals is also very important. The focus needs to not just be on the work that occurs within group sessions. Individual relationships between staff and young people are important, particularly when young people were having less contact with the world and these relationships could be the 'vehicle' to effectively to engage young people in the New Belongings action plan.
- Whilst lots of those who took part in the New Belongings programme felt that ultimately nothing can replace being in a room with others, with food and flipchart paper - for some online engagement is more accessible and therefore, post Covid it is important to not just rush to return to in person meetings as the only method of engagement.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Steps towards co-production (1)



Practice
example

Hertfordshire reflected on their 'co-production' journey during New Belongings (and produced some films to show their journey).



- At the start of the programme Hertfordshire acknowledged that the number of people invited to the dissemination meeting to discuss the results of the survey was small. Hertfordshire also didn't have an agreed definition of co-production nor knew what standards they wanted to achieve or what best practice looked like.
- Lots of the work involving young people was centred on the Children in Care Council – findings from the survey formed the basis of a work plan for the year- it had lots of actions and projects for the Children in Care Council to take forward with colleagues. Working in this way did not fully achieve the ambition for a child and young person led agenda.
- Over the course of the New Belongings programme Hertfordshire developed their ways of working alongside young people. <https://youtu.be/6W4U1dyujK0>

Steps towards co-production (2)



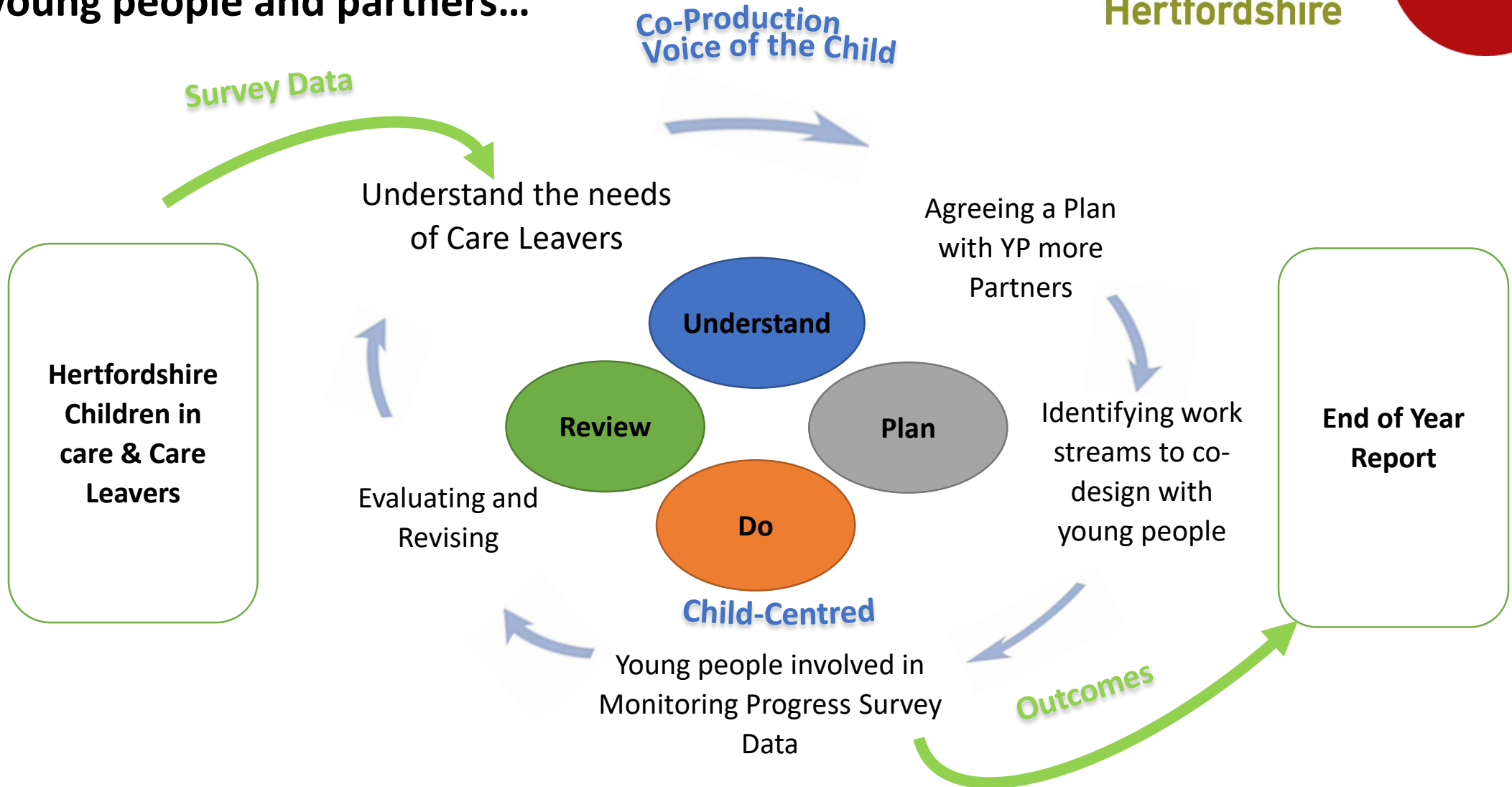
- They worked on a new Corporate Parenting Strategy called “Our Exciting Life Changing Plan”. The title reflects the exact words used by young people to describe the strategy and the content is now ‘friendlier, kinder and more readable’.
- Young people advised that they really liked the ‘you said we will’ parts and the link into Bright Spots/New Belongings survey feedback and they REALLY liked the graphics, speech bubbles and Strategy name.
- Alongside producing the plan Hertfordshire have also reviewed their Corporate Parenting Board membership and agreed a new structure strengthening partnership representation. The aim to make the board more influential and raise the profile of everyone’s corporate parenting role and responsibility across the county.
- The board are developing different ways (e.g. action cards) to ensure the voice of young people is consistently fed into Corporate Parenting Board.
- Hertfordshire feel they are developing a better understanding of how they can co-produce services and are planning a co-production board.

New Belongings Action Plan

	You Said	We Will - Actions required	Who/ When	Update
<p>1</p>  	<p>“There is a blurriness about what workers can and should do for young people. E.g. some workers take young people to meetings and support them e.g. if it’s about housing benefit or take them for coffee. But some workers say they can’t do that. It needs to be clear and, on the website, exactly what workers can and can’t do”</p>	<p>Co-produce with young people standards for workers and being clear what support young people want from their workers- what they will do to support young people and publicise this on website, so it is transparent.</p>	<p>Care Leavers Service/CHICC</p>	<p>Standards document produced by staff and young people</p>

