

# **The Story of New Belongings:**

**Improving services for care leavers with care leavers**

January 2023

# Introduction

- This report tells the story of New Belongings.
- We are really excited to share the learning from the programme.
- The core message is simple: to deliver the best support and services to care leavers you must work alongside young people.
- This report shares our learning on this.
- All services can use the New Belongings model.
- If you are struggling or want to take your work to the next level Coram Voice are available to help.



# Outline – What is in this report?

## 1. What is New Belongings?

## 2. What made New Belongings successful?

2.1 Co-production with care leavers

2.2 Commitment of senior leadership in local authorities

2.3 Resources to deliver

2.4 Partnerships

2.5 Peer learning

2.6 Tools used in New Belongings

- Self-assessment

- Your Life Beyond Care survey

## 3. What did local authorities do?

3.1 Increasing the support offered by leaving care services

3.2 Improving accommodation

3.3 Emotional health & well-being

3.4 Education and employment opportunities

3.5 Financial support

3.6 Other action plan areas

## 4. What next?

# 1. What is New Belongings?

The New Belongings (NB) programme provides a structured (yet flexible) approach to continuous engagement with young people to identify priorities and develop services to meet the needs of local care leavers.



# The building blocks of New Belongings

## Local authority (LA) selection

Each LA submits an expression of interest to join the programme which demonstrates their commitment to the programme and co-production.

## Baseline evidence

All LAs complete a self-assessment (with managers and care levers) and do the Bright spots Your Life Beyond Care survey with their care leavers – to better understand what makes life good for their care leavers and how to improve the support they are offering.

## Action planning

Using the baseline evidence the local authority works with their young people to co-produce solutions to the issues identified. An action plan is produced

## Implementing action plans

LAs spend around 1 year implementing their plan. There are formal reviews measuring progress against the plan with both care leavers and LA staff. Care leavers are supported to review and challenge the LA on progress of the plan

## Review progress & refresh plans

Towards the end of the programme each LA does the Your Life Beyond Care survey & self-assessment again to inform on-going review and refresh of action plans

Throughout all stages of the programme there is a focus on:

Care leaver engagement

Senior leadership  
commitment

Engagement of partners and  
wider community

Peer learning

# Continuing the legacy of New Belongings

New Belongings (NB) started around 10 years ago. It first ran from 2013 to 2016 and involved 23 local authorities.

The programme was originally funded by the Government and was facilitated by the Care Leavers Foundation.

Authorities in the original phase of NB created and tested different practices and approaches to improve services and outcomes. Some of these have influenced national policy.

For example, local authorities taking part in NB piloted approaches like Personal Advisers to 25 and Council Tax exemptions for care leavers long before these became national policy.

An independent evaluation of the original programme was published (2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-belongings-programme-evaluation>

Learning from the programme was published in a guide (2016)

<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/23786/sitedata/files/A-Guide-to-the-New-Belongings-Approach.pdf>

# New Belongings – new home, new phase

In 2019 New Belongings found a new home at Coram Voice with funding from Esmée Fairbairn and Segelman Trust.

The programme was reviewed based on the evaluation and learning from the previous phase and a new 3 year programme began (from July 2019 until July 2022).

This report tells the story of this new phase of New Belongings.

## Evaluation

Coram Impact & Evaluation did an independent evaluation of the programme and produced:

- [New Belongings Programme: Baseline evaluation report \(2021\)](https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-baseline-evaluation-report-2021) - <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-baseline-evaluation-report-2021>
- [New Belongings Programme: Final evaluation report \(2022\)](https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-final-evaluation-report-2022) - <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/new-belongings-programme-final-evaluation-report-2022>

*When we started this in 2013, there was so much excitement to join up Local Authorities and share ideas, getting Care Leavers to meet other Care Leavers and ask questions about their own services. We've brought it back this year for a third time to really start to think about **how we can implement National change**.*

*I'd really like to see an **improvement in health services for young people** this year and really considering **mental health and services for 18-25 year olds** and how we can improve support and the transition process into adult services.*

**Mark Riddell MBE,**  
**National Implementation adviser for care leavers**

**16 local authorities  
applied to join the  
New Belongings  
programme  
8 local authorities  
were selected to  
take part**



# Local authority recruitment

- Each interested local authority was expected to submit an expression of interest, setting out their existing services for care leavers and current youth engagement work.

Prerequisites for participation were:

- A commitment and engagement from senior management including Director level and the Lead Councilor for Corporate Parenting to drive change through the programme,
- An existing care leavers' forum or commitment to set one up and coordinate this,
- Identification of a local authority lead to manage local authority engagement, commitment to dedicate staff time to coordinate local care leaver engagement, survey distribution, action planning and implementation.

*Our CEO, who chairs our corporate parenting panel, has been fundamental in championing the needs of care leavers. He and the Leader of the Council recently drove forward our 'Family Business' initiative to engage local employers in improving Education, Employment and Training (EET) support for our care leavers.*

**LA application**

*New Belongings has the support from senior members of the authority. The submission of interest has been supported by the Children's Services Leadership Team. Within the authority there is a large level of support to further improving support to care leavers.*

**LA application**

# Setting expectations – commitment required from the very beginning

The New Belongings application process for local authorities was clear on what was needed from local authorities. The application process asked for evidence of:

- A **commitment** and engagement from senior management including Director level and the Lead Councillor for Corporate Parenting to drive change through the programme;
- A **commitment** to embed the voice of care leavers in the local authority decision-making process;
- An engaged care leavers' forum or **commitment** to set one up and coordinate this;
- A **commitment** to dedicate staff time to coordinate local care leaver engagement, survey distribution, action planning and implementation;
- A **commitment** to identify a local authority lead to manage local authority engagement in the Programme. It is important that the link person has ready access to the Director of Children's Services and senior leaders and sufficient authority to be able to coordinate activity;
- A **commitment** to join up services across the local authority and with external partners to support care leavers and create opportunities in the wider community.



# In our words: What is New Belongings?



Young people from the participating local authorities worked alongside Coram voice's Care Experienced Consultants (CEC) to define what New Belongings meant to them.

# Coram Voice – critical friend and facilitator

- The New Belongings team included care experienced young adults (Care Experienced Consultants), supported by a programme manager and a participation lead, as facilitators to help the engagement of local care leavers.
- Coram Voice were in charge of running the programme (governance, planning & keeping all on track). The team provided external scrutiny and advice, reminding participating local authorities about the programme goals of co-production and engagement.
- The team also brought people together – partners, leaders & young people both locally and nationally. We provided opportunities to share learning nationally with other local authorities as well as government and policy-makers.



The New Belongings team made sure young people in each local authority had been involved in designing the solutions identified in the action plan. We pushed the local authority to make sure their young people felt like the plan was on track and that it included their thoughts and ideas.

# What Coram Voice originally offered:

- Support over x2 years – critical friend
- Self-assessment tool
- *Your Life Beyond Care* survey (at 2 time points)
- 8 visits to facilitate co-production
- Peer support sessions



# Care experienced consultants (CECs)

The programme employed care experienced young adults (New Belongings Care Experienced Consultants), supported by our programme manager and a participation lead, as facilitators to help the engagement of local care leavers.

*I would like to learn and enrich my understanding of the experiences that care-experienced young people may have. I'm excited to be part of the New Belonging Project where I can offer my insights and assist to implement change that may help other young people.*

Thuy Ly-Chambers, Care-experienced Consultant at Coram Voice



# Working alongside CECs

- The programme originally recruited 8 Care experienced consultants (CECs). These were care experienced young people aged 16-25.
- CECs are paid sessional roles managed by the Participation Manager .
- The recruitment and interview process went well. Interviews included a group exercise, an interview panel and Warner interviews.
- The CECs induction process involved training in facilitation skills, interview skills, group work and research skills. We spent time considering how CECs would introduce themselves and the programme and how to share your own story.
- CECs worked together to plan sessions for the launch event and introductory meetings with each local authority (LA).
- The CEC role focused on visiting LAs and working directly with care leavers.



# Covid - Changing role of CECs

- When lockdown started in March 2020, the work of CECs paused.
- The pandemic changed the dynamic of the CEC role as meetings went online and some CECs, like many other care leavers at the time, were not equipped for this. Following an application for further funding Coram Voice was able to provide computer equipment to CECs later in the year.
- Some CECs personal circumstances changed during this time and we had to recruit new CECs to the project. We could not do the same in depth induction with this new cohort.
- The role of the CECs changed to adapt to the new ways of working. As a result CECs were less prominent in New Belongings. We tried different models of working over the course of the programme, but did not regain the level of engagement that we had in the beginning.



# Lessons learned in working with CECs

- Losing in person meetings meant a loss of structure and less direct work with other young people.
- Other commitments (e.g. work/college) and the nature of sessional work posed challenges to making sure CECs were available for meetings.
- Continuity and continuous engagement was important so not to lose momentum.
- Personal circumstances and challenges could lead individuals to disengage.
- Continuous re-recruitment, training and team building costs needs to be built into any project.
- Need to resource online engagement – we managed to source equipment, but not sourced for the first crucial period when the UK entered lockdown because of Covid and some young people may not have had internet at home.

