

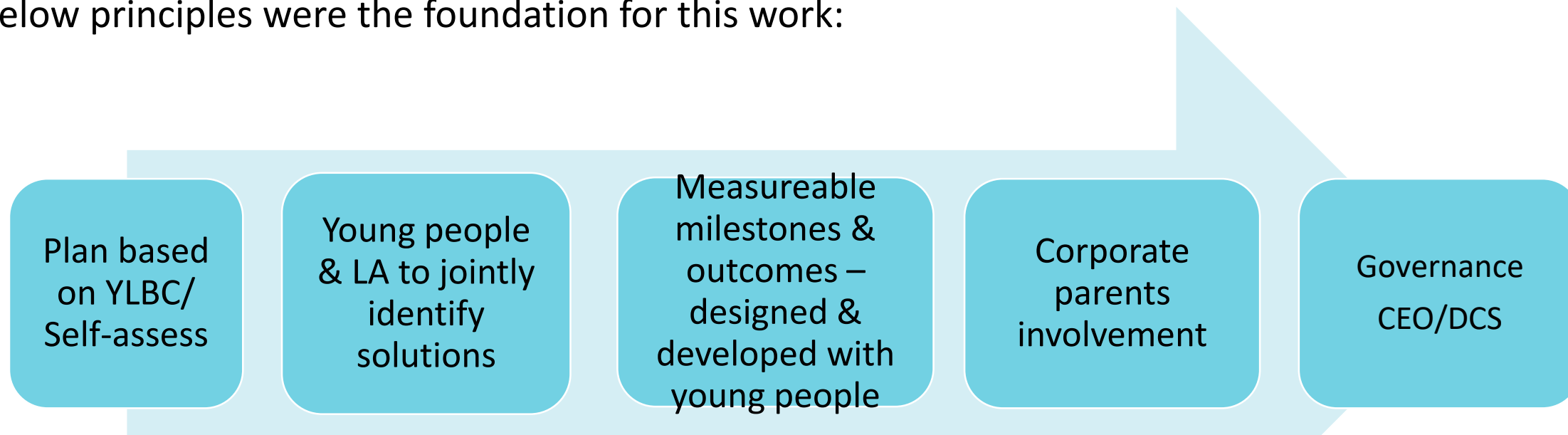
## 3. What did local authorities do?

This section describes what local authorities and young people worked on together as part of the programme, drawing on the findings from the YLBC survey, self assessment and young people's priorities. It covers:

- The principles of planning
- The common themes from the 8 action plans
- Practice examples in each theme from New Belongings local authorities

# Principles of New Belongings Action plans

The New Belongings programme supported local authorities in their action planning – the below principles were the foundation for this work:



Based on learning from the previous New Belongings programme local authorities were encouraged to focus on 4-5 maximum areas or themes in their action plan.

# Working on action planning alongside young people



**Fi Pure Insight** @fi\_insight · 9m  
Calling all Stockport care Leaver's!  
On Monday Natalie and I are hosting an event to look at the Stockport action plan that has been developed by young people, LCT & Coram voice.  
It's so important to get your views on the plan & highlight what's missing that is important to you!

**Fi Pure Insight** @fi\_insight · 1m  
Please get in touch with me or @InsightNatalie if you would like to come along 😊

FUTURE FIRST NEW BELONGINGS PRESENTS...

# CHECK IN WITH CORAM VOICE

## ON ZOOM

### THURSDAY 7TH OCTOBER

#### 6PM – 8PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/95709260711>  
Meeting ID: 957 0926 0711  
Password: NewBelongings

Come and have a look at the Action Plan for Future First

Tell us what's working, what needs changing and what can be improved?

**JUST EAT**  
£15 voucher for your time

For more info please contact:  
Chiara Edwards  
07929177096  
chiara.edwards@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