HERTFORDSHIRE

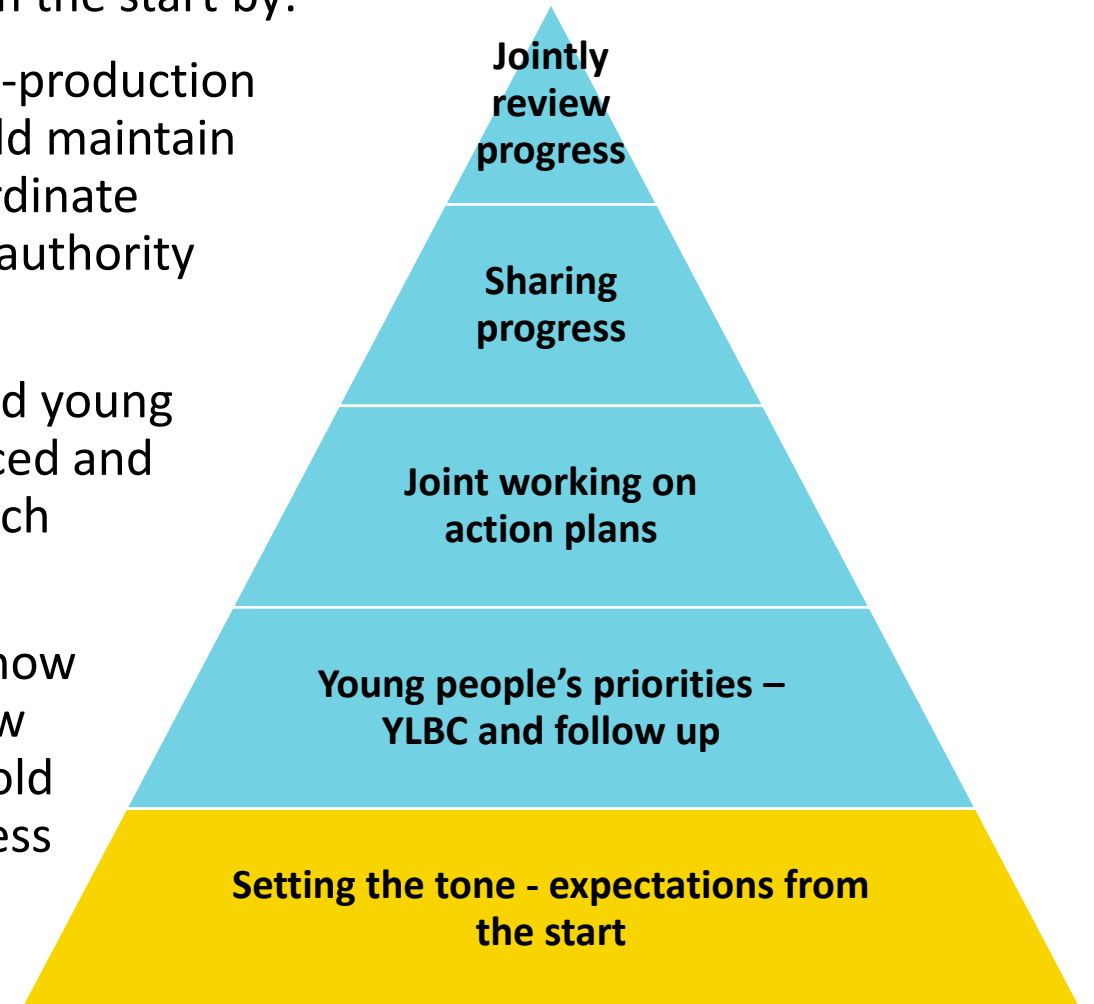
Co-producing “Our Exciting Life Changing Plan” with young people and partners...

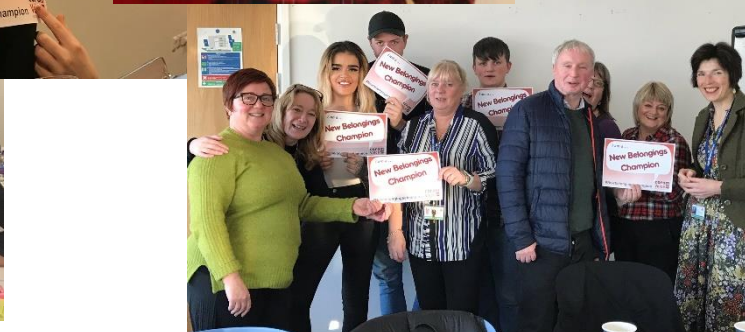
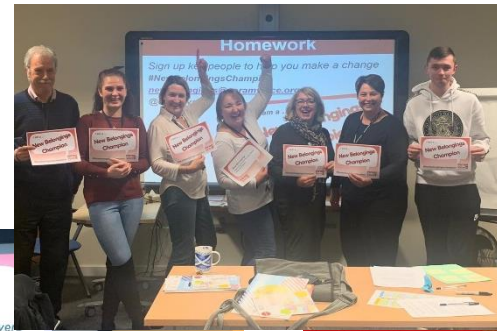


Setting the tone

Working towards co-production was a clear expectation from the start by:

- Asking local authorities to set out their commitment to co-production in their Expressions of Interest by outlining how they would maintain or set up a care leavers' forum; dedicate staff time to coordinate engagement; embed the voice of care leavers in the local authority decision making process.
- Holding a national launch event with lead professionals and young people together underscoring that NB would be co-produced and expecting young people to be part of initial meetings in each authority to introduce NB.
- Encouraging conversations and practice sharing about how young people were involved in decision making and how authorities were addressing issues that young people told us were important to their well-being e.g. pets, loneliness etc.
- Asking staff and senior leaders to sign up as 'New Belonging champions'.







Tweet



Kaye Wright @KWleavingcarePA · 9m
Great way to start the week, a room full of people who share the same passion to drive change for care leavers 💖

The New Belongings project will be a vehicle for making this happen.

We need your support though
@mattprosserceo @SarahDCSDorset
@PaulineBatstone @CllrAndrewParry



You and 4 others



Tweet

@CoramVoice making a fab start of our 2 year journey with lots of care leavers! Working alongside our care experience experts & corporate parents to really make a change & a difference! Proud & honoured to be involved, watch this space....



Maggie Allen
@Maggipecallen

North Yorkshire in London. Starting our on our New Belongings Journey. Lots to get stuck into - exciting times ahead. @watkinson_nicki @drclairebaker @CoramVoice @ShannonDowning9 @louisefaircloth @Jack_Lindsay1



Tweet your reply

Plans built on what was important to young people

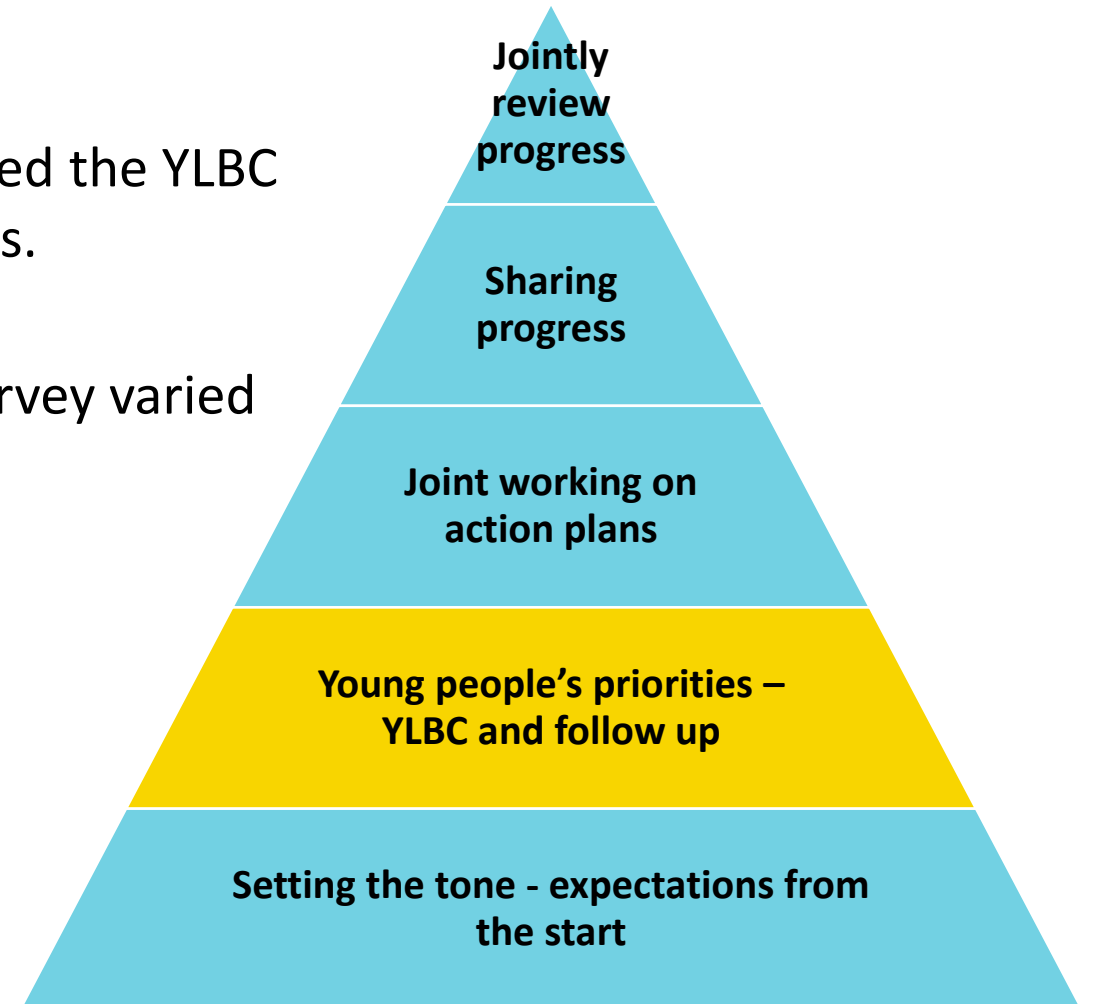
Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC)

In March to July 2020 1,258 young people completed the YLBC survey – exploring what life was like for care leavers.

