

Research into Action: The Story of the New Belongings Programme

Improving services for care leavers with care leavers

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Evolution of the New Belongings Programme

2013

- The first round of New Belongings, involving 23 local authorities. Funded by Government and facilitated by the Care Leaver's Foundation.

2016

- The first round of New Belongings comes to an end. Evaluation [Dixon & Baker]
- Leads to more post-25 support and council tax exemptions for care leavers.

2019

- New Belongings finds a new home at Coram Voice.
- Programme runs for 3 years with 8 local authorities.

coramVoice)))
getting young voices heard

2022

- New Belongings Programme ends. Evaluation [Coram I & E]
- Emphasis on local solutions to local problems.

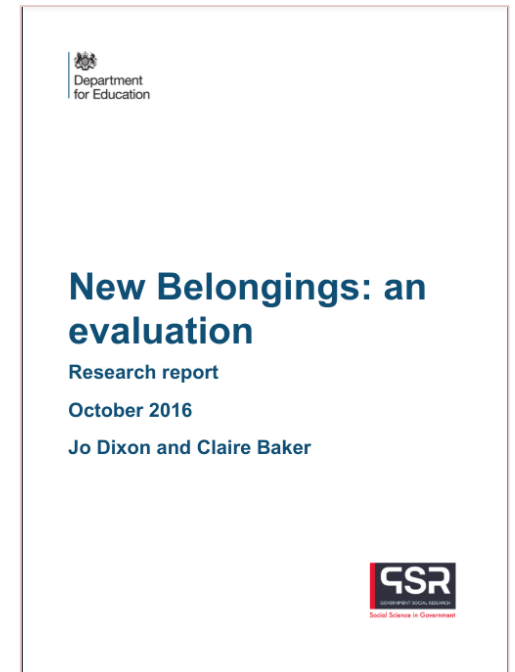
2023

- Succession planning - the introduction of New Belongings Plus.



Original: New Belongings Programme

- Two 12 month programmes delivered by the Care Leavers Foundation and funded by the DfE (2013-2016)
- Aims
 1. Increase the extent to which LAs use the experience and wisdom of care leavers to take decisions about the services provided
 2. Ensure LAs engage all services and partners in providing excellent services to care leavers
 3. Help LA engage effectively the wider local community in improving the daily lives of care leavers
- In Phase 2 - 28 LAs joined forming 8 clusters
- NB team consisted of project manager, 7 facilitators and 27 care leaver panellists
- Independent evaluation (Dixon and Baker, 2016)



The original New Belongings Model

1. Care leaver survey
2. Review role of PA
3. Establish a care leaver forum
4. Develop multi-agency plan
5. Ensure strategic commitment
6. Use the influence of political leadership to engage the wider community

► Evaluation aims

Describe	Understand	Explore
Describe the different components of the NB approach	Understand what was needed to implement a successful NB approach	Explore if, and how, the NB approach impacted on the experiences of care leavers and the delivery of services to support them.

- None of components are new – but what was different was putting together in a model to bring focus in an LA onto care leavers

Building Blocks in the (new) New Belongings Programme

Local authority (LA) selection

Each LA had to submit an expression of interest to join the programme which demonstrated their commitment to the programme

Baseline evidence

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

Action planning

Using the 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

Follow up evidence review

Towards the end of the programme each LA does the YLBC 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:

Senior management & partner commitment

Care leaver engagement

Peer learning

In our words: What is New Belongings?



Coram Voice's Care Experienced Consultants (CEC) worked with young people from all the participating local authorities to define what New Belongings meant to them.