coram Voice getting young people's views

Future First Richmond and Wandsworth

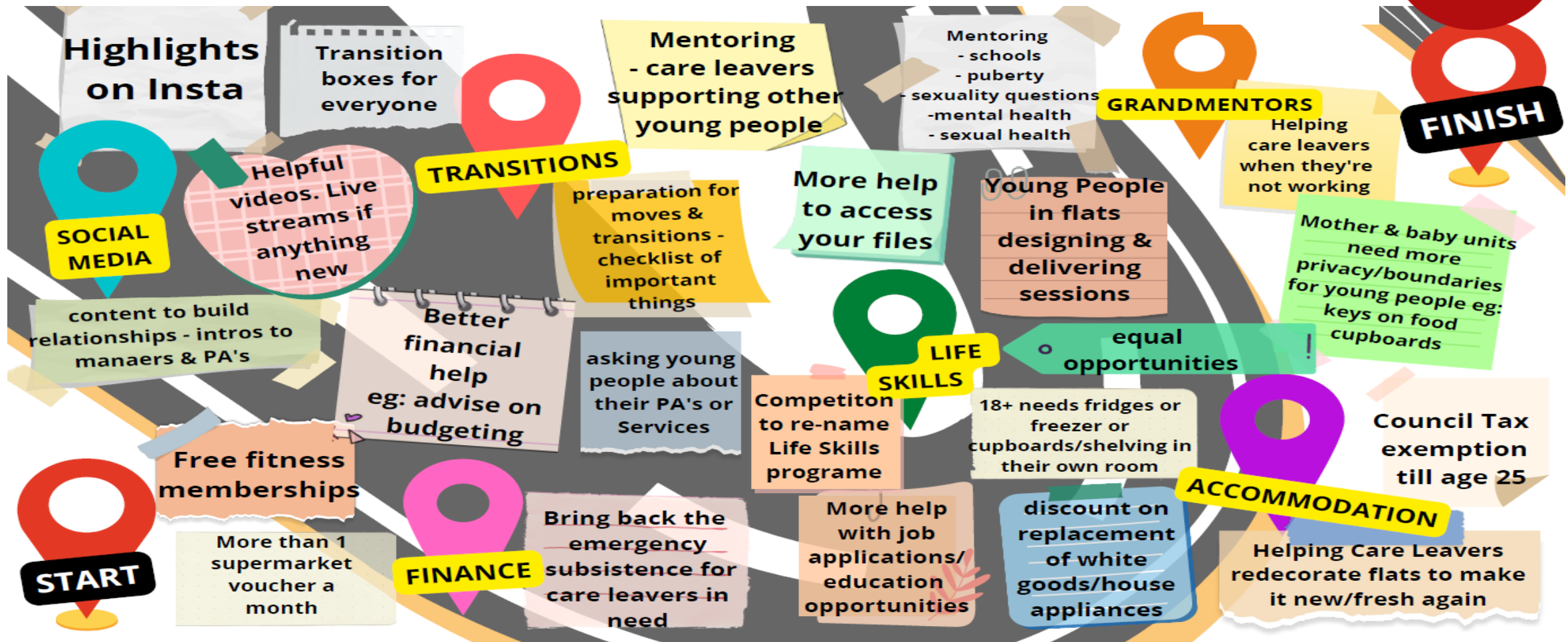
# Common themes in action plans

We analysed the 8 local authority action plans – the themes below were most commonly worked on:

<b>1. Support from leaving care service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All 8 local authorities (LAs) included this in their action plans</li><li>• 46 specific actions</li></ul>
<b>2. Improving accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 LAs included this in their action plans</li><li>• 53 specific actions</li></ul>
<b>3. Emotional health and well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 LAs included this in their action plans</li><li>• 46 specific actions</li></ul>
<b>4. Education , employment and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 LAs included this in their action plans</li><li>• 45 specific actions</li></ul>
<b>5. Financial support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 LAs included this in their action plan</li><li>• 34 specific actions</li></ul>
<b>6. Other areas</b>	Local authorities worked on a range of other actions e.g. understanding personal history; tackling isolation etc.

# Young people's ideas

Practice example



Wandsworth young people had lots of ideas about what they want to work on.

# 3.1 Increasing the support offered by leaving care services

All 8 local authorities' action plans focused on ideas to improve the support leaving care offered to young people based on the YLBC findings and self-assessment results.

# Increasing the support offered by leaving care services

- The YLBC survey findings showed that many care leavers rated highly the support they got from their leaving care workers.
- Five LAs were awarded Bright Spots\* for trust in workers
- Four were awarded Bright Spots for continuity of workers and ease of contacting worker
- We encouraged all LAs to include one area in their action plans where things were going well – and develop actions that built on what was already working.

\* Bright Spots are awarded in YLBC LA reports when young people report significantly higher levels of wellbeing than seen in other LAs or by peers who are not care leavers

*Best leaving care worker I've had so far, very trustworthy and understanding.*

*My worker is so kind so genuine. I would be totally lost without her.*

*I have had the same leaving care worker since I was 17 and would say that she's a very important person in my life.*

*He's good at getting what I need done and always gets in touch and keeps me updated.*

# Co-produced Practice Standards



**Why?** In Hertfordshire 70% of care leavers reported they found it easy to contact their worker 'all or most of the time', but some reported uncertainty about the level of support they would receive. Managers wanted to ensure that despite being a large authority with over 750 care leavers a consistent service was offered to all young people.

**What?** The care leaver forum co-produced standards that set out the minimum levels of support a care leaver could expect to receive up to the age of 21. The standards will be adjusted to meet individual needs and cover:

- **Contact with their workers-** frequency of calls/ visits, names and number of managers and duty and cover arrangements.
- **Support at meetings and help with forms-** what meetings the PA will attend and how to build young people's confidence to manage on their own
- **Moving into their own flat** – PA to attend 'sign up' meeting, the essentials for moving in and who will help with DIY/ decorating
- **Support through difficult times-** the level of extra support. PAs have received mental health first aid training.

Young people shared the standards with the leaving care services and they have been adopted by workers & managers.

**Impact:** Young people were very positive about their work and felt they had been listened to. PAs felt they were helpful as it gave clarity to their work and managers are using them in supervision. The standards are being shared with social workers, IRO and fostering staff so young people and those working with them are aware of the available support. Everybody is reporting that they are helpful and give a good starting basis to agree individual support plans.



OLDHAM

# Building trust with Personal Advisors

Practice  
example

**Why** - To ensure their care leavers feel supported Oldham have supported leaving care workers to develop their skills and increased opportunities to spend time with young people to develop relationships.

## What?

- Leaving care workers support an average of about 22 young people allowing them to spend time with their young people.
- Following a serious incident specific training was provided on suicide intervention strategies. This has led staff to report they feel more confident in their work with young people.
- A joint venture with the Youth Involvement Project and Personal Advisors has worked alongside young people who haven't ordinarily got involved with activities. Nineteen young people attended a Thai boxing group, 12 young women went on a spa day together and a group walked up Snowdon, raising over £1,300 to support other activities.

**Impact:** In the YLBC survey nearly all (90%) of Oldham care leavers trust their workers *all or most of the time*. This is higher than the 78% reported by care leavers nationally.