The proportion of young people completing the survey varied between authorities from 29% to 81%

Local authorities encouraged participation and reached out to young people e.g.:

- Offering an incentive of £10 for 10 minutes.
- Using the survey as a chance to check in with young people and have a different discussion.
- Sending paper copies to those in custody and asking staff for support to complete it.



Identifying priorities

- YLBC set out what life was like for the care leavers in each authority. We wanted to support authorities to explore what their young people felt needed to be done in response. What were the young people's priorities for change?
- A short video of each LAs findings was created with the expectation it would be shared with all care leavers.
- Based on the findings, young people were asked what they felt was the priorities for their authority to change.
- Some authorities shared the video with online groups, their children in care council, others asked their PAs to gather the priorities.
- The YLBC findings and young people's priorities were presented to senior managers, elected members and everyone was asked to agree the 4-5 themes for the action plans.

Evidence provided the basis for change

Survey findings often provided powerful and hard to ignore information about *their* care leavers, which helped raise the profile of care leavers within their local authority and with partner agencies.

Feels like we're pushing against an open door since the dissemination meeting
New Belongings LA lead

Clearly [there is] a real issue around confidence & self-esteem for many care leavers. Social isolation issues will hamper social mobility
LA lead member

[There is a] Sense of optimism - done a good piece of work with the survey findings and now there's a level of aspiration about how take forward.
LA lead member

Care leavers are preoccupied with the same things all young people are interested in – it is just that care leavers [are] likely to have more challenging circumstances / past experiences - the need to be connected is the same. To support care leavers colleagues across council need to be involved.
Local authority CEO

PAs gathering priorities



Why?

North Tyneside wanted to identify priority areas to focus on in their New Belongings action plan. Covid had made it difficult to bring together care leavers for workshops and discussion and these groups tended to have a more narrow range of young people engaged.

What?

- 46% of care leavers had completed the Your Life Beyond care survey exploring what life was like for care leavers.
- A video of key findings from the survey was emailed to all care leavers and posted on social media.
- Workers were asked to discuss the video with 4 or 5 young people and ask them 'What does North Tyneside need to change?'

Priority 1: Accommodation

Specifically young people would like changes to the following;

Resolving Issues with shared accommodation quickly.

Internet access.

Suitability of accommodation

Knowing their options and why they have been allocated particular accommodation



"I live in shared accommodation. When people in the other flats make noise and break the rules, it's stressful but they get to stay"

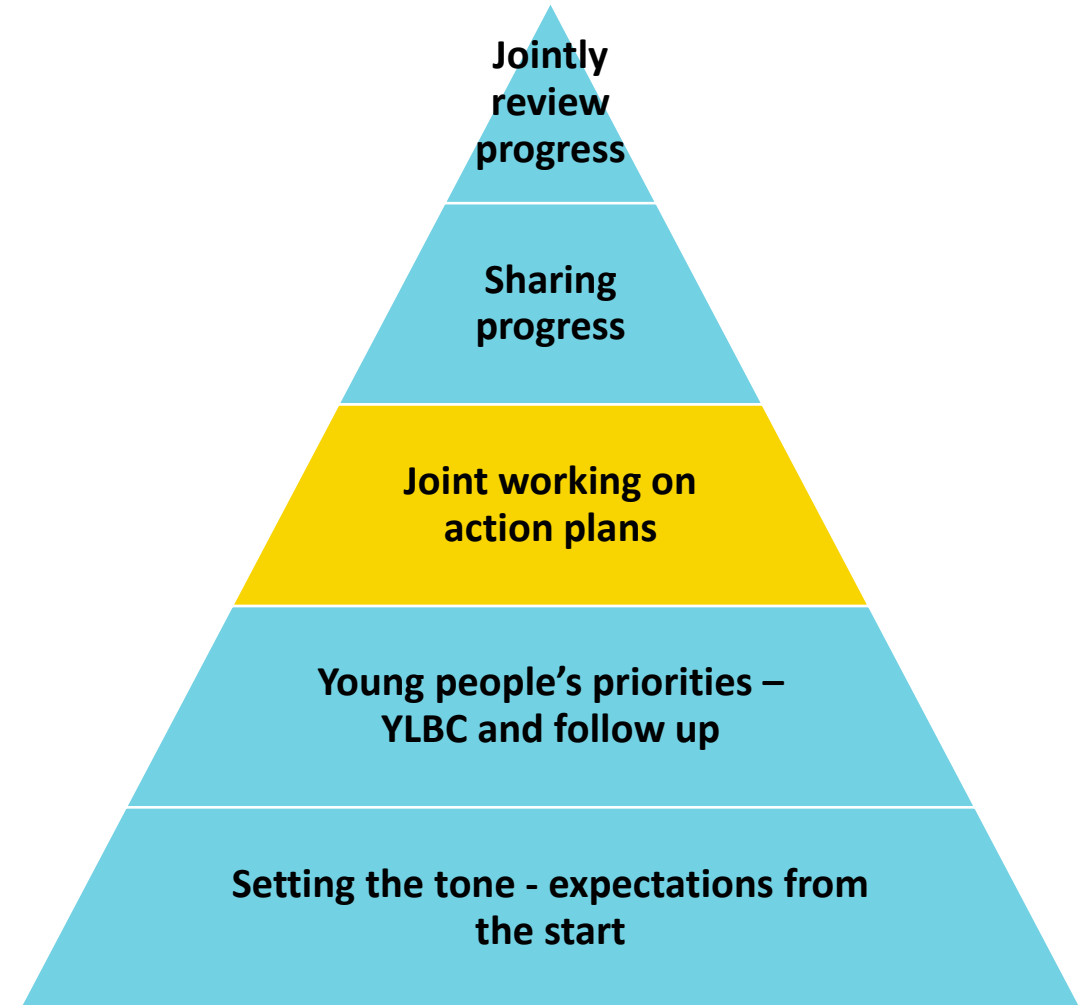
"I didn't know what choices I have, some people get their flat straight away but I'm stuck in temporary"

Impact:

- Workers spoke with a range of young people with different experiences—not just the more engaged young people.
- Care leavers' views were collected and set the priorities for the action plan to improve services for care leavers.

Joint working on action plans

- Action plans were based on priorities and what they were going to do in the next two years to work on them.
- Authorities were encouraged to involve young people in jointly working on their action plans.
- We challenged workers to go through action plans to highlight and identify every opportunity for young people's involvement.
- Planning was most successful where there was interest and involvement of senior officers and support for young people to engage.



Supporting young people's engagement

Practice
example

- **Stockport** – Had a well established care leaver forum manager, capacity to make changes good connections across the council, and access to Chief Executive and Director of Children's services
- **Hertfordshire** - offered young people a menu of opportunities to be involved to maximize their impact. Young people's effort and time were recognized and they were treated as equals in meetings, sent papers for meetings in advance and supported to prepare for the meetings or to make presentations etc.

PRACTICE SNIPPETS

Young people co-producing resources

Practice
example

Examples from the action plans of working alongside young people.