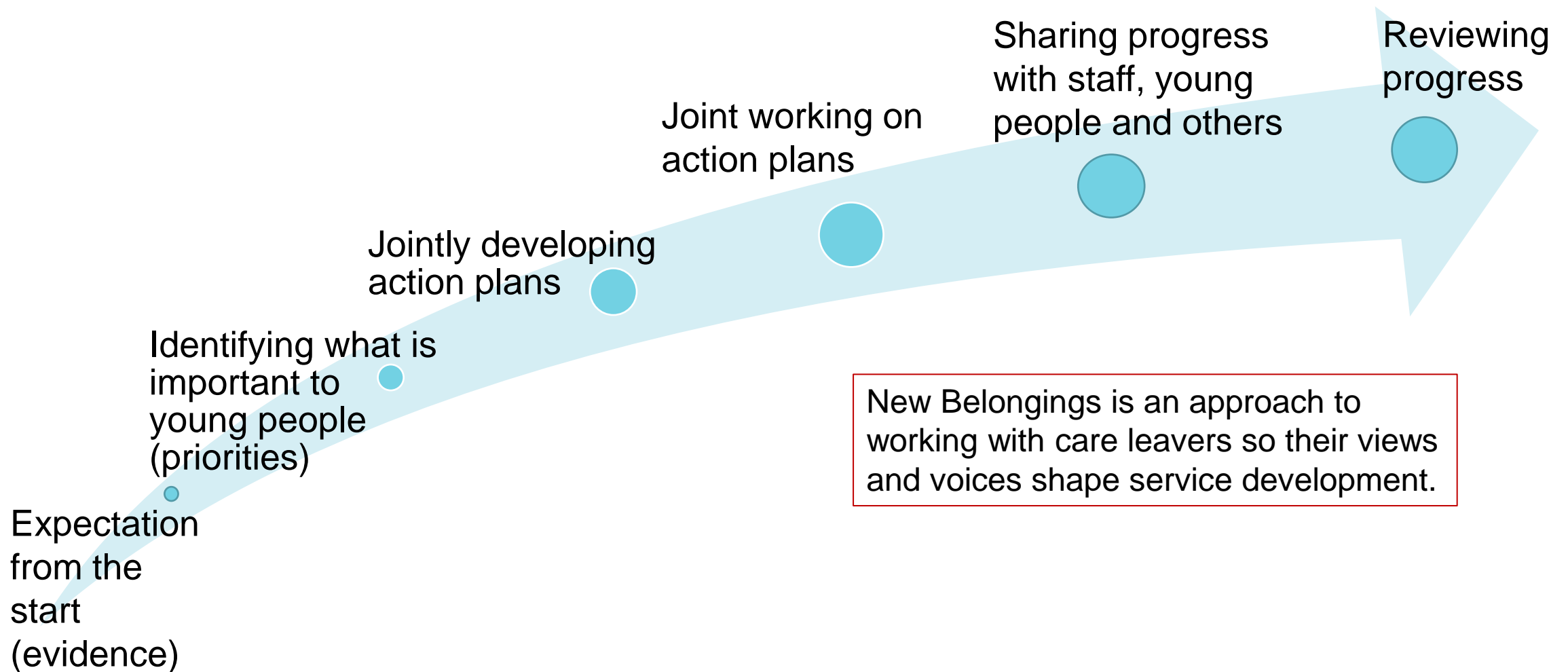
What made New Belongings successful?

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.