# The New Belongings process

## PHASE 1:

### Engagement & planning

**VISIT 1: introduction to project**

Raise awareness, sign up champions,  
identify related work

**VISIT 2: plan data collection**

Baseline data collection

**VISIT 3: Review evidence & identify  
priorities & next steps**

Initial action planning

**VISIT 4: Review & finalise actions**

Final action plan in place

ONGOING TELEPHONE & EMAIL  
SUPPORT & ADVICE FROM NB TEAM

## PHASE 2:

### Implementation & Review

Action plan implementation

**VISIT 5: In depth focus group**

Update & cont. implementation

**VISIT 6: 6 month review**

Update & cont. implementation

**VISIT 7: review progress & plan data  
collection**

Progress data collection

**VISIT 8: Review evidence & develop new  
action plan**

New revised action plan

# New Belongings launch events

- Around 50 people from the 8 participating local authorities came to the New Belongings launch in November 2019.
- Those attending shared what they were most of proud of about what they were currently doing and their hopes for what they would achieve during the programme.
- Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, DfE, shared his experience of how to make a strategic impact with participating officers, service directors and care leavers, getting the programme off to an inspiring start.
- The national event was followed by local launch events bringing together care leavers, leaving care services and partner agencies.





**Tia Henderson (S...** @T... · Nov 7, 2019 ...  
 Interesting and inspiring meeting for the [#newbelongings](#) project - developing services for care leavers in Oldham and strengthening young people's voices! Exciting things to come [@cicc\\_oldham](#) [#yww2019](#) [#youthworkinaction](#) [#youthvoice](#)



**jeanette war...** @Jean... · Nov 11, 2019 ...  
 Great day at the New Belongings launch today in London.. Great enthusiasm, passion and inspiration in the room [@NewBelongings](#) [@The\\_SK\\_Family](#)



**Trudi Dunn...** @Dunn... · Nov 11, 2019 ...  
 The start of new beginnings. We are raring to go. [#newbeginnings](#) [#Stockportlct](#) [#Stockportlct](#) [@karenbazell](#) [@Jeanettewarb](#)  
[Show this thread](#)



**Sherrie Mc...** @Sherrie... · Nov 11, 2019 ...  
 Interesting day at [@CoramVoice](#) launch event of [#newbelongings](#) programme. Looking forward to starting the work and implementing into Coventry [@AnnMarieGuest1](#) [@drclairebaker](#) [@CoramVoice](#) [@MattJClayton](#) [@coventryDCS](#)



**matt clayto...** @MattJ... · Jan 13, 2020 ...  
 Great kick off meeting today for [#newbelongings](#) in Coventry [@CoramVoice](#) [@drclairebaker](#) [@NStirling4](#) [@AnnMarieGuest1](#) [@imms\\_jo](#) [@SherrieMcMaho14](#) [@SheilaBates18](#) [@VoicesOfCareCov](#) [@A1tchJH](#)



**Claire Ba...** @drclaireb... · Dec 3, 2019 ...  
 Sunny day up in north Tyneside for our 1st [#newbelongings](#) meeting - really great energy n enthusiasm in the room - we r really looking forward to working together





# Adapting to Covid-19

- New Belongings started in late 2019 – we were able to hold some of our initial meetings in person, but like everyone we had to move to virtual meetings as the pandemic started.
- We adapted the programme and offered local authorities more frequent virtual contact than had been originally planned.
- We tried out different ways of engaging everyone (Jam boards, menti-meters, virtual break out rooms).
- Much of the New Belongings programme was delivered online with some face-to-face meetings when restrictions allowed this.



**matt clayton** @MattJClayton · 18m  
First @ThroughCareCov service development morning delivered virtually! Once I got hang of tech seemed to go well. Good to all advanced pracs present! @AlexandraCapit8 @Dannii\_Ryan @jessicajade89 @NStirling4 @BeckGreenhouse @SherrieMcMaho14 @LTPM2 @coventryDCS @imms\_jo



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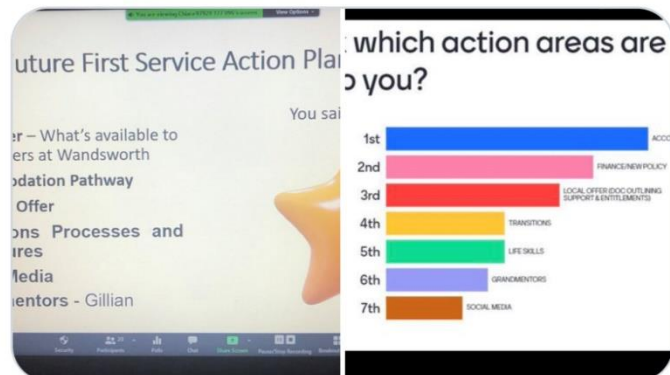
**matt clayton** @MattJClayton · 17m  
Lots of positivity about New belongings @CoramVoice @drclairebaker and how we support young people in this period as well

# Getting together online and in person



• C L I C... @clickwands... · Oct 8, 2021 ...

An amazing [#newbelongings](#) deep dive last night on zoom with [@CoramVoice](#) with 17 care experienced young people. Lots of progress on the action plan 😊 Great feedback from the young people as always! Bring on the face to face deep dive next week! [#getclicked](#) [#youthvoice](#)



Coram Vo... @CoramV... · Jul 28, 2021 ...

Some of our Voice's Improving Care team are out in the real world today, meeting with care leavers in [@northyorksc](#) as part of our [#NewBelongings](#) program. Excited to be seeing people outside of a screen!



• C L I ... @clickwands... · Sep 9, 2021

Amazing Click Plus last night coming up with ideas for the [#newbelongings](#) deep dive and yof [@WBCYouthCouncil](#) big shout out to Alfie for helping out with the BBQ come rain or shine...[#youthvoice](#) [#getclicked](#) [#clickfam](#)





# Final local authority meetings

- By the end of the programme most local authorities had held their final dissemination meetings (a mix of online & in-person).
- These were a chance to look at the second Your Life Beyond Care survey findings & self-assessment and discuss with young people and partners what work still needed doing.



sholden  
@sholdenuk

What a week! Service day then Ian Coram and our care experienced Tonia telling leaders and partners highs and lows of leaving care in Dorset, provoking thought as to how we can respond  
[#newbelongings](#) [@drclairebaker](#)  
[@DCSTheresaLeavy](#)  
[@mattprosserceo](#) [@CoramVoice](#)  
[@louisedrury6](#)



Kaye Wright  
@KWYouthVoice

Thank you Antonia for amplifying the voice of [#Dorset](#) [#CareLeavers](#) today by reinforcing the [#NewBelongings](#) messages we've heard.

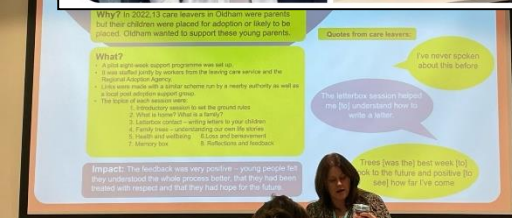
Lovely to meet you in person Ian ([@CoramVoice](#)), we hope you enjoyed sunny Dorset ☀️



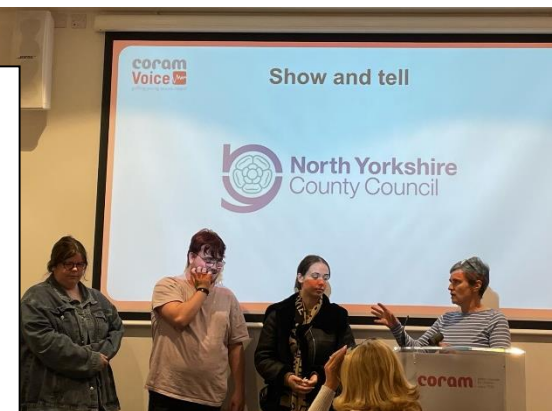
# Sharing learning

- The New Belongings programme ended with an in-person celebration event in October 2022 and series of webinars to share learning. The sessions were an opportunity to reflect on the 'story of the programme' and hear each local authority share what they were most proud of. For the participating local authorities the celebration event was also an opportunity to reaffirm commitment to working alongside care leavers.
- Recordings of the webinars and videos of some of the work local authorities shared are available on the New Belongings webpage.  
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/newbelongings/>

 **Maggie Allen** @Maggiempallen  
Great day in London at [#newbelongings](#) celebration event and fantastic to see colleagues in person from other authorities after nearly 3 years seeing them virtually .



 **Chloe Juliette** @clohesion · 1d  
Replying to @CoramVoice @MBrazierHMI and @linda\_briheim  
Lovely to see familiar and new faces and hear people talk frankly and openly about coproduction in local gov. More of this sort of thing I say!