- **Wandsworth:** Linked to YLBC findings about home - some care leavers felt unhappy with how decisions were made on accommodation, who got what and why. A booklet/guide to accommodation was produced with young people to create a more open and transparent process around housing.
- **Stockport:** Linked to findings in YLBC about understanding why in care young people wanted to ensure that precious photos and certificates were kept safe when children came into care. Together with the children in care council the local authority developed a Memory box so everything could be kept safe. Information & training was given to all staff on their use.
- **Coventry** – Lots of young people wrote positive things about their worker in the survey. Young people clearly recognized how important their relationship with Personal Advisers was and wanted to be able to give feedback about their PA. They created a 'PA feedback form' which young people completed when they stopped working with a PA; it can also be used at any time a young person wanted to give feedback
- **Hertfordshire** – Linked to the areas in the YLBC survey young people wanted to make pathway plans more focused on what was important to them. They worked with the LA to add a question to the plan 'Who would you go to in a crisis' to see if young people had somebody they trusted. They also asked about owning a pet as they recognized this was a great source of support to many care leavers. Young people and staff are also working on a 'How to do' guide for staff about pathway planning to improve ways of working together.

Young people setting standards and inspecting services

- **Dorset** – Young people were involved in the planning and design of new housing provision –sharing ideas about ways to make accommodation feel safe.
- **North Yorkshire** - To make sure the local offer met the needs of local care leavers young people wrote a report for senior managers and lead members with suggestions on what needed to improve (informed by findings from YLBC).
- **North Yorkshire** - Whilst young people felt supported in their roles working for North Yorkshire they also identified from their own experience as care experienced employees, how improvements could be made.
- **Coventry** – Following survey findings about how care leavers' felt about their home the local authority in partnership with young people set up a programme of young person's inspectors to be involved inspecting accommodation and commissioning of provision.
- **North Yorkshire** – the local authority and young people worked together on a 'suitable home' set of criteria to ensure that the local authority are striving to get the right accommodation for care leavers the first time based on what young people say is important for their home.
- **Hertfordshire** – working together young people and the local authority produced Personal Adviser practice standards so everyone knows what to expect. There are plans for care leavers apprentices to audit files to check usage, uptake and impact.
- **North Yorkshire** – linked to findings in the survey about understanding why you are in care a project Group comprising of workers and young people was formed to explore what good would look like and propose better processes for supporting care leavers and others with accessing their files.

OLDHAM

Post adoption support



Why? Oldham recognized they had a high number of young women who's children had been adopted.

What?

- Young parents affected by adoption worked with the Regional Adoption agency to develop post adoption support arrangements for care leavers.
- This was an 8 week programme for care experienced young people affected by adoption; the sessions worked on building self esteem and focusing in on reaction to grief and loss – building peer support was key.
- The group comprised of a 'closed group' of women who had their children placed for adoption – it provided a safe space to share feelings and hopes for the future.
- Work was practical – focusing on artistic activity as a way to express difficult experiences.

Impact: Feed back from the attendees was universally positive with care leavers often talking for the first time about what they had been through.

Menu of opportunities

Why? As part of the New Belongings programme Hertfordshire wanted to identify opportunities for care leavers to get involved and improve leaving care support.

What?

- Hertfordshire developed a ‘menu of opportunities’ setting out the projects that care leavers could get involved in.
- The menu set out areas that the authority wanted to improve, what young people could help with, how many young people could be involved and the time commitment involved.
- Young people could choose to get involved in the issues that interested them.
- The menu was shared with young people through social media.

Impact:

- A wide range of young people were able to join in projects they were interested in.

New Belongings: Opportunities for Care Leavers to get involve

Practice example

Care Leavers, Hertfordshire County Council and Partner Agencies Joint Plan 2021

You Said, We Will

As part of our on-going commitment to improve outcomes for care leavers, Hertfordshire County Council are working with Coram Voice and the University of Oxford on New Belongings, a programme which aims to improve the outcomes for care leavers by identifying and promoting actions based on what care leavers say the priorities are.

There's a varied range of opportunities for Care Leavers to get involved with and help shape future services. The only qualification you need is your lived experience of being a care leaver. Everybody's experience is different, and we want to engage with as many Care Leavers as possible.

We can pay High Street vouchers and will also pay for any travel expenses incurred. Volunteering looks great on your CV, and applications for university etc.

(Whilst Covid restrictions are in place, meetings and project work will be online instead of face to face).

Between May and September 2020 all care leavers in Hertfordshire were asked to participate in an online survey to find out how they felt about their lives. The survey identified areas working well and areas needing improvement.



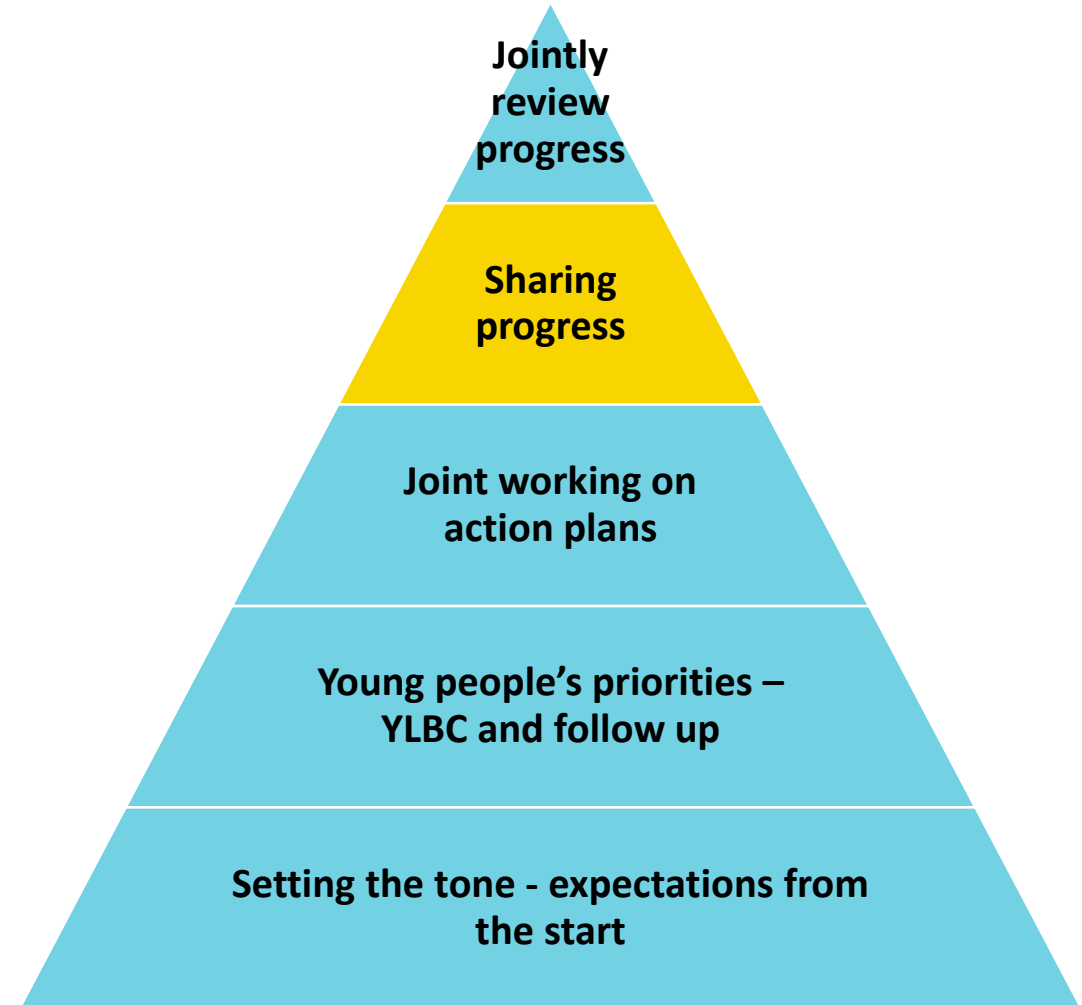
Having worked hard to gather the views of Care

Here are the projects for you to get involved in. You can choose to get involved in as many as you like or select ones because of your own interests or the time you have available.

	What we plan to do:	What we want you to do	Possible Time Commitment
4	Care Leavers' Website The dedicated website for Care Leavers is called the "offer" and needs to reflect the information that Care Leavers want in a format they want and understand.	You will be invited to attend meetings and give your views and contribute ideas on the design and content of the website. You do not need any experiences in web design just a willingness to tell us what you think.	4 meetings over 6 months. Each meeting will usually last 2 hours.
10	Care Leavers' Covenant We are going to ensure commitments are made to Care Leavers that extend beyond those provided by the County Council - this may be from local charities or local business.	You will be invited to attend meetings to progress the Care Leaver Covenant where public, private and voluntary sector organisations pledge support, including apprenticeships work experience, free or discounted goods and services to Care Leavers.	This area is currently in development – time commitment to be confirmed.
5	Promoting Positive Stories Care leavers need to hear more from other care leavers who have succeeded – there should be success stories on websites and social media.	You will work within a small team promoting good news stories of care leavers.	4 meetings throughout the year.

