

4. Summary and further resources

This section summarises what we have learnt in the New Belongings programme and sign posts to further resources. It stresses the importance of local solutions and the ongoing benefits of giving young people the opportunity to influence the services that support them. It highlights the core elements of the New Belongings model and the steps in our co-production, learning from the Lundy approach to participation. **Listening and acting on young people's voices should be at the heart of children's social care. We encourage all services that work with care experienced young people to embed participation and co-production in service development.**

Work together to make things better

We realised that services are better for young people when informed by young people's views...

Participant, local authority dissemination events

The core message of the New Belongings programme is simple:

To deliver the best support and services to care leavers you must work alongside young people.

Over 3 years Coram Voice worked with 8 local authorities from Dorset in the South to North Tyneside in the North, to help them understand the views and experience of their young people find new ways of making their lives better through co-production. The authorities developed lots of different ways to support care leavers. These practice examples have been included throughout this report and you can also search them in our online **Bright Spots Resource bank**.

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>

We want these examples to inspire you to go on your own co-production journey. Whilst there were many great ideas we do not want other local authorities to see these as off the peg solutions to just pick up and roll out in their local areas.

The importance of local solutions

The important lesson from New Belongings is that the value comes from working with young people locally to develop solutions that they feel will make the most difference to them.

Not only does this identify the changes that are relevant to care leavers in their particular area, but the process itself has benefits for the young people participating.

We collated some feedback from young people about what they felt they got out of New Belongings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7Akw0xHRYE>



[Being involved] has helped me feel heard and feel positive about the future of care leavers. This has also made me feel like some things can be changed for the better. This is a sense of relief because sometimes in the care system you feel like you're going to get nowhere. You feel trapped and lost and forever lonely but this has all these changes that have come into place through the New Belongings (Project) have carried on to benefit many others and I would like to carry on seeing these changes progress and stay in place in the future. So I am really happy to be a part of this.

Care experienced young person involved in New Belongings

Evaluating progress

The final New Belongings evaluation report was published in Autumn 2022. It found that the local authorities involved experienced:

- **Increased funding for the leaving care service** (new posts and targeted provision)
- **Improved relational practice and connectivity** (relationships between leaving care workers and young people, as well as improving social activities for care leavers)
- **Additional opportunities and resources for care leavers** (e.g. through the Local Offer, as well as education and workplace opportunities)
- **A greater focus on suitable and affordable accommodation** (Ring Doorbell and Guarantor scheme)

I've had my voice heard and have seen evidence that my voice has been heard...

Care leaver

There were things being talked about, but New Belongings pushed them over the line...

LA lead

- **Greater awareness of young people's needs and views through their direct contribution** (developing mechanism to listen to care leavers voices, - Task Force leaders, care leaver Champions)
- **Increased co-production with young people** (identifying solutions to problems, such as the Care Leaver Standard)

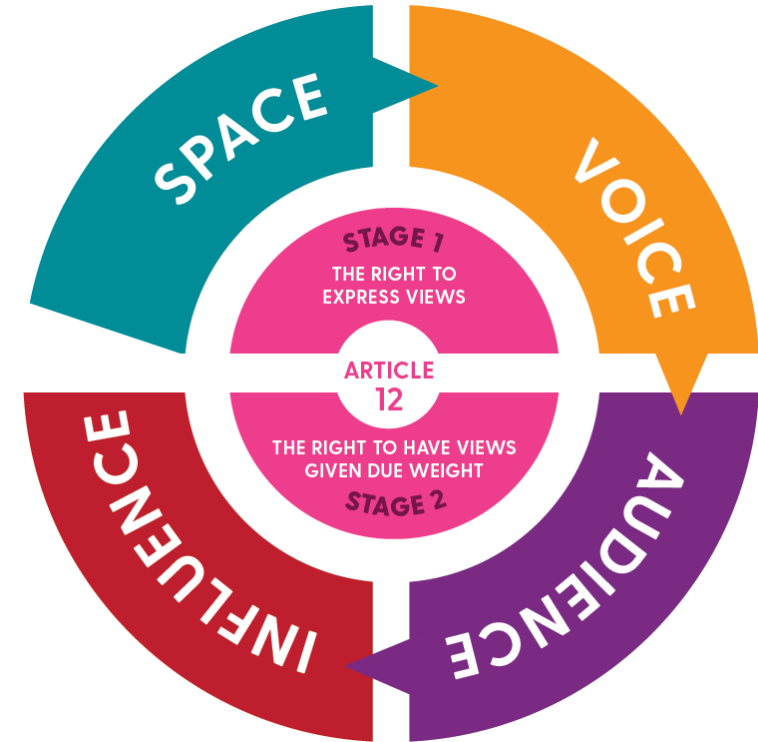
The impact of having more care experienced young people embedded within our service has helped with a longer-term change in culture. This is quite subtle but immensely important. **Final LA meeting participant**

Learn more: <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-final-evaluation-report-2022>

Making change happen through co-production

We adopted [Lundy's model of participation](#) which shows co-production and participation requires commitment to give young people opportunities to have a say (**Space**) and the information and support to express their views (**Voice**). In New Belongings we did this through the Your Life Beyond Care survey and ongoing engagement.