*"Feels like we're part of something normal.. and it's the social time I don't get otherwise."  
(Care leaver)*

# 'Always Here' scheme

**Why?** Findings from North Yorkshire's Bright Spots YLBC survey found indicated that the majority of their young people found it easy to get in touch with their leaving care worker. Care leavers in North Yorkshire also reported higher rates of trust compared to care leavers elsewhere. Building on these positive relationships North Yorkshire wanted to extend the support they offered their young people beyond the age of 25 (when services traditionally end).

## What?

- North Yorkshire recognized that some care leavers wanted to keep in touch with their workers after 25; to let them know what's happening in their lives, share their successes at work or university or to share major life events – such as having a child, getting married etc.
- Others wanted a bit of support or a listening ear when things were difficult.
- North Yorkshire introduced the 'Always Here' scheme so that all care leavers (regardless of age) are offered the option to approach the service at any age. Always Here is part of the Local Offer and it has been promoted on social media to alert young people who are no longer in touch with the service.
- Young people can contact their previous worker, a manager or the duty number to request a service.
- Young people are happy there is a formal arrangement so they can ask for help and workers feel their work is being recorded and acknowledged.

**Impact:** 55 young people have used this service in the first 6 months since its inception. Of these 22 young people have sought advice and 11 have wanted to share their achievements with the local authority.

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Working together on solutions

Practice  
example

- **Coventry:** Through their New Belongings action plan the local authority and young people looked at how they could support care leavers who felt more isolated at Christmas. Working alongside young people some of the ideas everyone came up with included: a Christmas themed treasure hunt for young families, hair and make up workshops, and Christmas dinner for 30 care leavers was served. For the first time young people who were on their own on Christmas day got a phone call from their worker or manager. Read more: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Coventry-in-Christmas-Feb-2021.pdf>
- **Stockport:** Have a long-standing successful relationship with Pure Insight (a local charity) <https://www.pureinsight.org.uk/> offering mentoring to care leavers. Linked to their New Belongings findings the local authority are proposing to extend the offer of a mentor to all care leavers (making it opt out rather than opt in). Their work with Pure Insight also enables social workers who have supported young people whilst they were in care to be trained and supported to become mentors for their young person - this had helped to provide continuity of a key relationship and help young people as they grow older.
- **Dorset:** Lots of the findings from Your Life Beyond Care were positive about the relationships care leavers had with their PA – to help young people continue to share this good feedback Dorset set up an email address where young people can tell everyone what is going well (as well as what's not going so well). They recognised the importance of leaving care workers and appointed 5 additional PAs and a manager to ensure these relationships started at 16 to support young people as they left care.
- **Oldham:** Have piloted 2 Personal Advisers having credit cards to support young people when spending their setting home allowance so that shopping can be done in a more flexible and less bureaucratic way.

COVENTRY

# Bringing people together



Practice  
example

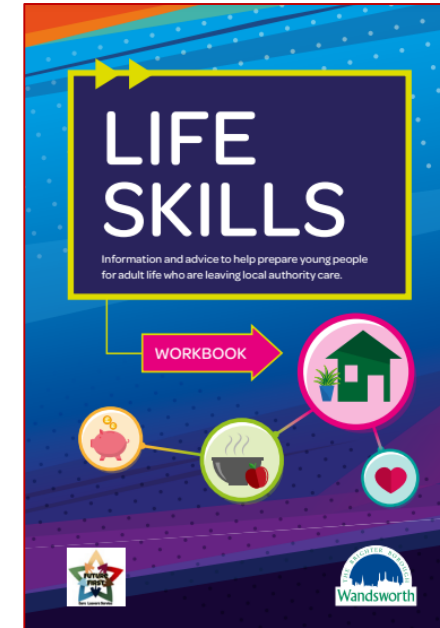
Coventry developed a range of initiatives that brought people together and supported care leavers to develop relationships.

- The annual awards event was held following feedback from children and young people. The awards focus was on inclusivity and diversity and was hosted by care leavers and included performances from talented care leavers.
- Coventry has been working with care leavers in custody and is part of the Innovation Project to provide Life Long Links support to those in custody and streamline pathway and sentencing plans. This has had a positive impact for those care leavers that have been part of the project.
- A parents group has been set up in Coventry as a result of the feedback from care leavers who are parents. This group is co lead by parents and focuses on wellbeing and self esteem as well as practical support for parents.
- An annual activities timetable has been devised specifically for children in care and care leavers to provide social opportunities and experiences. There have also been residential opportunities for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.
- A football group has been created which is mixed gender and inclusive. Regional tournaments have been attended to help build relationships with other local authorities and also provide leisure opportunities.

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Life skills

- **North Tyneside** – building on their positive findings and to maintain and further promote relationships with workers the care leaver drop in centre has recently been refurbished and provides a space for young people to call in, attend focused sessions, cook, do laundry and join workers for brunch and informal get together.
- **North Tyneside** - young people redesigned the **Branching Our Programme**. The programme helps young people develop skills to live independently and has been introduced to children in care. This is part of the Staying Close project.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/932004/Staying\\_Close\\_North\\_Tyneside.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/932004/Staying_Close_North_Tyneside.pdf)
- **Wandsworth** - The Life Skills programme which is AQA Accredited has had 2 roll outs across a number of platforms. The training was planned between Care Leavers Teams and fostering colleagues to focus on preparation for adulthood & ways to support care leavers' well-being.  
<https://wandsworth.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-and-families/future-first/future-first-local-offer/independence-skills-for-care-leavers/>



**MOVING AWAY TO UNI?**  
**MOVING INTO SEMI INDEPENDENCE FOR THE FIRST TIME?**

Starting your journey into independence can be costly...  
If you don't feel you don't have some of the essential items to help you on your ways you could get a free...