Sharing progress

- Ongoing communication was encouraged so that young people and staff could see the progress that was being made.
- Local authorities adapted communications to make them more accessible and relevant to young people.

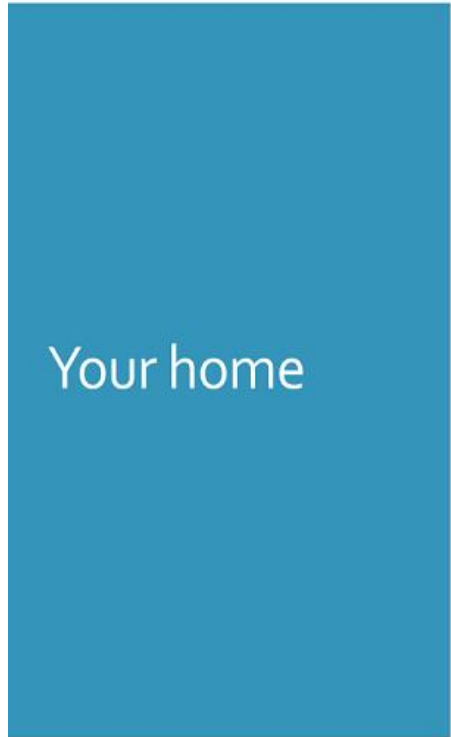


'Young person friendly' plans

Why? Oldham wanted to keep young people informed about the New Belongings programme & what the local authority was doing to improve support for care leavers.

What?

- Oldham sent their care leavers updated action plans to ensure they were regularly updated.
- The plans used quotes & findings from the YLBC survey and set out what they planned to do and what had been achieved.



You Said	We are doing	What you will see
To have Housing that feels safe and is near to the people who support us.'	We will involve you in our residential review an plans to provide more suitable housing for care leavers	You will feel more involved in having a say in what sort of housing we have in Oldham
'To be involved in decisions about the sort of housing available to us.'	PA's will ask you how safe you feel in your home and a report will go to our senior leadership team to help us make plans	Safe homes that are in safe areas
<i>39% of care leavers did not always feel their accommodation was right for them</i>	We are working with our housing providers on a care leaver pledge to prioritise care leavers and provide good quality accommodation	Housing providers that understand your needs Housing that is safe, comfortable and affordable
<i>34% of care leaver did not always feel safe in their neighbourhood</i>	Increasing our staying put arrangements	Leaving foster care when you are ready to

Impact: The 'young person friendly plans' shared progress with care leavers in a way that was more accessible using headings such as 'you said'; 'we are doing' and 'what you will see'.

Sharing progress with young people

Why? Stockport wanted to keep young people informed of what the local authority was doing to improve support for care leavers and gather young people's views on progress.

What?

- Updates on Stockport's New Belongings plan for care leavers was updated every 3 months.
- Prior to its presentation to senior managers the report was sent to care leavers for their comments.
- All the care leavers comments were incorporated and presented to senior officers.

Review Date: September 2021

Young People's Feedback:

YOU SAID	Young people's comments on progress made this Quarter
1. To support you to understand your life story and feel secure in your identity and maintain your family relationships	
2. To support you to make and sustain safe, healthy and trusted relationships with your friends/peers	
3. To support you to feel safe, supported and secure in your home	
4. To support you to have good emotional health and reduce isolation	
5. To support you to manage your money and make it stretch for the things you want to do	
6. To support you to transition to adulthood and have goals and aspirations for the future	

Your Feedback

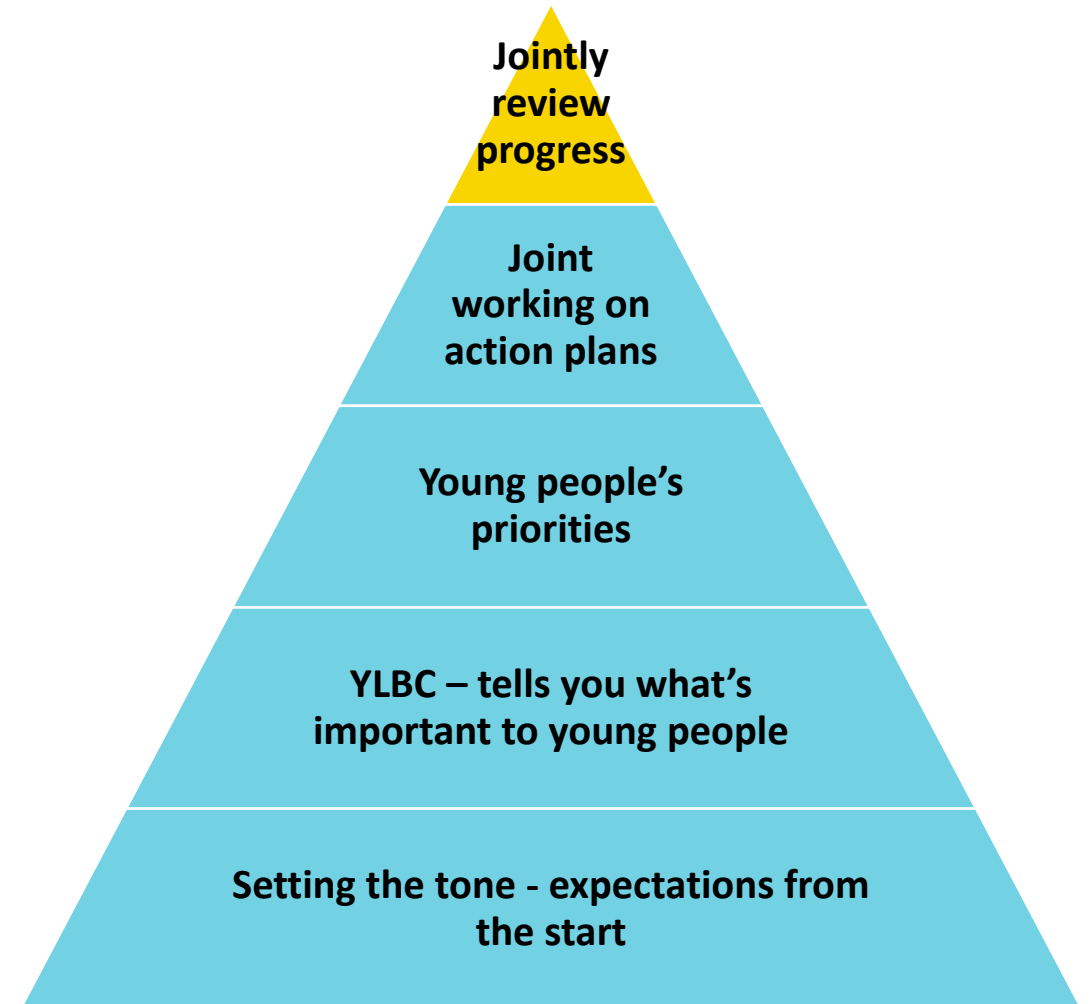
We will re-run the New Belongings young people's survey during the month of January 2022 to invite your feedback to help us to keep improving services for you.

Impact: Progress is shared with care leaves and they have opportunities to scrutinise the work and give feedback.

Jointly reviewing progress

- In May-June 2022 we met with young people to review how they felt their authority had performed against the self-assessment framework.
- Young people were asked to rank the 10 standards by importance and how they felt their authority were doing
- We used mentimeter to review how young people felt their LA was doing in the different areas of the self-assessment.
- Young people in Hertfordshire made short videos of what they had achieved and what needed to happen next

<https://vimeo.com/711625717>



WANDSWORTH

Future first champions



Practice
example

Why? Wandsworth wanted to make sure care leavers jointly review progress of their New Belongings action plan and improvement to support for care leavers.