 **Matthew Brazier** @MBrazierHMI · 14h  
Very pleased to be at yesterday's @CoramVoice event celebrating the work of the [#NewBelongings](#) programme - great contributions from participating LAs and young people [#coproduction](#) [#careleavers](#)

 **Coram Voice** @CoramVoice · 1d  
Panel discussion underway now with @MBrazierHMI, @linda\_briheim and @clohesion.



## 2. What made New Belongings successful?

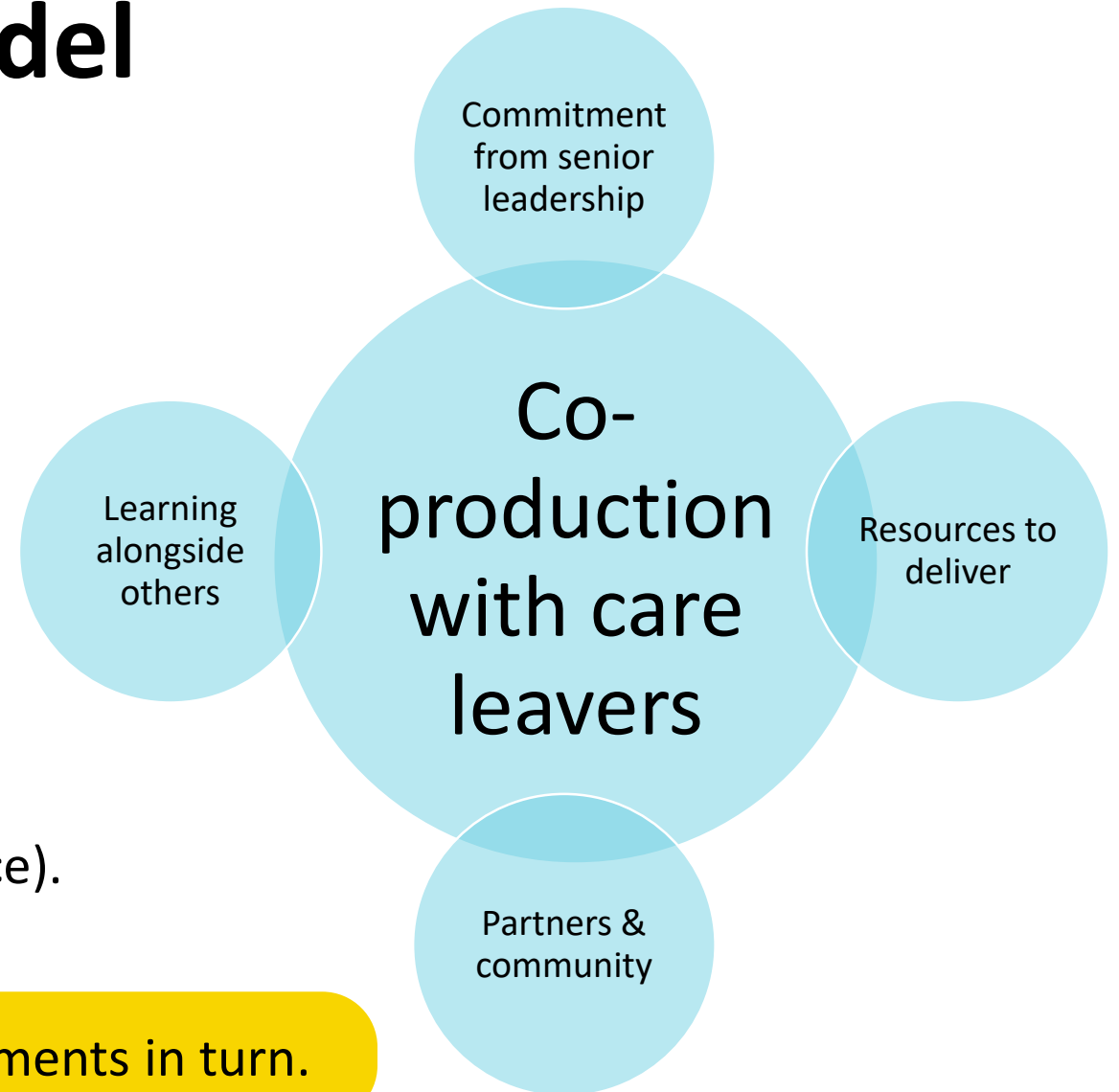
We identified 5 cornerstones to make the NB approach successful:

- (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

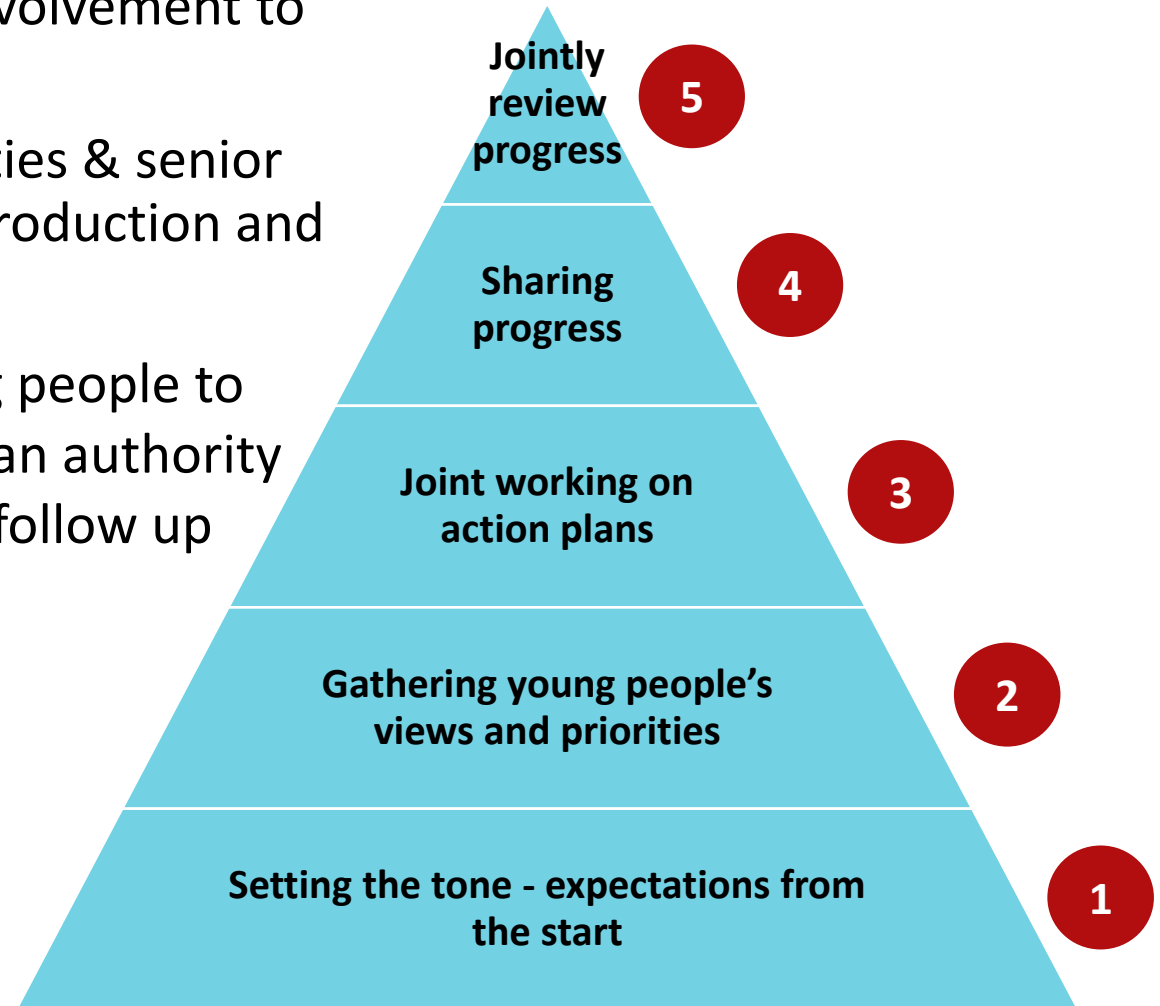
Developing services based on the views and experiences of care leavers is central to New Belongings. How local authorities listened to their young people and worked with them has developed and changed over time to reflect the reality in each authority and the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

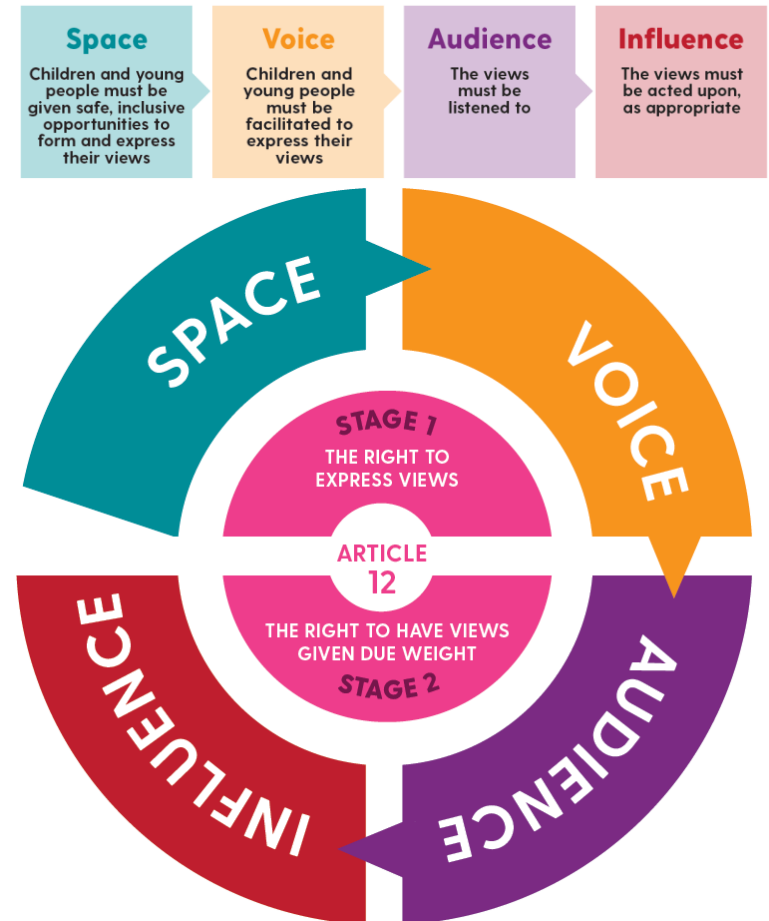
Lundy's model of how to support young people's right to express their views and be listened to sets out some core principles that can help staff and individuals ensure all participation, whether through surveys, one-to-one interactions, group work or activity, is meaningful for all involved. This model 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](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](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](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](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-lQZo>
- 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](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](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.