**STARTER PACK**

Comes in 2 holdalls and contains bedding, toiletries, cooking stuff, and more...  
(For Wandsworth Care Experienced Young People)

For more info please contact:  
Mei Lai Lu: 07775417462 | [click@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:click@wandsworth.gov.uk)

## 3.2 Improving accommodation

All but one local authority worked alongside their young people on ideas relating to improving accommodation – looking at things like safety and sufficiency.

# Improving accommodation

- Findings from the YLBC survey completed by young people from the 8 authorities in 2020 showed
  - 68% felt always safe in their accommodation
  - 62% felt always safe in their neighbourhood
  - 53% felt always settled in their accommodation
- This is in contrast to the 85% who according to government national statistics are in 'accommodation considered to be suitable' in
- Lots of care leavers wrote how they felt about where they lived – these responses as well as the self-assessment results led to many of the New Belongings local authorities focusing on housing in their action plan.

*My house is in XX but I want to be in [town], so its hard.*

*Hostel, don't feel safe, hate it where I am.*

*Feels like home but when I leave this place it will be difficult*

*I live in a nice area with a nice community. The walks where I live a great ... I love my home and where I live*

# 'Future House'

**Why?** Care leavers were uncertain about their accommodation options and felt there was a lack of transparency in the process. Wandsworth produced an accommodation guide and worked to include young people more in decision making.

**What? Future House** is a bi-monthly meeting of young people with housing and leaving care managers to discuss housing related issues.

- Since it started it has overseen the production of a myth busting accommodation guide – developed jointly with young people. It sets out the different housing options and scenarios young people may face.
- Monthly multi- agency housing meetings are held. These are jointly chaired by housing and leaving care managers and look at all requests for social housing and rent guarantees. Young people are encouraged to attend. The panel has been a great way for young people to have a meaningful role in decisions about their future housing needs. It has helped young people understand the process.
- Young people have also been involved in contract monitoring meetings. There has been a focus on issues that are important to young people – such as staff turnover, making sure staff offer consistent responses, levels of repairs and access to Wi-Fi.



**Impact:** Housing continues to be a challenge in Wandsworth but in their recent YLBC survey more young people reported they safe in their homes and neighbourhoods.



# Improving accommodation options



**Why?** Dorset recognised that a number of their care leavers did not feel safe where they lived. They have developed a number of services to help address this. Young people have supported this work.

## What?

- Increase the number of staying put arrangements and encouraging young people to remain in supported lodgings post 18
- Implemented the rent guarantor scheme <https://www.maryannehodd.co.uk/>
- Working with private landlords and Housing Association so young people are properly supported when they first move into their own accommodation
- Developed a quick response service to support young people with difficulties so they can remain in their accommodation and don't have to keep moving.
- Increasing the number of one bedroom accommodation available to care leavers, especially in the Weymouth area.

**Impact** – it is early days in the work and impact will take time to be felt but Dorset continue to keep this issue on the agenda and continue to work on making sure they have a range of safe accommodation options for their young people.

# STOCKPORT

## Ring doorbell pilot scheme



Practice  
example

**Why?** A number of care leavers reported not feeling safe where they were living in the Your Life Beyond Care survey.

### What?

- In response to the YLBC findings young people were asked more about *why* they did not feel safe where they lived.
- Young people had the idea that 'Ring' video doorbells could help.
- The local authority piloted this – initially with 8 young people so they could see who was approaching their door via their Smartphone.
- If young people did not have WIFI or phone this was provided.
- The cost is just over £100 per young person.

**Impact** – Those taking part completed a survey at the start and end of the 30 day trial – everyone was very positive about the idea. It will now be rolled out and offered to all care leavers signing a tenancy. Oldham are now running a similar scheme

Stockport care leaver's forum members and head of service have taken on to help young people to feel safer in their own homes. 🙌

[#yousaidwedid](#)

[@pureinsight1628](#)



# Accommodation

- **Coventry and Oldham:** following their survey results workers are making sure that they regularly ask more about if their young people feel safe in their homes & remain curious about what needs to happen for young people to feel safe. When young people share that they do not feel safe then their concerns are directed to senior officers for wider action.
- **Coventry and Hertfordshire:** have introduced 'young inspector' schemes where young people are supported to check accommodation.
- **Oldham:** Updated their joint working protocol with colleagues from Oldham's housing Department; training has been provided for all staff. As a result of their protocol no young person has been evicted from their accommodation in recent years.
- **North Yorkshire:** their Kickstart workers have developed 'suitable homes criteria'. This looks to ensure young people get the right accommodation first time and it asks questions that are important to young people's well-being like 'Can I have a pet' so they feel settled and able to remain there on a long term basis.

## 3.3 Emotional health & well-being

Having good emotional well-being is pivotal to young people having a positive experience both in and after care. Positive emotional well-being underpins success in other areas of life

The emotional well-being of young people leaving care is a critical consideration for corporate parents. But the survey results from YLBC showed that care leavers don't always feel their emotional well-being is prioritised and supported as a result many of the local authorities focused on this area in their New Belongings action plan.