What?

- Four Future First Champions were elected by other care leavers (Future First is the name of the Wandsworth Leaving Care service).
- The champions had diverse backgrounds - this helped them reflect the different experiences of Wandsworth's care leavers.
- The Champions attended the monthly Care Leavers Action group – a meeting chaired by the Assistant Director along with managers from across the council and partner agencies.
- The Champions received the agenda, reports and updates before the meeting and were supported by a participation worker to prepare their responses and agreed how they wanted to present their views.
- They were paid expenses at the London Living Wage and their travel costs etc. were reimbursed.

Impact: The Future First champions were able to make informed and valued contributions to the Care Leavers Action group which oversaw the delivery of Wandsworth's action plan.

2.2. Commitment of senior leadership in local authorities

The New Belongings programme requested that local authorities demonstrated engagement from strategic leads including Director level and the Lead Councillor for Corporate Parenting to drive change through the programme. It ensured that key leaders were listening to young people's priorities and could implement proposed changes. This was pivotal to progress.

Fostering commitment

- A key aim of the programme was to engage and sustain the support of senior leaders in the local authorities.
- The LA's Chief Executive, Director of children service as well as other senior officers from partner agencies were invited to each LA launch event.
- Managers, workers and partners were asked to be champions.
- At each stage of the programme senior managers & partners were kept up to date (attending meetings, making pledges).
- Action plans were 'signed off' by senior leaders (e.g. Corporate parenting board; Assistant Director).



Listening to young people

- Mark Riddell (New Belongings Advisory Board member and the DfE National Implementation Officer for Care Leavers) wrote to all local authority Chief Executives asking for their personal support of the New Belongings programme. As a result of this letter, a number of CEOs have met with their young people to hear about their ideas and offer their support.

Practice example

- **Dorset** set up task force leaders and a Care leaver service delivery group to ensure care leavers priorities are heard and acted on.
- The Corporate Parenting Board in **Coventry** is a forum to ensure the voice of children in care and care leavers is represented. The young people set the agenda and present at the board. There will also be a review of the pledge to children and young people and plans for the board to be co chaired by children and young people.



sholden
@sholdenuk

Dorset New Belongings task force leaders and Senior Leaders improving care leaver support. With young people as experts by their experience we can break down seemingly insurmountable barriers.

[@mattprosserceo](#)

[@DCSTheresaLeavy](#) [@louisedrury6](#)

[@LucyB_PA](#) [@CoramVoice](#)

[@drclairebaker](#)



Taskforce leaders



Why? Dorset wanted to make sure young people were involved in the work and had opportunities to meet senior decision-makers.

What?

- A new role of 'task force' leader was created.
- The taskforce leaders had a specific interest and experiences in the 4 areas of the Dorset New Belongings action plan.
- They met with managers from the relevant services to share their views and ideas so managers were better informed of the issues needing to be addressed.
- Together the managers and task force leaders jointly developed the action plan.
- The meetings were held on line, so a wide range of young people could be involved – e.g. those out of area, young parents. Meetings were held at times that were convenient for young people and were run in a flexible way – for example, some young people only felt able to contribute if their cameras were switched off.

Impact: Managers heard the experiences, views & ideas of young people and this provided the basis for the authorities action plan. Everybody felt the plan addressed the challenges young people faced.

DORSET

Development of Care Leavers Service Delivery Group

Practice
example

Why? The Care Leaver Service Delivery Group is responsible for overseeing service improvement for care leavers including the implementation of the New Belongings action plan.

What?

- Dorset had set up groups of care experienced young people (taskforce leaders) who meet with managers from a range of services to develop their New Belongings action plan.
- When the Task force leaders met with the council's Chief Executive and Director of Children's (DCS) service they expressed their concerns about drift and delay in implementing the New Belongings plans.
- To address this the DCS set up the 'Care Leavers Service Delivery Group' which is chaired by an elected member with a responsibility for children services and is attended by senior managers from a range of services including health and housing. The delivery group reports to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- The delivery group has adopted the New Belongings action plan. This plan will be updated using the findings from the 2022 YLBC and self-assessment and further involvement of young people.

Impact: The delivery group has made some tangible differences – it led to an increase in the number of Personal Advisors and increased access to children in care nurse, as well as improvement in accommodation options.

2.3. Resources to deliver

A commitment to youth voice requires adequate resources to drive it. The New Belongings approach requires an authority to have the resources to deliver the different elements of the model: dedicated staff time to coordinate local care leaver engagement, survey distribution, action planning and implementation. Local authorities also made resources available to support young people's engagement. Having these in place was a key driver for improvement.

Local authority leads to drive programme

- The New Belongings programme has benefited from stability in workforce.
- All 8 local authorities have remained engaged in the programme over the 3 years.
- There was a lead manager in each local authority throughout (in 6 of the 8 LA this has remained the same person).
- All lead managers held different roles (team manager, service manager or participation manager) & were usually able to rely on other colleagues to support delivery of the programme.
- The programme worked well when the lead was able to make changes, had good connections across the local authority and was able to identify opportunities and budget to support the action plan.
- But...problems and delays occurred when there was leadership changes and there were difficulties in getting partners to 'own' different sections of the action plan.

Skills to engage young people

- In all local authorities staff time dedicated to facilitating engagement with young people was key. This was delivered by a range of different staff.
- Some local authorities used dedicated participation staff with youth work backgrounds that sat outside of the leaving care service. They often had skills and time to dedicate to developing participation activities. They were often more experienced in using online engagement tools and had skills and access to resources to create effective communication materials with and for young people, such as videos, posters etc. Sometimes external staff could be less embedded in the leaving care services.
- In other local authorities leaving care workers took more of a role. They had good existing relationships with young people and good links with their wider teams but did not have the same youth work experience. They may not have had the equipment, training or experience in using different participation tools.

Resources to support young people's engagement

- Some young people involved in the programme were employed e.g. as apprentices and paid a salary by their local authority or sessional staff. These roles embedded care experience in teams and also helped engage other young people.
- Facilities and location mattered. Local authorities invested in young person friendly spaces where there are opportunities to socialise and engage young people.
- Dedicated and protected time to meet with young people is important – e.g. tea time chats, planned trips.
- Adapting models to what your young people want –e.g. in one local authority young people did not want to spend time on ice-breakers and preferred focused meetings, whilst others may prefer a more informal set up.
- Local authorities provided incentives to encourage young people to participate in the survey or in workshops, such as food or vouchers.
- Resources were made available to implement changes e.g. purchasing ring door bells to support care leavers to feel safer where they live.
- Creative materials such as posters and videos supported young people's engagement.

Creating capacity to change



Why - Hertfordshire recognised to maximise the benefits of New Belongings they needed to widen the range of managers involved. The initial plan to manage the project through the participation services was expanded to include managers from the operational teams.

What?

- By including managers from the leaving care service Hertfordshire found it was easier to encourage leaving care workers to support & encourage young people to complete the Your Life Beyond Care survey.
- It supported managers from the leaving care service to work with young people to create the practice standards, and changes to the pathway plan
- Other managers were able to focus on developing employment opportunities and foster links with Amazing Apprenticeships to expand the range of opportunities available to care leavers.
- They are using ideas from New Belongings in their Corporate Parenting plan – ‘You Said We did’ as well as including graphics and quotes from young people. At the suggestion of young people they renamed their plan – ‘Our exciting life changing plan’.

Impact - Having managers from a different services and different levels of responsibility has enabled Hertfordshire to make significant changes to their services . Young people have recognized this saying the ‘ Exciting life changing plan’ is ‘friendly, kinder and more readable’ .

2.4. Partnerships

Leaving care services cannot deliver high quality support to their care leavers on their own – they need full range of partners as many things that would make life better involve other organisations.