# Steps towards co-production (1)



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>

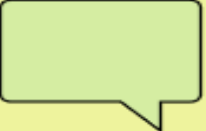

# Steps towards co-production (2)



Practice  
example

- 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

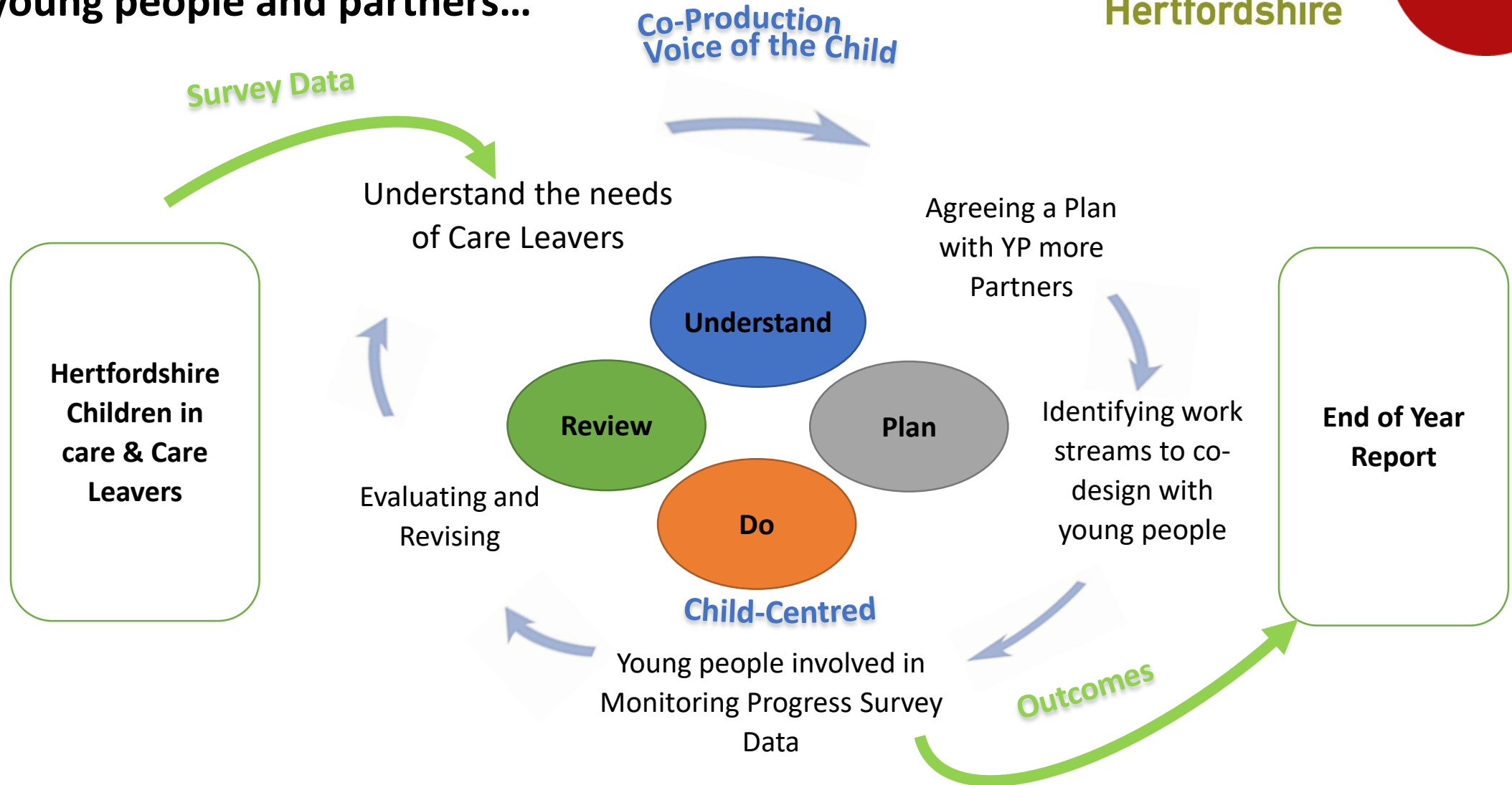
	You Said	We Will - Actions required	Who/ When	Update
1  	"There is a blurriness about what workers can and should do for young people. E.g. some workers take young people to meetings and support them e.g. if it's about housing benefit or take them for coffee. But some workers say they can't do that. It needs to be clear and, on the website, exactly what workers can and can't do"	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.	Care Leavers Service/CHICC	Standards document produced by staff and young people