However, this is not enough. Meaningful participation requires professionals, including senior managers, to get together with young people to listen to what they had to say (**Audience**) and make a change as a result (**Influence**). We made sure that New Belongings Action plans were based on what young people said was important and they were involved in designing solutions.

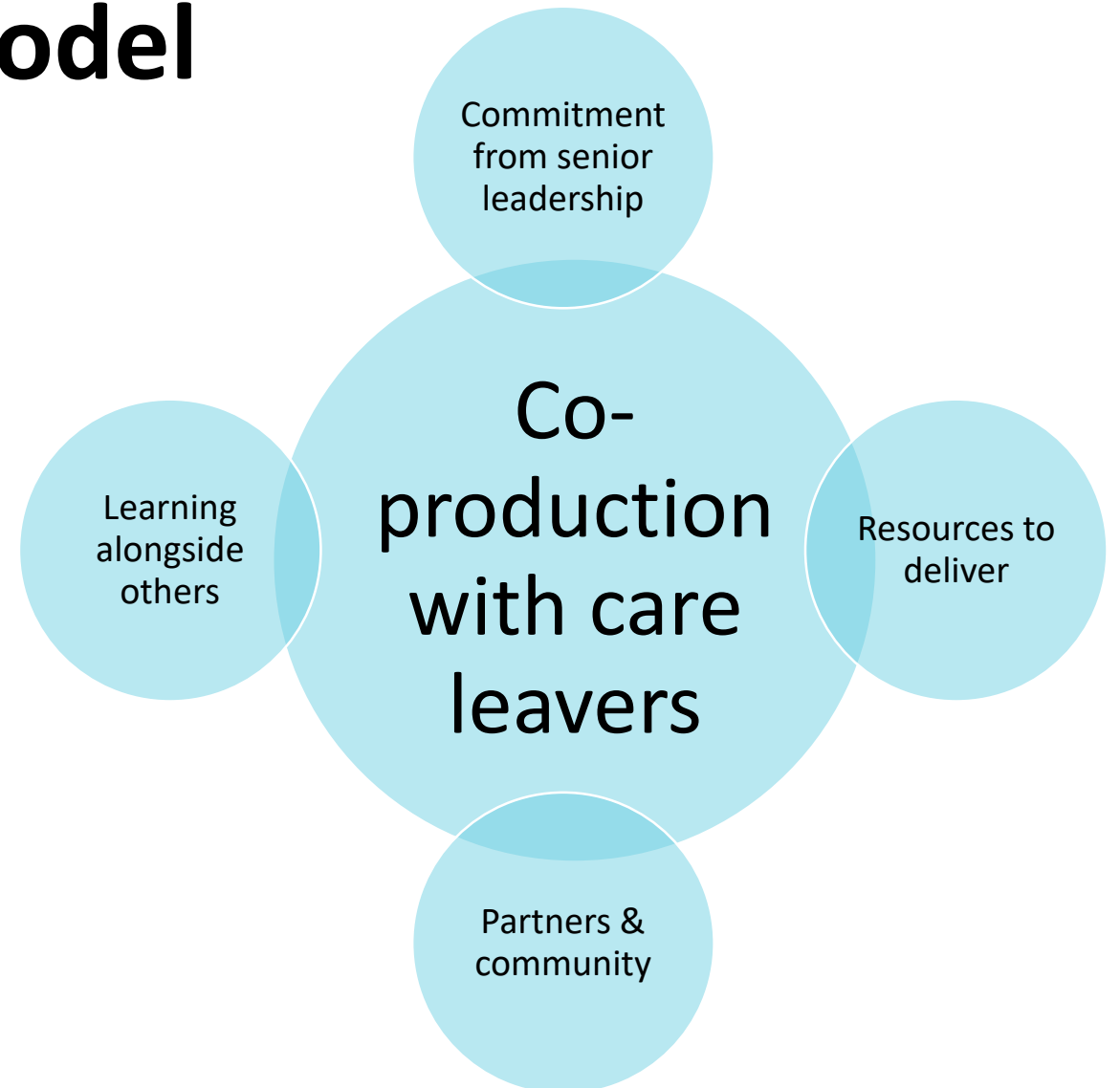


<https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>

Core elements of NB model

We identified 5 cornerstones to make the New Belongings approach successful:

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 tools to understand and assess change

The work was supported by 2 key tools (the Your Life Beyond Care 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.