Partners built into the programme

Key partners have included:

- Housing department in-house & external providers
- Health colleagues
- Further education colleges
- Leisure / sport services
- Libraries
- Community groups (e.g. food co-operative)
- Voluntary sector delivery organisations

New Belongings encourages partners to be part of the programme in a range of ways:

- Partners were invited to launch meetings in LAs;
- Partners were key contributors to self-assessment (completed by holding meetings & this provided a good basis for future multi-agency working);
- Partners attended feedback meeting of survey findings / self-assessment results;
- Partners were part of action plan development and delivery;
- Partners were part of governance arrangements;
- Partners were kept updated as programme developed fed back what they were doing and made pledges;
- Partners participated in celebration / dissemination event at end of programme to plan next steps for local action in authority.



Improved partnership working

Examples of partnership working included:

- **Oldham:** Through New Belongings the relationships with housing colleagues were reported to be strengthened – over time this led to the setting up of their first ‘House’ project in partnership with 2 neighbouring authorities <https://thehouseproject.org/local-house-projects>
- **Hertfordshire:** Using the standard New Belongings tools (self-assessment) led to greater inclusion of health colleagues who recognized how limited their current offer to care leavers was and committed to increased closer working e.g. production of a booklet on well-being for care leavers.
- **Coventry** – The Coventry House Project has supported cohorts of young people to ensure they have their voice heard and a space for them to feel safe and supported. The project came out of the New Belongings survey following feedback from young people about their accommodation and support. The project works with wider organisations and businesses such as Valpak to further develop community support for the project. The young people on the project are also part of the Care Leaver National Movement.

Partnership with housing colleagues

Why – Based on their YLBC findings Wandsworth recognised they faced a number of challenges to ensure care leavers had a home where they felt safe. The housing sector is complex with a wide range of partner agencies involved – so it was crucial to develop partnerships and to co-ordinate this work.

What?

- The improvement in accommodation has been coordinated through the setting up of ‘Future House’ – a multi-agency group including accommodation providers, the housing department, and young people
- Working with providers they have been able to lower service charges, increase free access to Wi-Fi and improve living standards for care leavers. The Future First Champions (care experienced young people) have been involved in the inspection of accommodation.
- The monthly housing liaison panels considered all requests for social housing and rent deposits. Young people are encouraged to attend– this has helped young people to understand the decision making and ensure allocation of properties better meets young people’s needs.
- Working with colleagues from children services colleagues have been able to support the production of an accommodation guide as well as the introduction of a rent deposit scheme.

Impact: Wandsworth have been able to make progress on a wide range of issues – by developing strong working relationships with a range of partner agencies.

Linking with other programmes

New Belongings local authorities were all (to different degrees) part of other change programmes. These initiatives were very welcome and often addressed the areas identified in the New Belongings action plan. Examples included:

- **Life Long links** helped young people in several New Belongings authorities reconnect with significant people from their lives and improve their understanding of their histories.
<https://frq.org.uk/>
- **House Project** to increase the accommodation options for care leavers.
<https://thehouseproject.org/>
- **Staying Close** worked on developing options for care leavers at 18 to remain with and be supported by their residential carers.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/932004/Staying_Close_North_Tyneside.pdf
- **Care Leaver Covenant** aims to work with partners to provide additional support to care leavers. This model can help and consolidate the changes made through New Belongings
<https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

2.5. Peer learning

An important part of the New Belongings programme was getting everyone (managers, workers and young people) together to share what was working well and help each other with things that were 'stuck' or not going as well.

Peer learning

- Opportunities for peer learning were built into the programme from the beginning. For example, all local authorities shared an example of what they were proud of in their services at the New Belongings launch event.
- To respond to the challenges of the pandemic we brought practitioners and managers together to share ideas about how they had adapted their ways of working. To share this learning more widely we published a briefing with examples of practice in April 2020. <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-pandemic-Role-of-the-leaving-care-worker-FINAL-14.04.20-PROOFED.pdf>
- In October 2021 we held an open webinar to share care leavers' experiences during lockdown and the wider lessons from the New Belongings programme
- We created a New Belongings in focus section on our website where we shared examples of practice and featured these in our Newsletter and promoted them on social media.
- Case studies from New Belongings were also featured in the Bright Spots resource bank. <https://coramvoice.org.uk/latest/bright-spots-practice-bank-shares-examples-of-how-to-improve-well-being-with-local-authorities/>



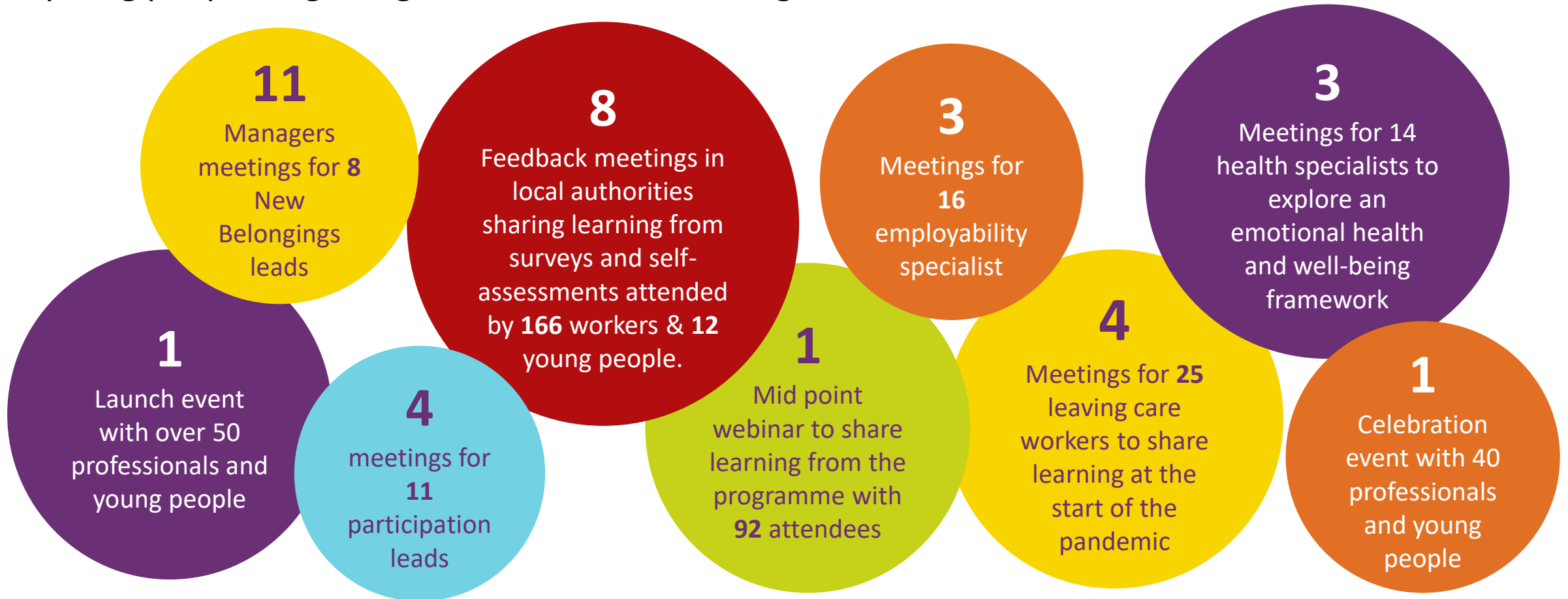
Kaye ~ Youth Voice M... · Nov 11, 2019 · ...

Some of the ideas heard today at the [#NewBelongings](#) launch with [@CoramVoice](#).

- 💡 free prescriptions
- 💡 CL parents group
- 💡 3 matching suitcases stuffed with essentials ready for move in
- 💡 apprentice participation workers
- 💡 'opportunity broker'
- 💡 'Leaving Well' pathway plan web app

Learning together

The Covid-19 pandemic meant peer learning moved online and enabled us to meet more frequently to share learning and develop ideas. There were over 30 opportunities for staff and young people to get together and share learning both within and across local authorities.



Learning from each other and adopting shared practice

Getting everyone together was great for sharing ideas and we saw some of these ideas being adopted in other local authorities.