HERTFORDSHIRE

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



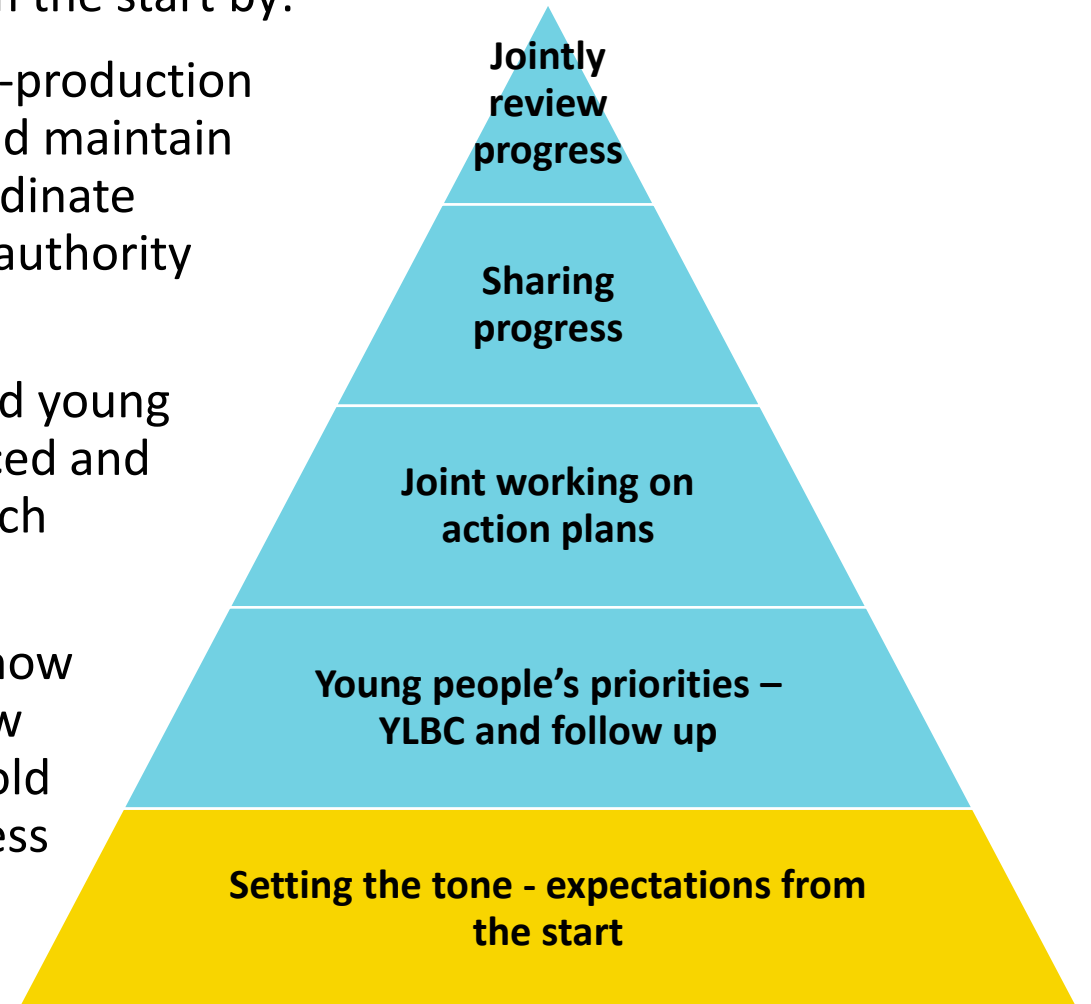
Practice  
example



# 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**  
[@Maggiecpallen](#)

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

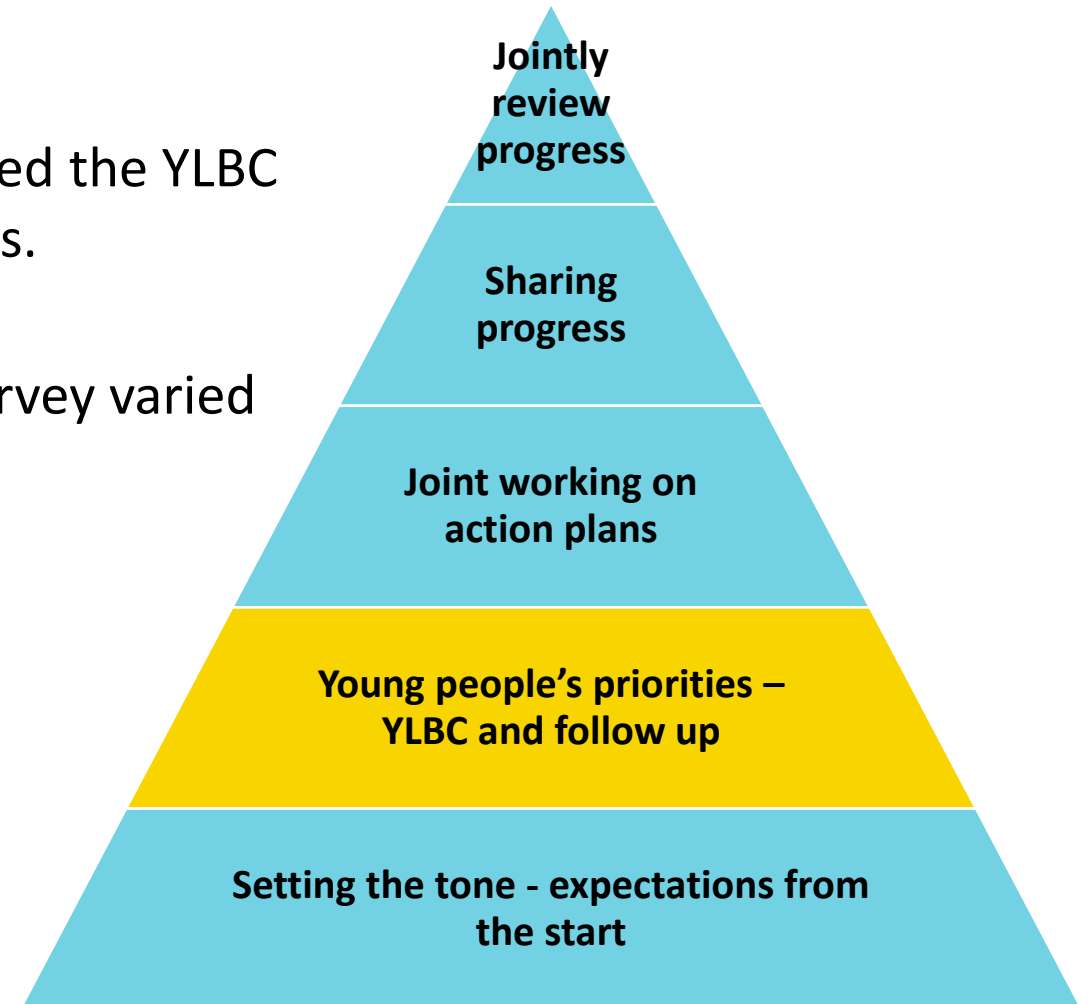
## *Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC)*

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



North Tyneside Council

Practice  
example

## 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"

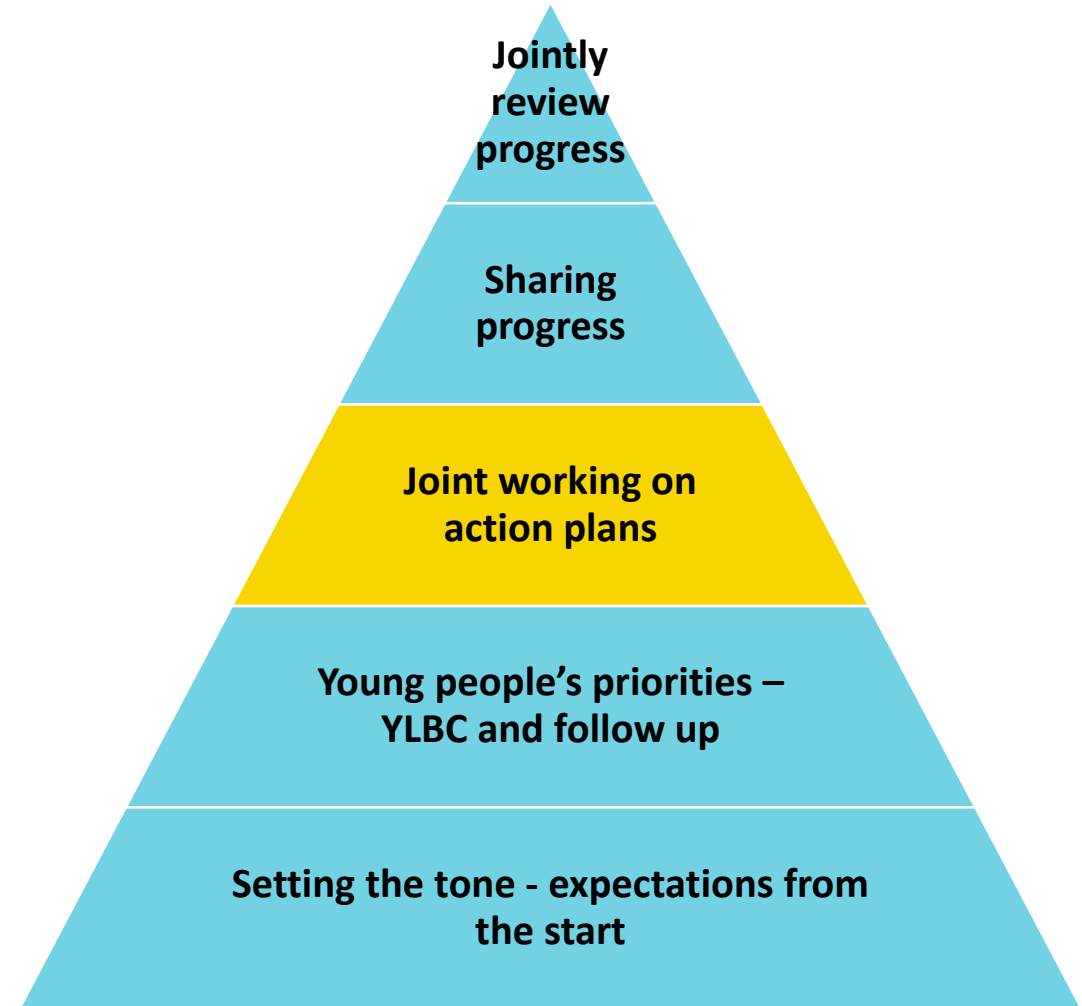
"I didn't know what choices I have, some people get their flat straight away but I'm stuck in temporary"

## 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



Practice  
example

**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.

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

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).

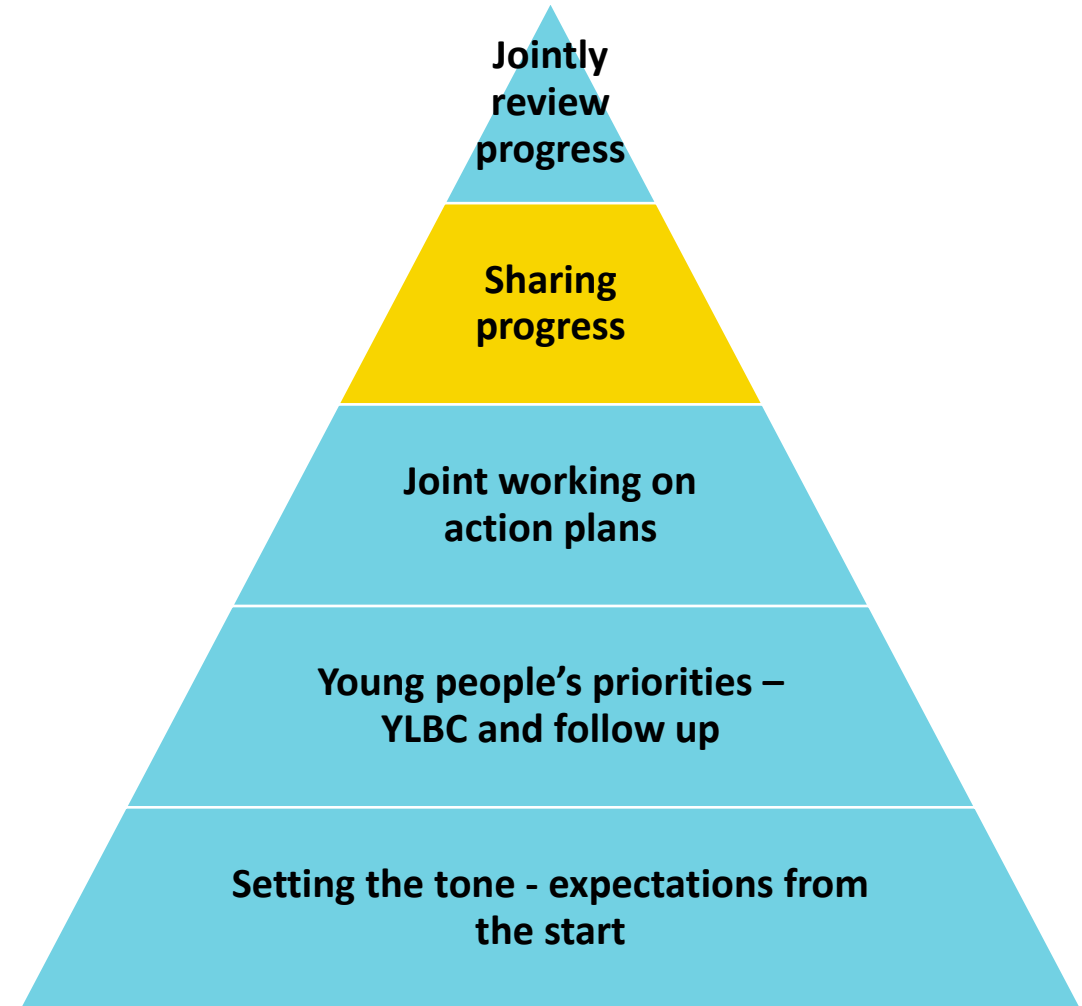


Here are the projects for you to get involved in. You can choose to get involved in as many as you like or select ones because of your own interests or the time you have available.

	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.

## Your home

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
39% of care leavers did not always feel their accommodation was right for them	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
34% of care leaver did not always feel safe in their neighbourhood	Increasing our staying put arrangements	Housing that is safe, comfortable and affordable
		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.