Young people's participation in NB



Lundy model

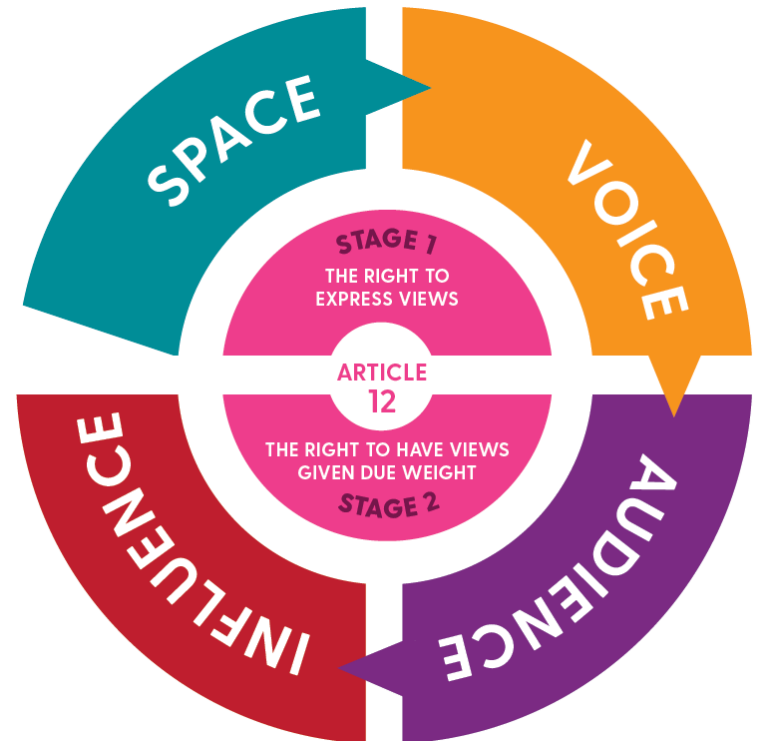
Lundy's model of how to support young people's right to express their views and be listened to sets out some core principles that can help staff and individuals ensure all participation, whether through surveys, one-to-one interactions, group work or activity, is meaningful for all involved. This model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

Commitment from Senior Leadership

- 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).
- Letter to CEO



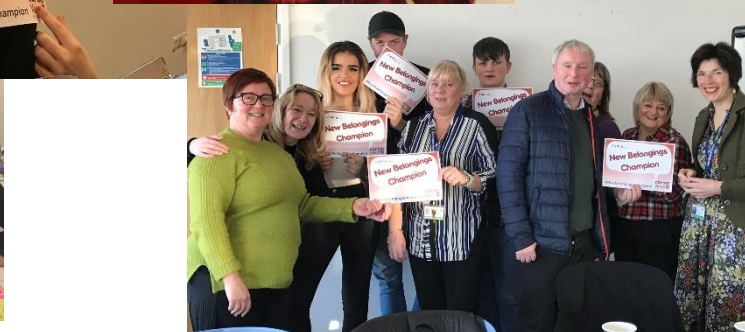
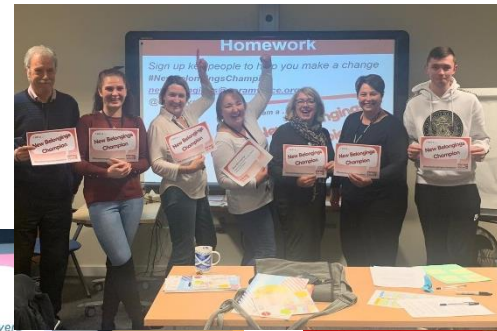
Partners built into the programme

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

- Partners invited to **launch meeting** in LA;
- Partners are a key contributor to **self-assessment** (completed by holding meetings/ provided a good basis for future multi-agency working);
- Partners attend **feedback meeting** of survey / self-assessment results;
- Partners part of **action plan development** and delivery;
- Partners part of governance arrangements;
- Partners kept updated as programme developed / partners feedback what they doing / partners **make pledges**;
- Partners at celebration / **dissemination event** at end of programme to plan next steps for local action in authority.

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



Tools used in New Belongings

The **Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC)** survey, focuses on the thoughts, feelings and experiences of care leavers (*What makes life good?*). 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.

- Time 1 (early lockdown) **1,258** from 8 LA = 50% (29% to 81%)
- Time 2 (Spring 2022) **1,233** from 8 LA = 45% (26% to 81%)

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.