# Emotional health & well-being

In the YLBC survey completed by young people from the 8 authorities in 2020:

- 34% reported high levels of anxiety yesterday
- 29% reported they felt unable to control the important things in their lives
- 21% reported feeling lonely always or often
- 26% reported low life satisfaction.
- All these figures are considerable higher than those reported in the non care leaver population
- When completing the Baker-Dixon self-assessment all authorities scored 'Having good health and wellbeing as the lowest of the 10 gold standard areas.
- As a result nearly all NB local authorities focused on working with their young people to improve emotional well-being.

*Have very little confidence in myself and my abilities ... I'm always physically poorly due to anxiety*

*I have been feeling quite anxious and overwhelmed ... a bit emotional with things like university, but there are other times I feel happy and enjoy it.*

*I am good*

*I feel as if that nobody cares about me until they want something.*

# Specialist workers to support emotional health and well-being needs



**Why?** 24% of Wandsworth care leavers (about 85 young people) felt they had a disability or long term health issue and there were concerns existing services were not meeting their needs.

## What?

- Wandsworth recognized that a range of services were needed to support their care leavers who had additional mental health/ emotional health needs. A team manager co-ordinates these different services:
  - **Transition social worker-** They will be allocated to work alongside the PA to complete the Care Act assessment and support the young person to access services
  - **Specialist Personal Advisor-** They have a background in mental health and bring a therapeutic approach to their work with up to 15 young people who are experiencing acute difficulties.
  - **Commissioned counselling services.** Two 0.5 fte counsellors support care leavers. One offers a more traditional style of counselling. The other offers an 'out reach' style – working with young people in custody or those involved in gang related activity.
  - **Talk Wandsworth** – Part of the NHS- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) and used by a number of young people who value the confidential nature of the service.

**Impact:** Offering this range of services gives the leaving care service different options to support care leavers.

# Opportunity Brokers

## Why?

It was recognized that to support care leavers to lead happy and successful lives they sometimes needed extra help to engage in activities. The Opportunity Brokers work along side the Personal Adviser to help young people fulfil their aspirations and dreams. The work support positive well-being.

## What?

- The Opportunity Broker works care leavers following a referral from the Personal Adviser. This includes young people who are being supported under the 'Always Here' scheme (support post 25)
- The Opportunity Brokers develop contacts in local businesses, training providers, social and sports clubs so they can create opportunities for care leavers.
- If the young person is not ready to work towards their goal they are supported to deal with underlying issues – such as engaging in bereavement counselling, getting basic educational qualifications
- In some cases practical support is offered to help the young person get to the first day of work or activity.
- At other times they work closely with the PA and provide information about suitable courses/jobs etc. to the PA who will then support the young person to access the courses. Their approach is flexible to meet the needs of the young person.

**Impact:** As well as supporting young people to take up training and employment opportunities, the scheme has helped young people become a football coach, join a local theatre group and to take up a place at university.

# Ohana



**Why?** It was recognized that many care leavers who became parents needed some additional support and may be unable to access this through community groups. Ohana looks to provide the opportunities for young parents to meet up and to be supported.

## What?

- Ohana (meaning family) meets every 2 weeks at a local play café. The sessions are an informal and relaxed opportunity for young parents to chat and for their children to play.
- The volunteers who support the sessions can provide advice and support both emotional and practical support on a range of issues such as cooking, planning shopping and help with completing forms etc.
- Young people have described Ohana as welcoming and value its non-judgemental approach

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/in-care/lifelong-links-ohana-support-group.aspx>

**Impact:** The young parents who attend feel its helped them become more confident, be helped with practical problems they face and for their children to have a safe place to play.

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post from Hertfordshire County Council, dated 10 October 2021. The post text reads: "Introducing 'Ohana' a free and friendly support group for young parents who are in care or who are care leavers. Being a parent is hard! You are not alone. Would you like to be part of a supportive group and meet other parents with similar experiences? then look no further, for more info visit [hertfordshire.gov.uk/ohana](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ohana)". Below the post is a flyer for Ohana support groups. The flyer features the Ohana logo (a stag) and the text "Support groups for Young Parents who are in care or care leavers". It lists benefits: "Being a parent is hard, support groups are available for you to: Meet other young parents, Share your experience with others who understand and can relate, Support each other, Access information about support services e.g. benefit advice or childcare". A quote from a parent says: "...even though I'm living on my own, I'm not alone because I've got the other parents from the support group at the moment who are helping me. All the parents are on the same page, so it's nice". Contact information is provided: "If you want to find out more, email: [Lifelonglinks@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lifelonglinks@hertfordshire.gov.uk) Or call: Fiona on 07864224876 or Millie on 01992 588 344 Or visit: [hertfordshire.gov.uk/Ohana](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/Ohana)". The flyer also includes a photo of a man holding a baby and the Hertfordshire logo.



# Emotional health and well-being

- Following YLBC findings and the increased focus on well-being several local authorities have began (or strengthened) their 'out of office hours' support offer to care leavers: **Wandsworth** (Talk Wandsworth) and **Oldham** (Quell). **Dorset** have bought each care leaver who wants this a year's membership to 'Ask Jan' (Rees foundation helpline)
- **North Tyneside:** are developing a well-being pathway for care leavers which incorporates life story work, health passports and a well-being journal. This work will be jointly progressed by health and social care through their multi-agency board.
- **Dorset:** evidence from the YLBC survey helped to secure extra nurse time for care leavers (amount of time has doubled).
- **Coventry:** There is an agreed transitions process and protocol with adult social care. Staff are co located within the service once per week specifically in relation to transitions. As part of their New Belongings action plan the next step is to further develop the adult safeguarding referral pathways.