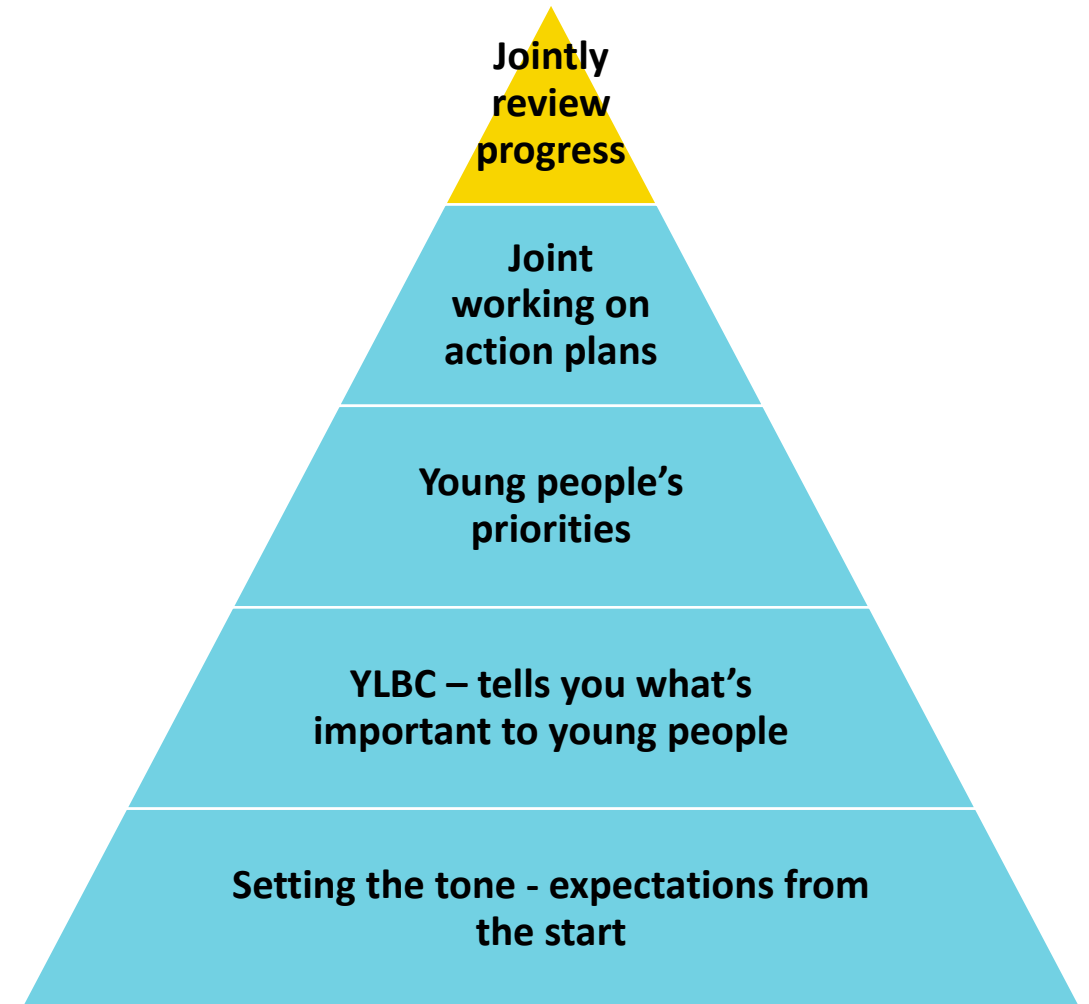
**Impact:** Progress is shared with care leaves and they have opportunities to scrutinise the work and give feedback.



# 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>



# Future first champions

**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 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://frg.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](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/>



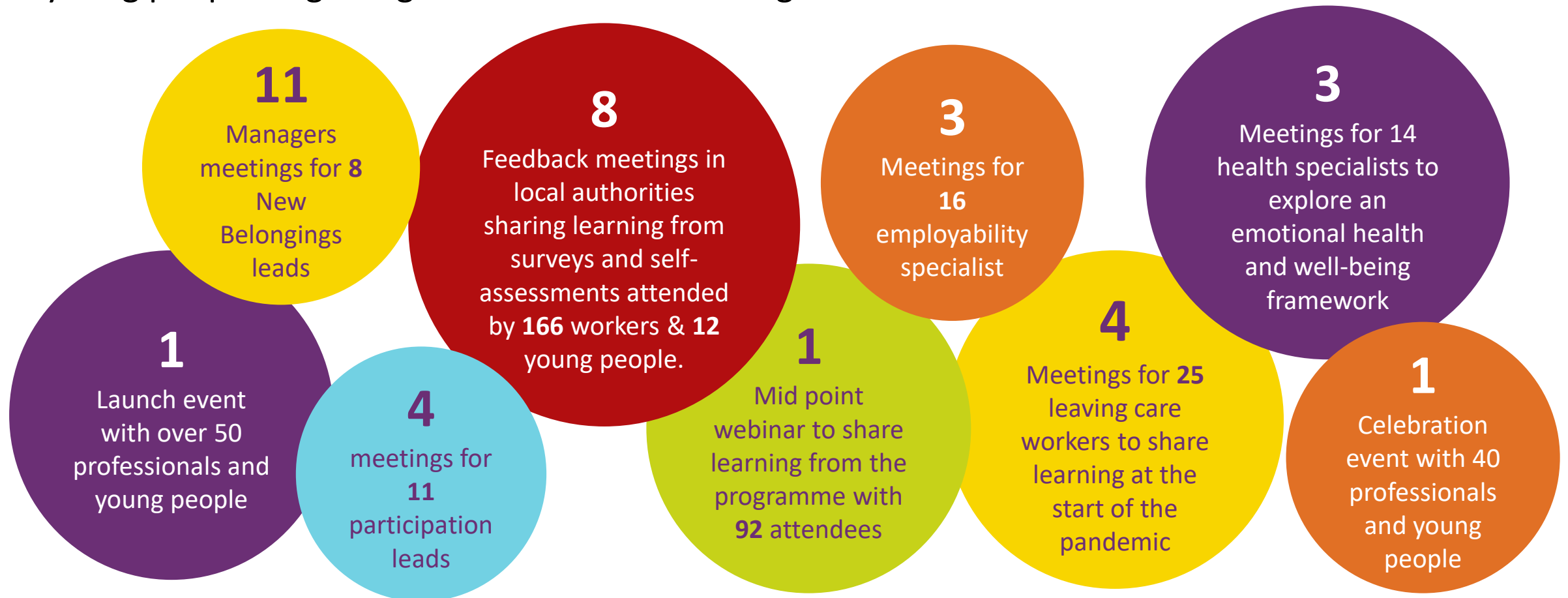
Kaye ~ Youth Voice M... · Nov 11, 2019 ...

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=6K0EDRe4xE>

*[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 <u>at present</u> , 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: <span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 20px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> / 10					[score out of 10]

# 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.



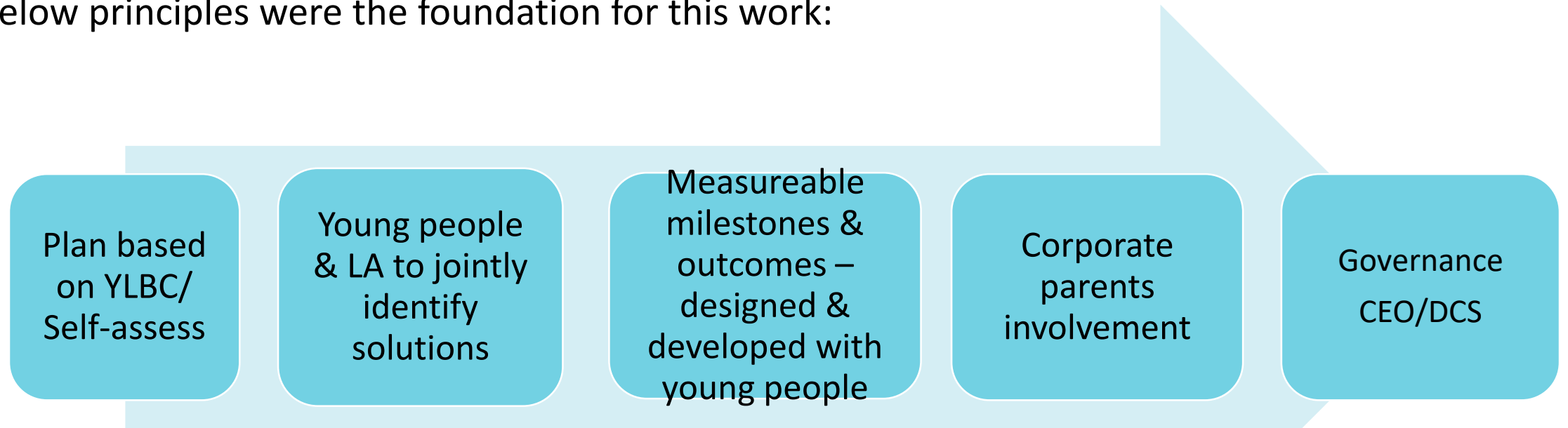
# 3. What did local authorities do?

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.