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

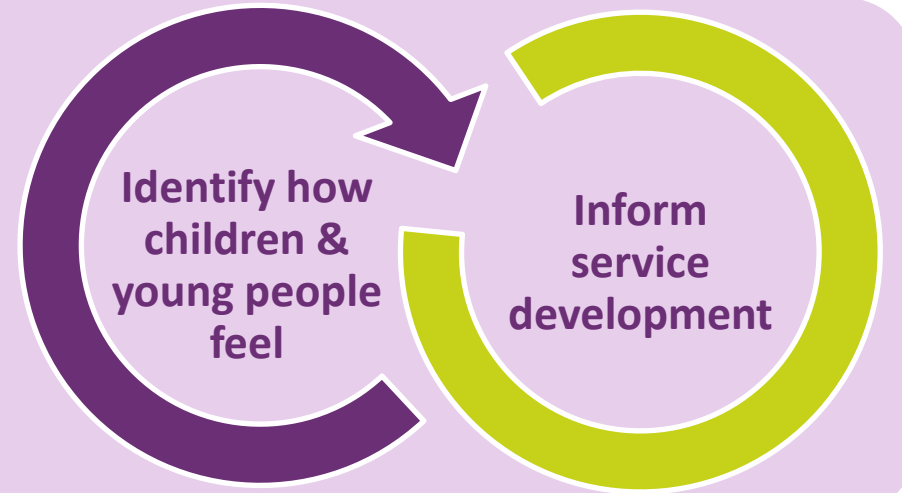
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K0EDRev4xE>



bright spots

*Your Life
Beyond Care*
survey is part
of Bright
Spots
Programme

- Developed in partnership between Professor Julie Selwyn (Rees Centre at the University of Oxford) & Coram Voice funded by the Hadley Trust
- Supports local authorities to explore how children feel about their lives and use this to address the issues they raise



Co-produced

based on **what children in care and care leavers** said was important to them and what made life good.



Evidence based

- developed over **10 years of research**
- international literature reviews
- piloting and cognitive interviews

Since the Bright Spots Programme started we have collected over

27,000 voices

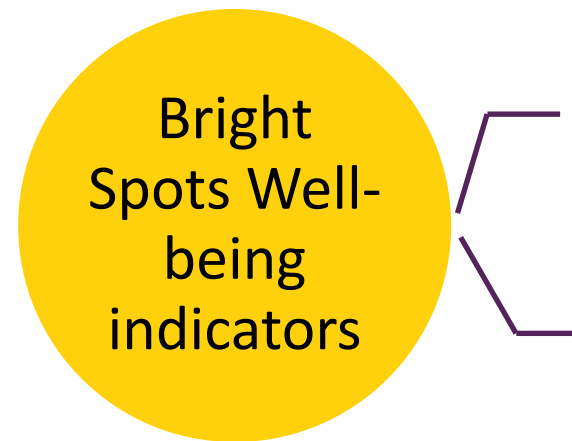
through the *Your Life Your Care* *Your Life Beyond Care* surveys working with more than

80 local authorities

Focus on
well-being
not
satisfaction
with service

Subjective Well-being: Feeling good and doing well at an individual and interpersonal level

Do children and young people themselves think they are **thriving** and **flourishing** in the areas that matter to them?



Your Life, Your Care (YLYC) survey
Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC) survey



What Makes Life Good?