- The ring video doorbell scheme which **Stockport** piloted and talked about at the New Belongings meetings was adopted by **Oldham** and is also being discussed within the wider group of Greater Manchester authorities.
- **Dorset** learnt about the free prescriptions for all care leavers from Oldham which was showcased at the national New Belongings launch event. **Wandsworth** are now offering free prescriptions up to 25.
- **North Tyneside** talked about how they had encouraged Personal Advisers to have more detailed discussions with young people about the YLBC survey findings – this approach has been used by most authorities and led to a wider group of voices influencing their service development plans.
- Always Here – **North Yorkshire's** model for supporting young people after the age of 25 - was in part influenced by their New Belongings findings. Other authorities have used their ideas in planning their own offer to over 25's.
- As part of the New Belongings work on creating employment opportunities for care leavers **Hertfordshire** presented their work with Amazing Apprentices and **North Yorkshire** are now working alongside this organisation. <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/>

2.6. Tools used in New Belongings

The New Belongings programme uses 2 main tools: the *Your Life Beyond Care survey* & Leaving Care Self-assessment (Baker-Dixon).

These tools were used towards the start of the programme and towards the end of the programme.

New Belongings tools

The **Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC)** survey, focuses on the thoughts, feelings and experiences of care leavers. It was developed together with care leavers based on a review of research into young people's views and the issues that young people felt made their lives good. So far 47 local authorities have now used the survey to explore the views of their young people (over 7,000 responses).

The **Leaving Care Service self-assessment** tool was developed by the researchers who conducted the 2016 evaluation of the New Belongings Programme (Dixon & Baker, 2016). The self-assessment tool draws on existing evidence and recognised frameworks setting out what makes a good leaving care service, including planning and Transitions guidance and the Ofsted Inspection framework .

The data from the survey and the self-assessment informed local authority action plans and provided a snapshot of the well-being of care leavers and state of existing services, which could be reviewed towards the end of the local authority's involvement in the programme, when both were re-done and a new action plan developed.

Your Life Beyond Care survey (YLBC)

We created a short film to explain and promote the survey to care leavers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K0EDR ev4xE>

[The data] really drove things, for example with the housing. There were things being thought about, but it helped push things over the line, because the evidence was there for what we were doing, rather than it seems like a good idea... the survey really helped, that was one of the key things. We had a really good response rate in the first survey, of care leavers responding to that, it's harder to argue with that when several hundred care leavers say they need support with that.

Local authority lead

Response rates

- Time 1 (Mar-Sep 2020)
 - **1,258** care leavers in the 8 LA responded
 - The overall response rate was **50%**, but ranged from 29% to 81% across the 8 authorities.
 - This survey was completed during the first Covid-19 national lockdown
- Time 2 (Jan-Feb 2022)
 - **1,233** care leavers in the 8 LA responded
 - The overall response rate of **45%**, and ranged from 26% to 81% across the 8 authorities.

New Belongings managers tips for increasing survey response rate

Distribution

- Send the survey link out to young people on WhatsApp/Messenger etc.
- Some LA used Gov.uk Notify – allowing them to send text messages in bulk, but also from a person the young person knew.
- Send out the survey link on a number of occasions with different messages.
- Raise survey regularly through workers weekly/ fortnightly calls to young people. This was helpful during the lockdown period as it gave personal advisers something additional to talk about with young person. Having a ‘captive audience’ during lockdown was felt to help.

Preparation & monitoring

- Have accurate lists of young people with latest phone numbers and email address.
- Send out messages in advance to ‘warm up’ young people. Attach the Coram Voice posters and New Belongings video to the messages.
- Keep records of who has completed the survey when young people or workers confirm it has been done. (separate from survey itself which is anonymous). Records allow staff to focus efforts.
- At the latter stages of the survey period target distribution to underrepresented survey respondents by requesting breakdown of age/sex/accommodation type of those who have completed the survey from Coram Voice.

New Belongings managers tips for increasing survey response rate (cont.)

Hard to reach groups / additional support

- Send paper copies in the post to those in prison. Book phone calls to discuss with young people. On occasion family members filled out the form with young person.
- Make interpreters available to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children.
- Support the small number who will need help to fill in the survey (Lots of young people were able to fill out the form online on their own).

Trusted adults

- Use a range of people to act as 'trusted adult' and support them to complete the survey (but not young person's own PA). Examples included:
 - Employment workers,
 - Support workers,
 - Mentors – e.g. from voluntary organisations; from LA scheme Children Champions;
 - Student social workers;
 - Housing staff etc.
- Make guidance for 'trusted adults' available at start of survey / and use FAQ film available.

Reporting on YLBC findings

Local findings

- Each local authority received a report of findings specific to their area and used this and their self-assessment to develop an action plan for change.
- A video summary of the findings of each report was created to support local authorities to share the results with their care leavers.

National findings

- Coram Impact and Evaluation (Ludvigsen & Taylor, 2021) analysed findings across the 8 local authorities from Time 1 (Mar-Sep 2020) as part of their evaluation.
<https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-baseline-evaluation-report-2021>
- The findings among the New Belongings local authorities were compared to a pre-pandemic sample of 1,804 care leavers.
- A further analysis of Time 2 data was published as part of the final evaluation report in Autumn 2022. <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-final-evaluation-report-2022>



The Leaving Care Services' Self-assessment Framework (Baker-Dixon tool)

The Leaving Care Services' self-assessment:

- provides local authorities with an opportunity to self assess their current service strengths and areas for development.
- Draws on evidence and recognised frameworks for supporting care leavers e.g.
 - Care Planning and Transitions guidance;
 - Ofsted framework;
 - Local authority audit tools;
 - Range of research and practice evidence.
 - The tool was fully updated for this stage of New Belongings (and a draft reviewed checked by the advisory group Inc. Ofsted & Department for Education colleagues).

It made you think about where you are now...highlighted work areas that needed more focus...sharing with partners for joint ownership...and what needed to work on more together.

Team Manager

Self-assessment gold standard areas

The self assessment covers 10 Gold Standard areas:

1. Responsive to care leaver views
2. Informed and supported
3. Educated to potential
4. Helped into work
5. Having good health and wellbeing
6. Being in safe and settled accommodation
7. Adequate income
8. People to count on for emotional support
9. Manage day to day life
10. Vulnerable care leaver groups

1. Services responsive to the views of care leavers (as individuals and a group).

Gold Standard Area 1	Thinking about how your leaving care service is operating at present, please indicate how far you agree with the following statements: please add an 'x'	Agree at present	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Disagree at present	Feel free to include evidence (e.g. comments, actions or links to supporting information). This might help you when reflecting back on your assessment.
Services responsive to views of care leavers	a. There is clear commitment from strategic leaders to improving leaving care services.					
	b. Care leavers are pivotal in shaping services and influencing how support is delivered.					
	c. We have various mechanisms for seeking feedback from care leavers about the support they receive.					
	d. There are opportunities for elected members to meet, listen to and work alongside care leavers.					
	e. Our children in care council (or similar) has strong care leaver representation and we have examples of the impact they have made.					
	f. Our local authority has ways to celebrate care leavers' achievements.					
	g. Where complaints have identified deficiencies or gaps in services this has led to positive changes in delivery of service.					
	h. Care leavers are involved in the recruitment, selection and training of staff and carers.					
	i. We have robust management information, which meets Annex A. (Ofsted) and SSDA903 return requirements and allows managers to track individual young people and also identify collective needs and concerns.					
	Overall Rating	We would rate our current performance in ensuring services are responsive to views of care leavers as:				

Messages from the baseline evaluation

- The New Belongings baseline evaluation report showed that even where leaving care services are considered by Ofsted and local authorities' own self-assessments as having 'good' or 'outstanding' performance, many care leavers still report that they struggle in important areas of their lives – so we must not simply rely on professional assessment of how things are going but always make sure we systematically listen to young people too.
- New Belongings YLBC initial survey findings took place during Covid lockdown restrictions – we found the pandemic did not necessarily worsen care leavers' experiences. Therefore it is important we don't lose some of the learning from working during Covid (increased PA support; focus on emotional well-being; more financial support).
- However, despite the fact well-being didn't seem to deteriorate in the pandemic we must not forget that overall a higher proportion of care leavers have poorer well-being than their peers in the general population, and when the survey was repeated .
- The New Belongings programme firmly puts the focus on how care leavers were feeling (as demonstrated through the survey) – the next section of the report looks at some of the work that happened.