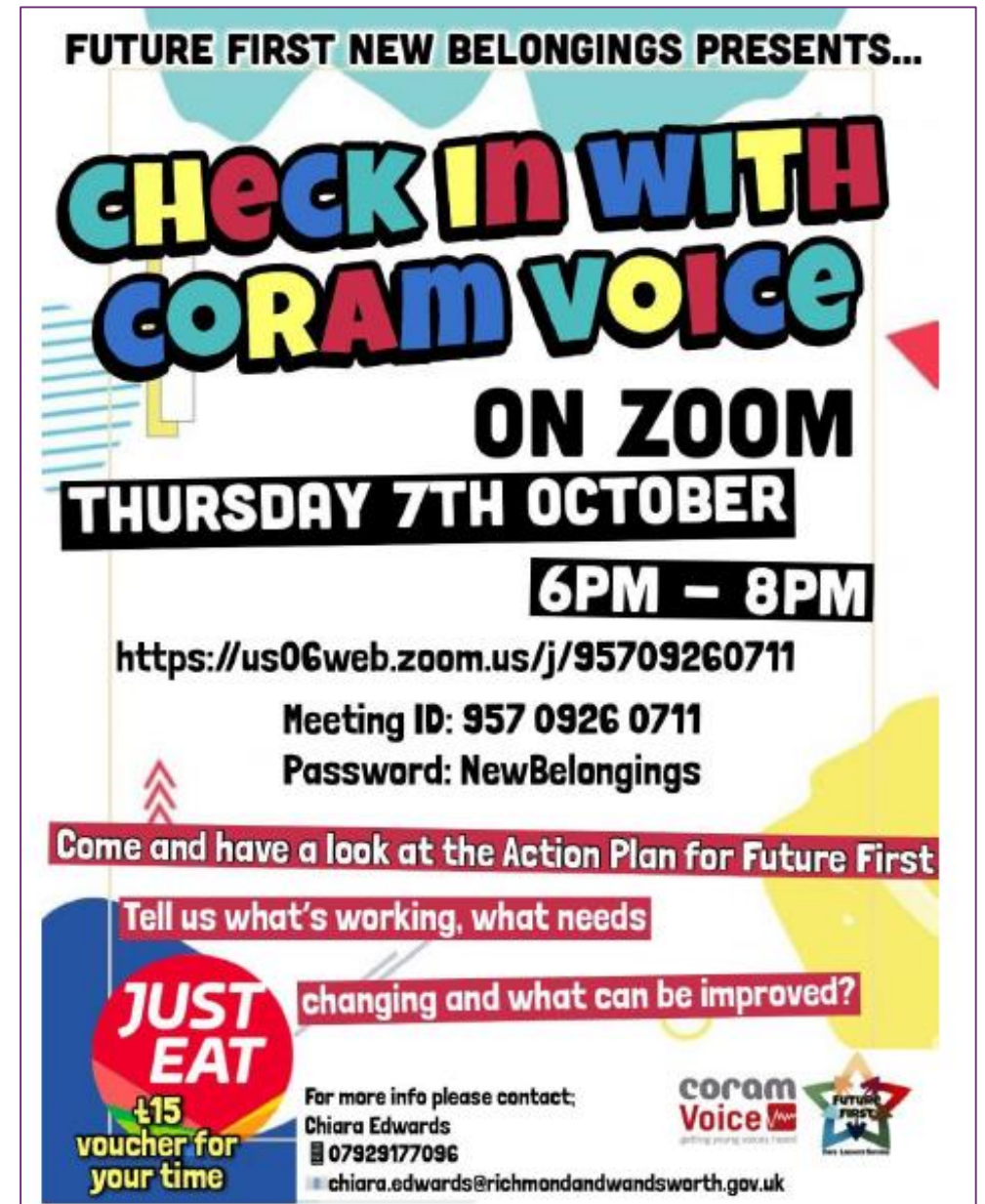
# Working on action planning alongside young people



**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!

1 reply 1 retweet 1 like

**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](mailto:chiara.edwards@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk)

**coram Voice**  
getting young people's views

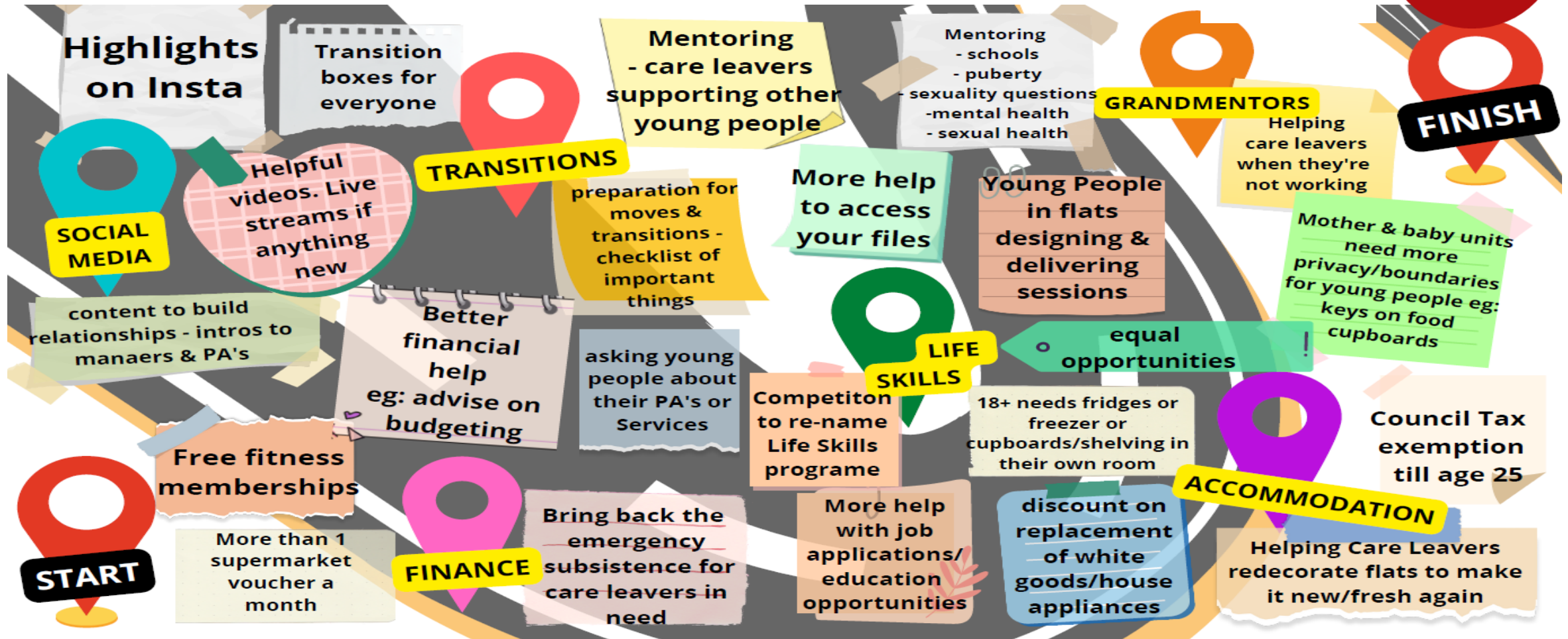
**FUTURE FIRST**  
New Belongings

# 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



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 Advisers 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.

Further info <https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/relationships-matter-more-than-age-ending-the-care-cliff-edge>



## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

Practice  
example

# Working together on solutions

- **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.pure-insight.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

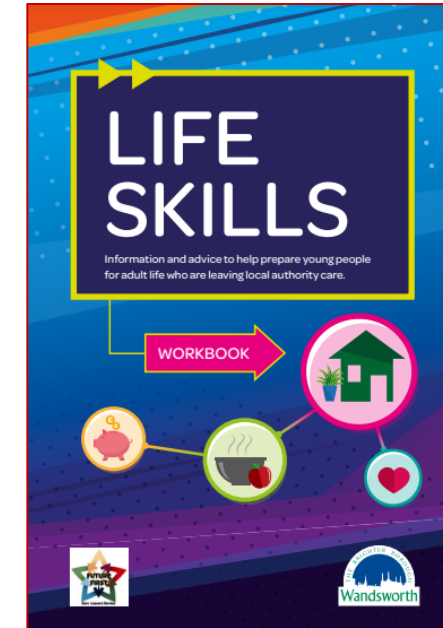
Coventry developed a range of initiatives that brought people together and supported care leavers to develop relationships.

- 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/>



## 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](#)



## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Accommodation

Practice  
example

- **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.

# HERTFORDSHIRE

## Ohana



Practice  
example

**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.



## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Emotional health and well-being

Practice  
example

- 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.

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Working together on solutions

Practice  
example

- 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 finding 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

# Community Hubs

**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

# Combating isolation

Practice  
example

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

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.	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
You told us that you wanted more fun activities and that lockdown had prevented you from taking part in these.	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



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>

## PRACTICE SNIPPETS

# Building relationships

Practice  
example

- **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://volunteermatters.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.

## 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)

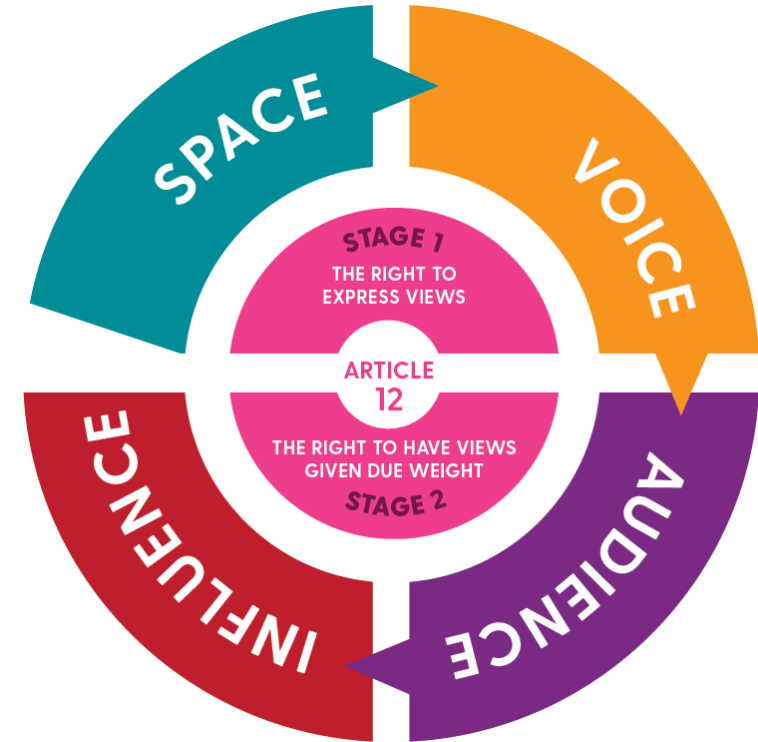
*The impact of having more care experienced young people embedded within our service has helped with a longer-term change in culture. This is quite subtle but immensely important.* **Final LA meeting participant**