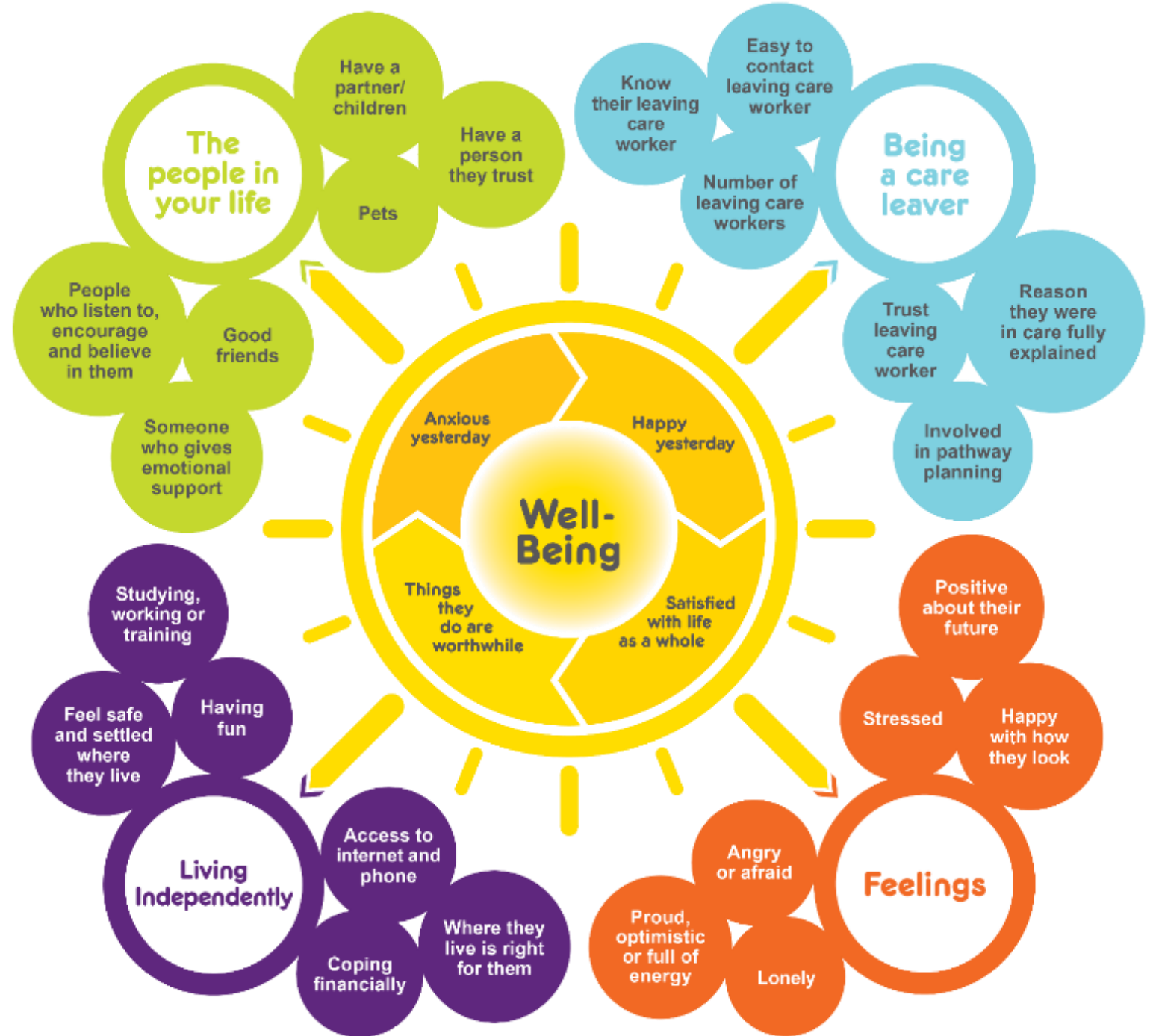


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyW4epjul1M>

Focus on what makes a good life..

Your Life Beyond Care Bright spots well-being indicators

- Co-produced with care leavers
- Shift focus of the care system to areas that may have been neglected – greater emphasis on what is important to young people.



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

- Tool created and tested by Dr. Claire Baker and Jo Dixon as part of the 2016 evaluation of New Belongings
- Provides LAs with opportunity to self assess their leaving care services in order to identify both strengths and areas for development
- Draws on evidence & recognised frameworks for supporting care leavers
- All NB LA completed the self-assessment towards the start of the programme
- Information used to inform action planning
- New Belonging team also used the completed assessments to collect good practice examples to promote and share learning.