Because of the timing of this work the programme also became an opportunity to understand how the pandemic impacted on care leavers. Over 1,200 care leavers completed the Your Life Beyond Care survey at the beginning of the pandemic and again in Jan/Feb 2022. The baseline and final evaluation reports by Coram Impact and Evaluation highlights some of these findings.

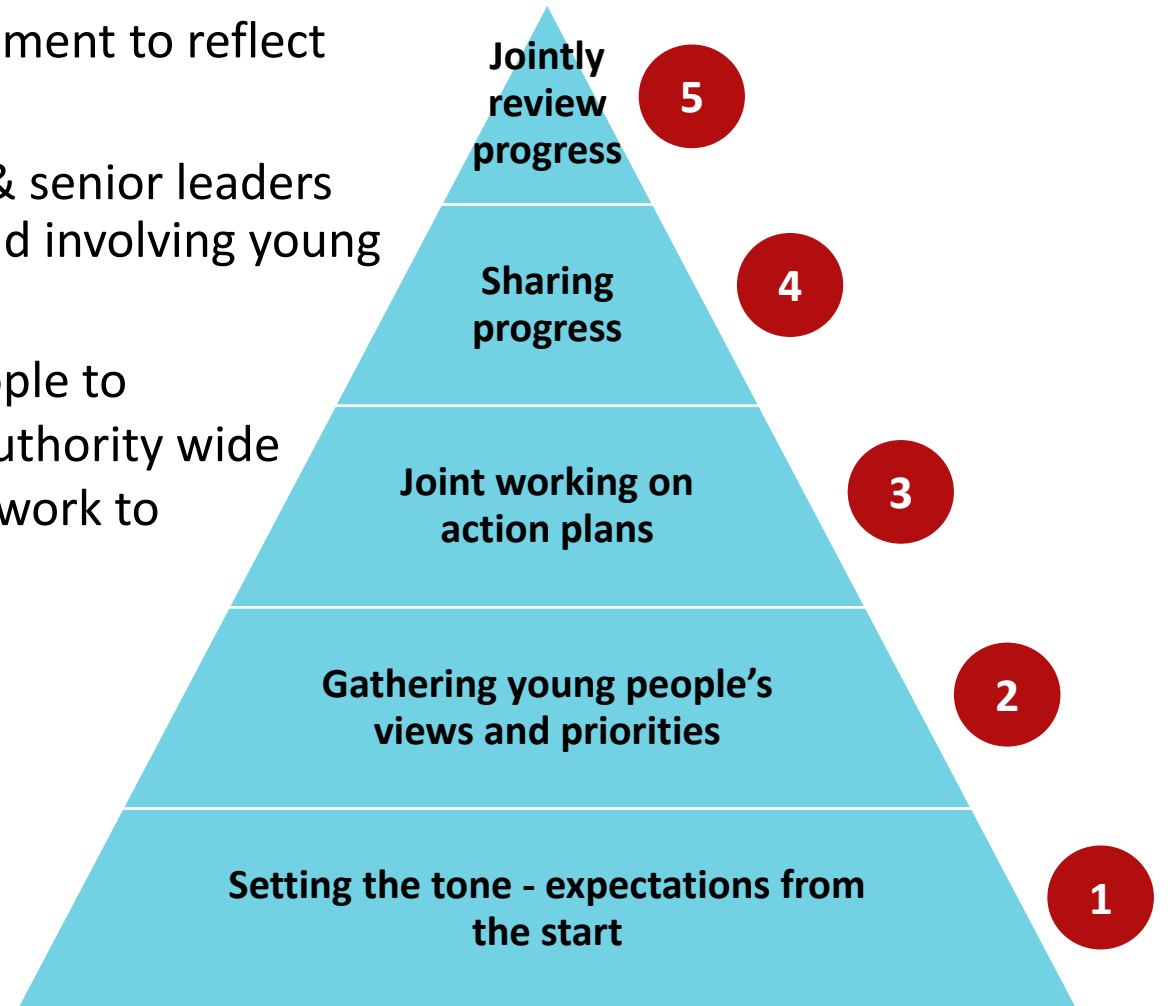
[The data] really drove things, for example with the housing. There were things being thought about, but it helped push things over the line, because the evidence was there for what we were doing, rather than it seems like a good idea... the survey really helped, that was one of the key things. We had 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

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.



Challenges of co-production

Co-production requires commitment and resources to make it work and there were challenges along the way. Changes in young people's lives can affect their ability to engage and it is important to keep working on making the work is relevant and makes sense to them.

The Covid pandemic started whilst we were still in the initial phases of the programme and the way we all worked had to adapt quickly. Losing face to face meetings meant it was more challenging to make sure young people had the space to be heard and could be actively involved in creating change.