**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.



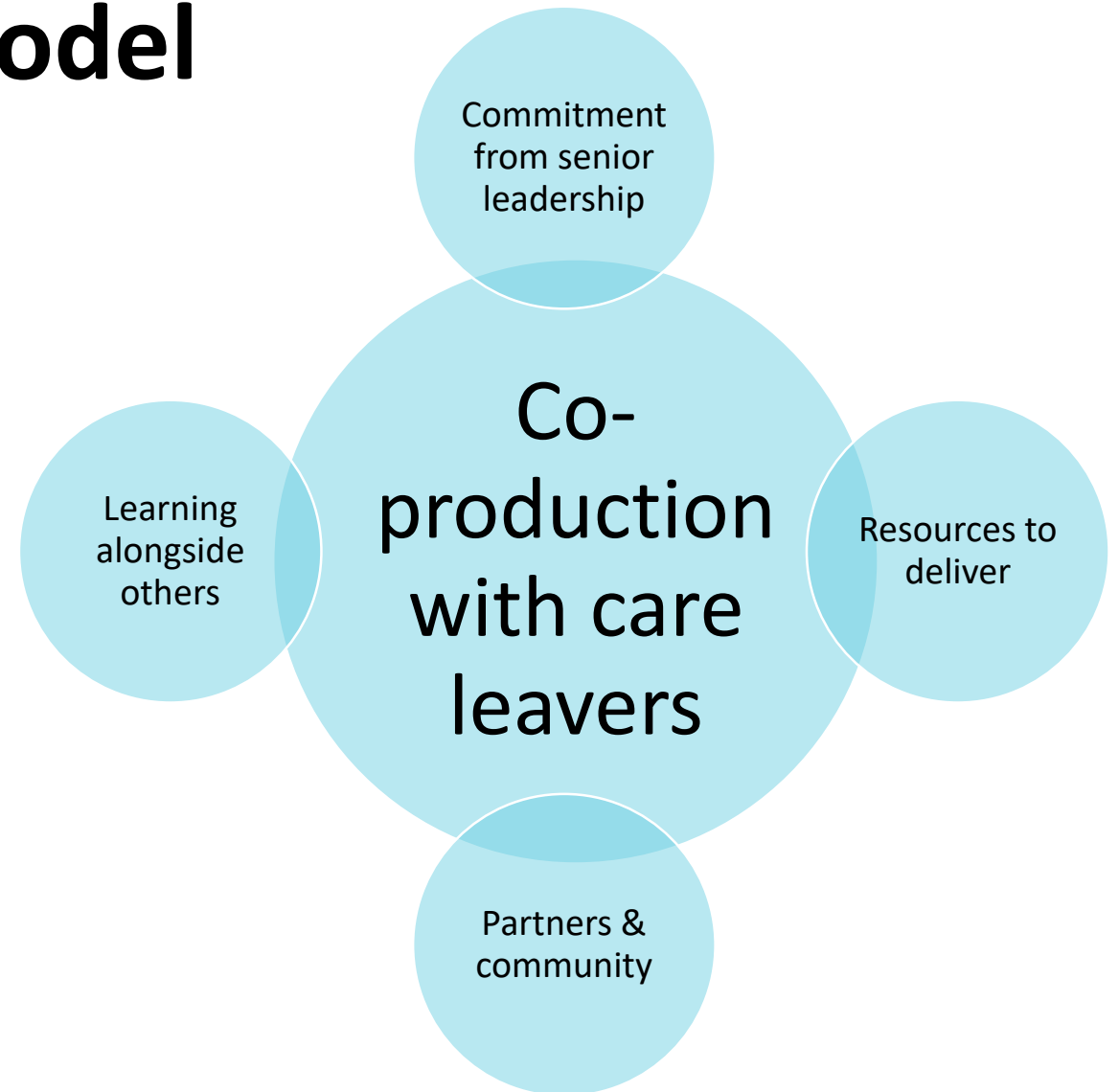
<https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>



# 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.

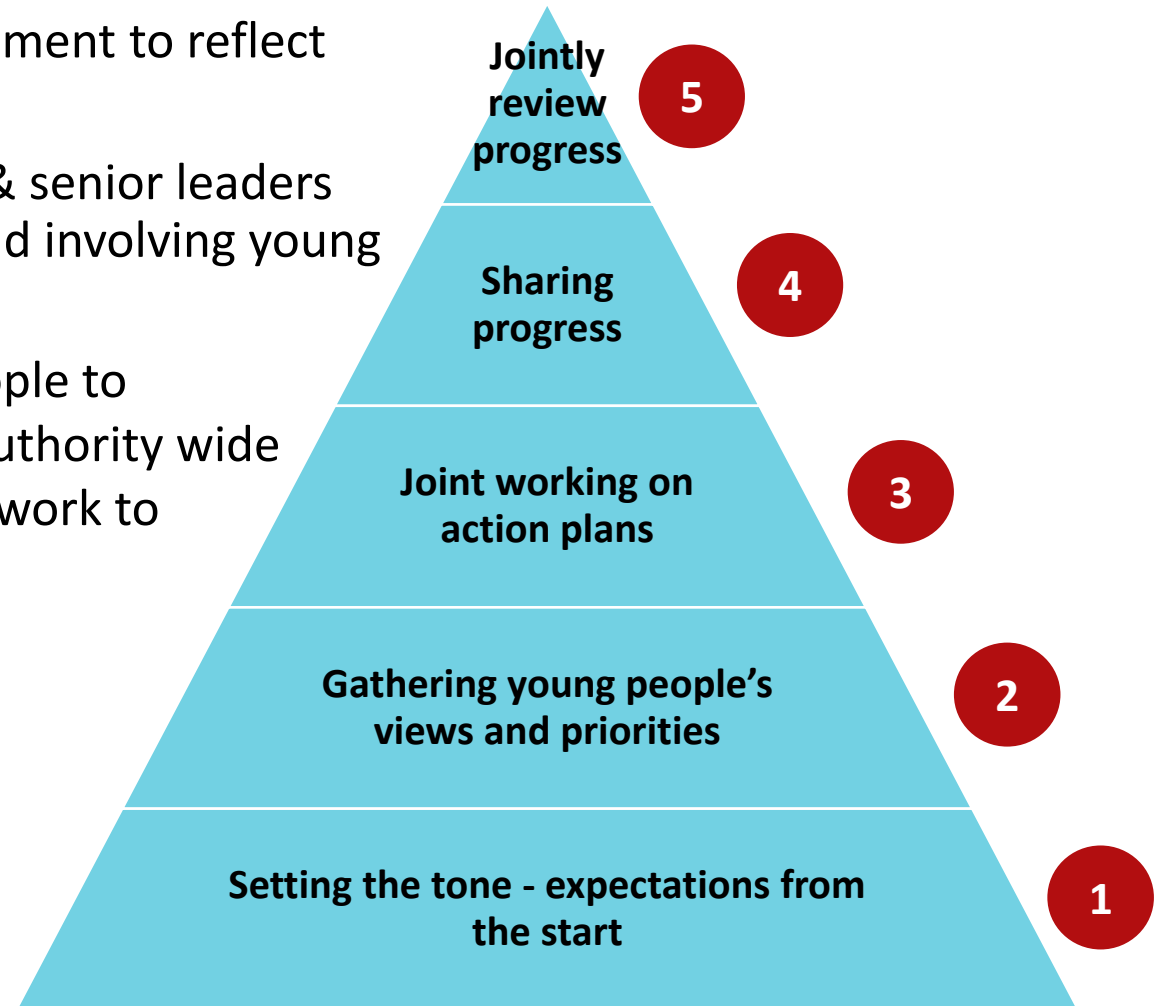
*[The data] really drove things, for example with the housing. There were things being thought about, but it helped push things over the line, because the evidence was there for what we were doing, rather than it seems like a good idea... the survey really helped, that was one of the key things. We had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



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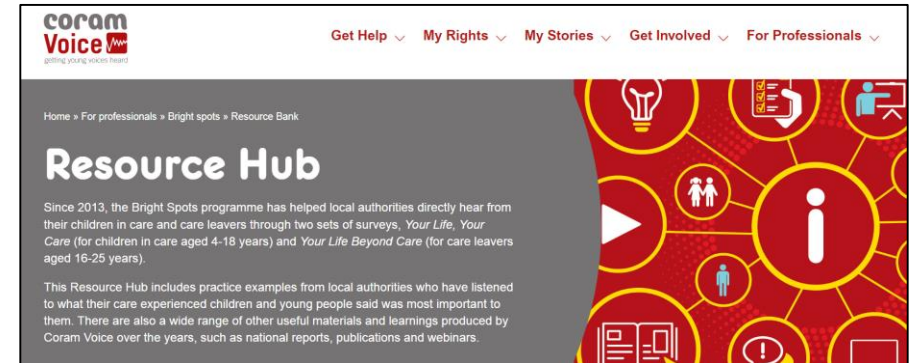


**Esmée**  
**Fairbairn**  
FOUNDATION

# 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](mailto:Brightspots@coarmvoice.org.uk)

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