“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”

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	<i>Thinking about how your leaving care service is operating at present, please indicate how far you agree with the following statements:</i> <i>please add an 'x'</i>	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 <i>responsive to views of care leavers</i> as: <input type="text"/> / 10 [score out of 10]				

Self assessment process

- All 8 New Belongings local authorities completed the self-assessment towards the start of the programme (Time 1 - between June and October 2020) and completed it again at the end of the programme in Spring 2022 (Time 2)
- Abbreviated version of the self-assessment completed towards the end of the programme (Time 2)
- Aim of Time 2 self-assessment: to understand whether the NB LAs made progress over time in relation to how they rated themselves in the 10 gold standard areas
- The follow-up self-assessment provided the LA with their original score out of 10 for each gold standard area at baseline and asked respondents to rate their current performance in relation to that area
- The scores for the 10 gold standard areas were then summed to provide a score out of 100 for both baseline and follow-up
- A workshop was held with young people to look at the self-assessment (rating & ranking exercises)

Evidence provided the basis for change

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

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

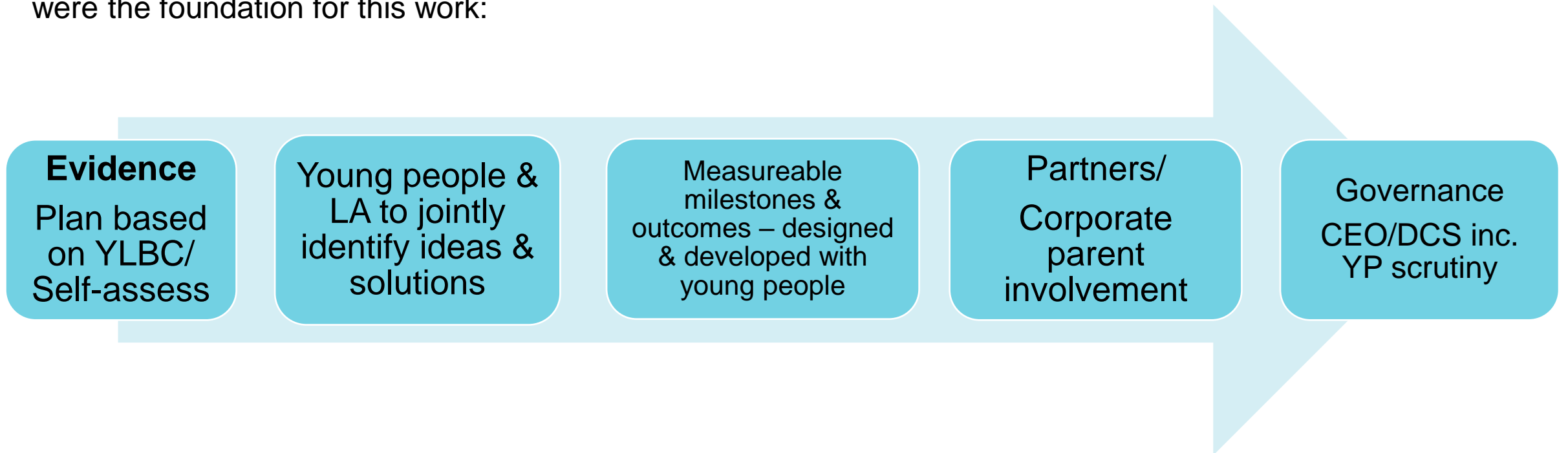
Care leavers are preoccupied with the same things all young people are interested in – it is just that care leavers are likely to have more challenging circumstances / past experiences - the need to be connected is the same. To support care leavers colleagues across council need to be involved.
Local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

How did New Belongings help local authorities to make changes?