# Working together on solutions

- Recognising the wide range of things that can help bolster positive well-being the New Belongings action plans included a wide range of actions e.g.:
- **Wandsworth:** have introduced a new service model where the looked after team and the Future First (leaving care) teams 'twinned'. This will ensure a smooth transition from the social work team to the leaving care service and help maintain trusted relationships over this period of change. They have also introduced a new Practice Model which is systemic and trauma informed. It places a significant focus on young people social connections and Life Story Work.
- **Hertfordshire:** Changed their pathway plan so it includes the question 'Who would you go to in a crisis?' This will ensure there is a discussion about who the young person would trust, what support they can offer and who else might be able to help.
- **Hertfordshire** have set up a football team for UASC to provide additional support to this potential isolated group of care leavers

## 3.4 Education & employment opportunities

Improving education and employment opportunities was seen by local authorities as one of the key areas they wanted to improve through New Belongings.

# Education & Employment opportunities

- Young people from the 8 local authorities were asked the question '*Right now are you in education training or employment*' and the responses varied between 24% and 56%
- This proportion is much higher than in the general population where only 11% of 16-24 years olds reported they were not in education or employment.
- When local authorities completed their self-assessment they scored : '*Employment -helping care leavers into work*' as one of their top performing areas and one they felt they had made progress on between 2020 and 2022.
- Interestingly when we asked young people to rank the 10 areas of the self-assessment they felt this area was relatively one of lower importance compared to all the other areas.

I'm currently on ESA and cannot work atm, my mental health has been poor

I've worked 16 hours every weekend- I'm findings it hard

I have always worked full time and managed my money quite well

I like to do things where I see my daughter enjoying herself, but it hard to balance with my work from university

# Project Positive



**Why?** The YLBC survey results together with the bigger national picture were the driving force behind Project Positive. Working with Amazing Apprentices and a range of local employers including several hi-tech national companies Hertfordshire looked to create meaning work opportunities to address concerns about low income jobs and the links to poor mental health and loneliness identified by young people.

**What?** Project Positive had three strands – recognising the importance of each and their interconnectivity:

**1. Support for care leavers:**

- Tailored support to ensure care leavers had the skills and confidence to apply for opportunities.
- Help to address any emotional health and practical needs.

**2. Support for training providers:**

- Training to help them understand the needs of care leavers – including trauma and attachment issues.
- Maximizing additional support and encouraging flexibility.

**3. Support for employers:**

- Training to help them understand the needs of care leavers – including trauma and attachment issues.
- Coaching to encourage programme flexibility and individual needs.
- Additional support from the project team

<https://amazingapprenticeships.com/amazing-apprenticeships-launch-project-positive-in-support-of-hertfordshire-care-leavers/>

**Impact:** Young people have recognized the value of the programme and the support it offers. Large local employers are looking to join the scheme and other authorities e.g. North Yorkshire - are looking to develop similar projects. Hertfordshire & Amazing apprenticeships spoke at a New Belongings webinar to share learning.

# What is the programme?



2-year pilot  
programme



At least  
15 high-quality  
apprenticeships



Care  
experienced  
young people  
16-24



Hertfordshire



Committed  
employer



**Wrap around support**



Training provider

# Employment, education and training

**Wandsworth + Richmond Council** created work opportunities for care leavers across both authorities. This work included a focus on 'guaranteed interviews' and 'ring fenced' apprenticeships. So far they have:

- Raised the profile of care leavers across the LAs and encouraged recruiting managers to consider offering apprenticeships and job positions to care leavers.
- Where the recruiting manager decides to extend an apprenticeship or position to a care leaver, there will be a short application window (open just to care experienced candidates).
- If the care leaver is successful, they will join Wandsworth or Richmond Councils.
- A training pack has been developed for recruiting managers
- **North Yorkshire** have a tick box on their application form to note whether you are a care leaver. Young people can nominate a supporter to help them through the interview (usually their PA) and they are guaranteed an interview if they apply for a LA vacancy.

# Employment, education and training

- **Oldham:** the New Belongings action plan focus on employment helped secure the first 'ring-fenced' leaving care apprentice. Building on this work pledges have been secured from Highways department & Parks / Gardens for two further apprenticeships.
- **Oldham:** have strengthened links with 'Get Oldham Working team' and a representative will now be sitting with the leaving care team for part of the week.
- **Oldham:** partnership working with the Job centre has improved which has resulted in joint sessions for care leavers on building skills and job preparation. A dedicated senior practitioner is taking the lead in this work.



DORSET

# Myth busting about care leavers



Practice  
example

Dorset young people wanted to challenge the stigma that can be associated with care experience – they developed a film targeted at employers

Film – *You're a Care Leaver, I wouldn't have known*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z07x4njHas8>



## 3.5 Financial support

Young people leaving care often face significant financial difficulties. Care leavers often do not have the support that young people living with their birth parents receive – the ‘bank of Mum and Dad. Having a very low income or experiencing economic deprivation is associated with low well-being. Many of the New Belongings local authorities wanted to work on this issue in conjunction with their young people.

# Financial support

- Young people completed the YLBC survey in 2020 during the first national lockdown.
- At that time slightly less young people than care leavers pre-pandemic reported finding it 'quite difficult' or very difficult' to cope financially.
- By 2022 when the survey was re-run the proportion reported finding it 'quite difficult' or very difficult' to cope financially (20%) was back to pre-pandemic levels..
- We believe the slight reduction in 2020 might be due to the additional support that was offered at the time by national government through the Furlough scheme and by local leaving care services which by 2022 had ended.
- A much smaller proportion, about 7%, of the general population aged 16-24 report they struggle financially.