Together we learnt about new ways of engaging online, which gave us new opportunities to bring people together, including those who may not always have been able to join in person meetings.

Not all the actions in local action plans were co-produced, but they all came from what young people emphasised was important in their survey responses. The different local authorities in the project used different ways of reaching out and engaging with young people and we have shared some of these in this report.

Keep working at it

In our final meetings with local authorities:

- 98% of participants agreed that the programme had helped their local authority listen to the views of a wider group of care leavers.
- 9 out of 10 felt that their local authority had new ways to involve young people in decision making and service development

Co-production and participation is a journey. With the right commitment professionals and young people can work together to make things better. Although it is not always perfect, continually aiming to bring people together, to listen and to act on what you hear is what is important.

Just because you can't do it as well as you would like to, does not mean you shouldn't do it at all.

Prof. Laura Lundy

<https://childfriendlygovernance.org/blog/laura-lundy>

We may not have always met the definition of co-production and we recognise that co-production is the gold standard and we can't co-produce everything, but it is still valuable to engage, educate and involve people in the work that we do and we have learnt to ask ourselves questions like: What can we learn for next time? Did people feel they made a difference? Was this true co-production? Was there any improvement for the people using the service?

Hertfordshire co-production video

<https://youtu.be/6W4U1dyujK0>

Recommendation

- The New Belongings model is a successful way of working alongside care leavers – it puts care leavers' voices and experiences at the centre of service delivery & design.
- All services can use some or all of the New Belongings approach to support their journey towards co-production.
- Hopefully the Story of New Belongings can inspire more services to go on that journey.
- **Listening and acting on young people's voices should be at the heart of children's social care.**
- **We encourage all services that work with care experienced young people to embed participation and co-production in service development and use the tools and learning from this report to support this.**

Thank you to all our project partners



North Tyneside Council



Acknowledgements

The New Belongings programme was led by the Voice Improving Care team at Coram Voice past and present:

- Linda Briheim- Crookall
- Dr Claire Baker
- Ian Stewart-Watson
- Emma Hosking
- Jenny Humphreys
- Pandora Ellis
- Shelly Reed

And special thanks to the Coram Voice Care-experienced consultants and all the young people in local authorities that participated in the Programme.

Supported by an Advisory Board: Rob Macpherson; Mark Riddell; Matthew Brazier; Jo Dixon; Helen Caldwell; Chloe Juliette; Peter Makeham; Laura Lines; Paul Dempsey

A special thanks to the programme funders:

Segelman
Trust

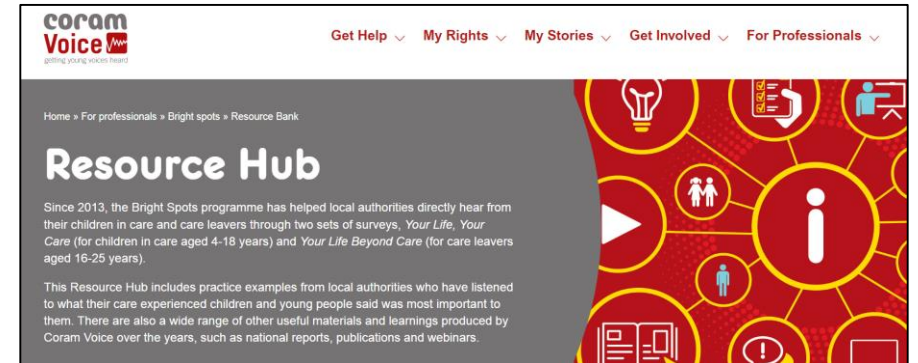


Esmée
Fairbairn
FOUNDATION

Find out more and keep in touch

- You can find the practice examples from this report along with many more resources in in the Coram Voice resource hub

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>



- To keep up to date with all developments from the Coram Voice team sign up to our newsletter: <https://coramvoice.us14.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=5d0d4c582fd00dabdc0008df7&id=324774c3cd>
- If you are interested in the Your Life Beyond Care survey or support based on our New Belongings learning do get in touch: Brightspots@coarmvoice.org.uk

References

- Baker/Dixon Leaving care services self-assessment - <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/baker-dixon-leaving-care-services-self-assessment-framework>
- Dixon & Baker (2016) *New Belongings: an evaluation*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/562139/DFE-RR616-New_Belongngs_programme_evaluation.pdf
- Ludvigsen & Taylor (2021) *New Belongings programme: baseline evaluation*
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/New-Belongings-Baseline-Evaluation-report.pdf>
- Ludvigsen & Taylor (2022) *New Belongings programme: Final evaluation*
<https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-final-evaluation-report-2022>
- QUB - Enabling the meaningful participation of children and young people globally: the Lundy model <https://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/case-studies/childrens-participation-lundy-model.html>