- The process of making change
- Linking evidence base to actions LAs took

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:



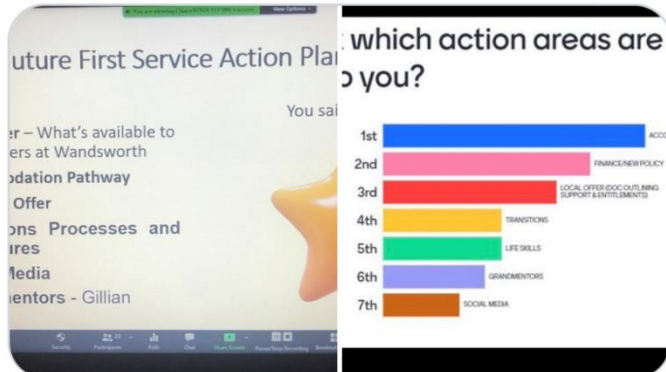
Based on learning from the previous New Belongings Programme, local authorities were encouraged to focus on 4-5 maximum areas or themes in their action plan (including at least one 'Bright Spot/ positive area')

Working alongside young people on the action planning



• CLIC... @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!



• CLI... @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



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



Fi Pure Insight @fi_insight · 1m ...
 Please get in touch with me or @InsightNatalie if you would like to come along 😊

Common themes in action plans

Analysis of the 8 local authority action plans – below you can see the most common themes across all LAs

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

How the New Belongings Programme supported us to make changes

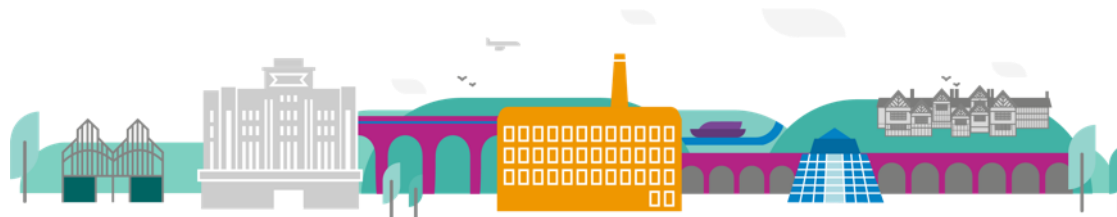
- Stockport has been involved in New Belongings since 2003 in wave 1 as a cluster with other Greater Manchester LA's and again in 2020-22 in this second wave.
- The New Belongings approach supports inclusion, understanding and co-production for priorities and action:
 - YP survey – encouraging young people voice and feedback (81% response rate). The report and video highlighting themes to turn into priorities for action.
 - Self assessment – opportunity to come together and have discussions, reflections and challenge about where we are identifying key areas for action
 - Practice Brightspots.
 - Co-production of key priorities and action plan with young people and wider stakeholders.
 - Providing a framework and evidence to raise awareness with Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership Team and Councilors for action and to drive change.



Change Example

Safety in Accommodation

- The 'Your Life beyond care' survey highlighted that 'Just over a third (36%) of care leavers reported not 'always' feeling safe' and 'nearly half (47%) reported not 'always' feeling settled in their accommodation'.
- LA Deep dive project into young people's lived experiences with young people to inform action
- Piloted the Ring Doorbell (£125 bundle x8 young people) with positive feedback from young people and now rolled out
- Accommodation group established and led by Director - to support a business case for more post-18 supported accommodation for care leavers
- This work was the foundation for our DfE Staying Close bid- awarded £2.4m to strengthen offer to young people leaving residential care and independent living