*I'm 20 years old and still struggle to budget. Having family that helps me is great but I can't always rely on them. Probably could do with some help to budget*

*Having family that helps me is great but I can't always rely on them*

*Without my partner living with me I couldn't live independently, even though I am working full time.*

# Personalised budgets

**Why?** Stockport recognised they often made additional payments to individual young people on a reactive basis in response to 'crisis' situations – this meant they did not always give additional ad hoc support to other young people. The Personal Budget (PB) looked to address this disparity.

**What?** The Personal Budget is for all care leavers up to the age of 21. It uses money from the leaving care team budget, so there is no additional cost to the local authority and it ensures the money is shared equally amongst all care leavers.

- All care leavers are allocated £315 a year, which includes their birthday and Christmas/festival money of £25 each.
- The young person and the Personal Adviser (PA) discuss and agree how the remaining £265 is spent. A Personal Budget Planner is completed by the PA and the young person identifying how the money will be used over the year. It can be used for a wide variety of costs- going to a festivals, holidays, clothing, entertainment and it can be used to provide a safety net for occasions for unplanned expenses.
- For those young people who struggle with budgeting the PA can support them closely with the personal budget spend and link them to specialist advice services.

**Impact:** Young people are positive about the Personal Budget and are able to see the benefits of budgeting and saving. It also allows them to use the money to do things their friends are able to do - so avoiding some of the stigma associated with care experience.

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Financial support

Practice  
example

- **Wandsworth:** young people have been involving in reviewing the financial policy and the setting up home allowance was increased (to £2500) to reflect rising costs.
- **Wandsworth:** given the importance of access to the internet (a theme in the YLBC survey) the local authority have committed to making sure care leavers have WIFI in their homes for (at a minimum) the first year after they have left care.
- **Strengthening working with partners** – some local authorities improved the intensity of their work with DWP colleagues; **Hertfordshire** relaunched their DWP protocol which stated that no young person should be sanctioned without discussion; in **Coventry** a representative from DWP started to attend young people drop in sessions to offer advice and support.
- Some local authorities focused on **ideas to improve individual pathway planning and offering money management** help. **Stockport** partnership with Stockport Homes to deliver SKILLS for independent living and support pre-tenancy training ; **Wandsworth** utilised the Monday Matters course and **Coventry, Oldham & North Yorkshire** include a calculator prompt in their pathway plans.

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Financial support

Practice  
example

- **Dorset:** in response to their YLBC findings where care leavers shared they sometimes struggled with their money Dorset increased the amount and variety of financial support available. For example, they sent all young people a £100 clothing and £50 supermarket voucher.
- **Dorset:** introduced a new Personal budget – each young person now has £700 (to last until age 25) – young people are encouraged to discuss and agree with their personal adviser how they want to use it
- **Dorset:** have made sure birthdays and important festivals are celebrated and everyone receives a gift.
- **Dorset:** have made sure that a significant proportion of the DWP Household Support Fund grants is allocated directly to care leavers for utilities, clothing and other essentials
- **Hertfordshire** offer Council Tax Exemptions to all care leavers up to 25. **Dorset** offer it to all care leavers regardless of where they live.
- **Coventry:** A care leaver apprentice supports the production of a newsletter which promote employment opportunities and money saving tips.

## 3.6 Other action plan areas

Local authority action plans contained lots of other areas everyone was working on together with their care leavers; for example, supporting care leavers to understand their personal history; tackling isolation and making sure care leavers had lot of positive relationships in their lives.

# Understanding own history and isolation

- Our New Belongings YLBC findings shows that 23% of care leavers had questions about the reasons why they were in care.
- Whilst young people in care may have had 'life story work' this cannot be seen as a one off event; young people's questions about their own history may change as they enter adulthood which means there should be able to have space for ongoing discussions.
- In 2022 the YLBC survey showed that 18% of care leavers in the 8 authorities felt lonely always or often. This is nearly double the figure reported by young people aged 16-24 who have not been looked after.
- As a result relationships and understanding personal history were key themes in a number of the New Belongings actions plans.

...I have asked why I was put into care, no one will tell me!!! I only have bad memories and therefore am left being very scared of my biological family and yet no one will/can help me..."

I just feel so alone and low. I have no confidence in myself

I've recently moved to be near support, but I don't know anyone else so I'm alone. I suppose I like to meet more people



STOCKPORT

# Community Hubs



Practice  
example

**Why?** Stockport were keen to look at how they could help their young people feel more settled in their local communities and to make links with supportive adults who could help them when the support from the leaving care service reduced or was unavailable. They also wanted to help support them financially. They made links with their Local Pantry scheme

## What?

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/your-stories/blogs/blog-stockport-local-pantry/>

- The Local Pantry is a community food scheme staffed by volunteers and run by Stockport Homes, Stockport's social housing provider. The volunteers are able to offer advice on recipes and ideas on cooking. They also use their skills and contacts to link young people with other community resources, e.g. DIY support in the area.
- There are opportunities for the young people to become volunteers themselves, with the aim of really establishing young people within their local communities.
- Creating community hub pilot links to the Local pantry was built into Stockport's New Belongings action plan to improve the support offered by the leaving care service and hopefully make young people feel more settled in their neighbourhoods.
- Each week the young people linked to the scheme can attend and select 10 food items (worth approx. £20) as well as a choice of free fruit and vegetables. Young people were able to access cheap but good quality food which had positive impact on nutrition and finances.
- The leaving care service paid the £10 joining fee and the £3.50 weekly charge for each young person.

**Impact:** Over 75 young people have been supported by the scheme, establishing a new network of support as well as being supported financially

# Helping young people understand their own stories



## We will .....

### To Support you to understand your life story and feel secure in your identity and maintain your family relationships, we will:

- Understand your life story, history, care experience
- Talk to you about your understanding of your life story regularly and when you become a care leaver
- Work with young people about the tools, materials and storage options that's right for you
- Support you to repair any family or key relationships important to you

YOU SAID	WE WILL - Actions required	By Who	Timescale	Progress
<b>1. To Support you to understand your life story and feel secure in your identity and maintain your family relationships, we will:</b>				
Help you to understand your life story, history, care experience	A New Policy and practice guidance and Training for staff	Principal Lead Social Care	By September 2021	A new policy and guidance for professionals and parent/ carers has been approved and launched from 24 June. Training has been delivered in July with further training planned from September 2021 for staff to help you understand your life history and care experience.
Talk to you about your understanding of your life story regularly and when you become a care leaver	The Pathway plan now includes section on understanding your life story. Your social worker or personal adviser will discuss this with you at least every 6 months as part of your pathway plan if needed.	Principal Lead Social Care  Social Workers/Personal Advisers	Completed  From 1 April 2021- Mar 22	Changes have been made to the pathway plan and review to ask you about your understanding of your life story regularly.  We will seek your feedback about this within your pathway plan review meetings and any support you may need.
Work with you to understand which tools, materials and storage options are right for you	Develop a new Memory Box for holding your photographs, certificates and other important items	Care Leaver Forum	By June 2021	Young people have helped us to develop a memory box for all children in care are care leavers. This was launched from 24 June 2021.
Support you to repair any family or key relationships important to you	Extend the Lifelong Links service so you can have this support with relationships in your family	Principal Lead Social Care	From 1 Sept 2021	We are working to make plans to extend the family group conference and lifelong link offer for you from September to support you with your family and key relationships.

### What difference will this make for me?

A new Memory Box for holding your photographs, certificates and other important items and more support with you family relationships

OLDHAM

# Combatting isolation



Oldham's New Belongings action plan focused on 'keeping connected'



You Said	We are doing	What you will see
22% of Oldham care leavers reported feeling lonely often or always. This is only 10% in the general population.  You told us that you wanted more fun activities and that lockdown had prevented you from taking part in these.	We have set up virtual tea time chats in the evenings to keep in contact with our care leavers and reduce isolation	Opportunities to check in with your PA's and others to help you feel less lonely
	We have launched our facebook page so that we can have better communication with our care leavers	Good communication about what services and opportunities there are that you can get involved with
	We are making sure that we have regular activities and events on for our care leavers that promote your well-being, develop your relationships and make you feel connected to others	A range of different things that you can try and that show you how important you are to us  Activities will be offered that you have asked for
	We are making sure that we consult with care leavers regularly to check that we are keeping our promises and so that you can shape the services that you receive	Opportunities to get involved in telling us what you want, what we do well and where we need to do better. Chances to get involved and design your care
-	We are going to continue to develop ways of making you feel cared about such as 'hugs in a bag'	You will feel cared for, appreciated and valued

OLDHAM

# Keeping connected action plan



Practice  
example

One of the sections in the New Belongings **Oldham** action plan was 'Keeping connected'

some of the ideas in the plan were:

- Making sure workers have space to check-in and keep in touch
- Application to TESCO scheme for free mobiles (via Care Leavers covenant)
- Links with local businesses who have supplied many new items
- Improvement to social media e.g. Face Book working as a good platform for inspirational words and sharing work opportunities.
- Care Packages at key times have continued for example during Eid or Christmas or at difficult times there is a focus on acts of kindness.
- More fun trips out (e.g. Snowdonia; Alton Towers) & links with other organisation who do youth activities
- Tea time chat is growing and several groups focused on music and art have been developed
- First after care Newsletter has gone out – looking to update at least twice each year.

Read more: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/features/article/personal-advisers-build-strong-relationships-with-care-leavers-in-oldham>

# Building relationships

- **North Yorkshire** – had a dedicated two day ‘Name your Network’ event to support workers to support their care leavers in building their own support networks.
- **North Tyneside** - have a drop in centre that has recently been refurbished and provides a space for young people to call in, attend focused sessions, cook, do laundry and join us for brunch and informal get togethers
- **Stockport** – have a high number of active mentoring relationships with care leavers and plan to offer this to all care leavers (opt out rather than opt in)
- **Wandsworth** - have created a Grand mentoring scheme - <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/opportunity/grandmentors-volunteer-wandsworth/>

# Tackling isolation

During the periods of national lockdown due to Covid-19 we saw leaving care services introduce a number of innovative and creative ways to support their care leavers and to tackle isolation.

- **North Tyneside** - PAs are posting a range of online activities to young people: wellbeing, meditation apps, and links to panda watching sites, virtual museum tours and mental health resources
- **North Yorkshire** – Young people were offered face to face visits via walking outside with their worker or video calls. This is reviewed on a weekly basis. For isolated young people they have increased the level of contact.
- Other local authorities had baking competitions, Netflix afternoons – where young people and staff watch a film together and chat online. The leaving care service have paid for one month's subscription if needed.

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-pandemic-Role-of-the-leaving-care-worker-FINAL-14.04.20.pdf>

It is important that creative thinking and planning is continued to be used now we have moved past national lockdown restrictions and work continues to help address isolation for care leavers.