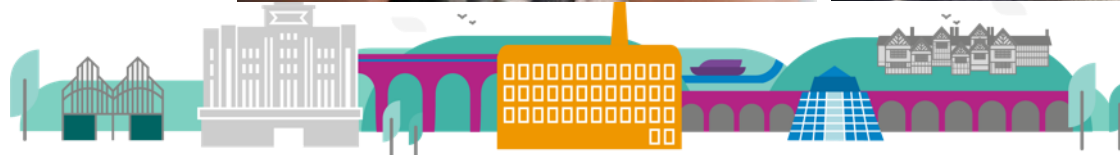
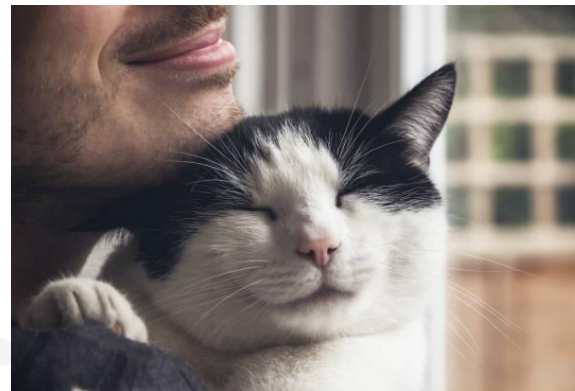
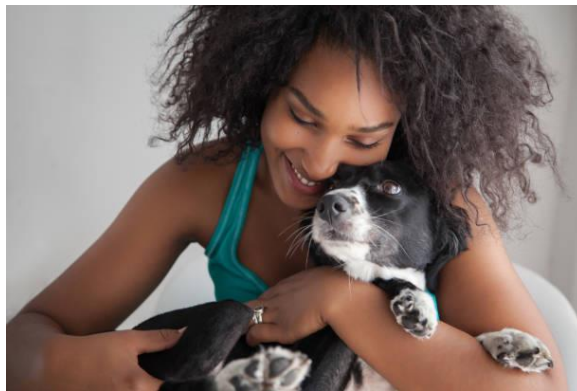
Stockport's Ring Doorbell scheme



<https://youtu.be/UGp8AwlqsQY>

Change Example - Working with the Blue Cross for Pet Care

- 48% care leavers in Stockport own a pet for love, companionship and emotional support (48% v 28% in other LA's)
- Stockport are developing a new offer to support care leavers with caring for their pets, education and advise as well as help with Pet food, health preventions treatments etc...
- The Blue Cross are connecting the LA with Pets R US for a more local pet care offer



Impact of New Belongings Programme - 2019-2022

- ➔ Local authorities utilised the New Belongings Programme in different ways, depending on where they were in their co-production journey.
- ➔ All eight local authorities stayed engaged throughout (despite the impact of Covid-19) and used the Programme to make positive changes to the lives of their care leavers.
- ➔ The local authorities felt that they had achieved improvements in these areas:
 - **Increased funding** for their leaving care service;
 - Improved **relational practice** and connectivity;
 - Additional opportunities and **resources for care leavers**;
 - A greater focus on **suitable and affordable accommodation**;
 - Greater **understanding** of young people's needs and views through their direct contribution;
 - **Raised profile of care leavers** across their local authority.

New Belongings was like having a turbo engine attached to our work – it's helped us make so many changes so quickly.
Leaving care manager



Key message from New Belongings

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>



'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>

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

Evaluation: Learning & Programme adaptation

- Extended to 3 years
- Number of LAs taking part reduced but 'cluster' element kept (peer learning)
- Self-assessment retained (and version for use with young people developed)
- Change in survey (validated; co-produced; analysis by Programme not LA – led to increase response rate; better feedback loop etc)
- Dropped review of PA (recognition council wide / partners)
- Menu of opportunities for local young people to get involved in (not requirement set up NB group)
- Shift to local young people (rather than emphasis on CEC)
- Built in expectations re: strategic commitment (LAs had to apply via EOI)

Tools and resources

Home » For professionals » Bright spots » Resource Bank

Resource Hub

Since 2013, the Bright Spots programme has helped local authorities directly hear from their children in care and care leavers through two sets of surveys, *Your Life, Your Care* (for children in care aged 4-18 years) and *Your Life Beyond Care* (for care leavers aged 16-25 years).

This Resource Hub includes practice examples from local authorities who have listened to what their care experienced children and young people said was most important to them. There are also a wide range of other useful materials and learnings produced by Coram Voice over the years, such as national reports, publications and webinars.

- **Practice examples** from New Belongings and wider Bright Spots work with children in care and care leavers
- **Reports** including the Evaluation report on New Belongings and the Story of New Belongings
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>

Find out
more and
contact the
team



Email Claire.baker@coramvoice.org.uk



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