

'Moving On' from Care into Adulthood Consultation

Respondent Information Form

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:

<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Children in Scotland

Phone number

0131 243 2781

Address

Children in Scotland, Thorn House, 5 Rose Street Edinburgh

Postcode

EH2 2PR

Email Address

pppteam@childreninScotland.org.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes No



Response to the 'Moving on' from care into adulthood consultation

October 2024

About Children in Scotland

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced, and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support, and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the lives of children and families in Scotland.

Introduction

Children in Scotland is pleased to respond to the consultation on 'moving on' from care into adulthood and share our views on the support available to young people as they leave care and enter adulthood. We know from our work on the Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹ that the transition from care into adulthood can be challenging for care experienced young people. We also know from our members and partners that the impact experience of care can have on young people does not end when they transition into adulthood.

Carmel Jacob-Thomson, Chair of the Board for Who Cares? Scotland, shared

¹ [Children in Scotland. and Staf. \(2022\). Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative.](#)

that the term 'care leaver' does not adequately describe those transitioning into adulthood because, "much of our experience will stay with us forever"². For this reason, it is important to view the transition from care into adulthood as a process of building independence and feeling supported and stable within their community.

Our response does not directly respond to all the questions posed in the consultation paper. However, it does provide general comments on the overall approach to the provision of support for care experienced young people in their transition into adulthood, as well as addressing questions under the themes of peer support and lifelong links, health and wellbeing and housing.

Children in Scotland's Manifesto for 2021-2026³ includes a number of calls relating to themes raised in the consultation paper, such as our calls for health and wellbeing and space, place and community.

This year, Children in Scotland responded to the consultation on policy proposals for a Care Leaver Payment, showing support of the intentions behind the payment but endorsed the position taken by partners such as CELCIS⁴ and Aberlour⁵ urging Scottish Government to consider a more ambitious and inclusive package of support.

This response draws on the evidence described above, providing insight into the views of people with experience of care, with specific consideration for the experience of children and young people.

General comments

In principle, Children in Scotland is supportive of the effort to seek the views of care experienced young people to improve their experience of the transition from care into adulthood. We believe it is important to amplify the voices of those with lived experience of care. However, it is important to acknowledge the wealth of evidence that already exists in relation to this topic – care experienced children and young people have expressed their views on what

² [Jacob-Thomson, C. \(2021\). *Changing the language of care.*](#)

³ [Children in Scotland. \(2021\). *Manifesto for 2021-26*](#)

⁴ [CELCIS. \(2024\). *Response to Scottish Government's consultation on policy proposals for a Care Leaver Payment.*](#)

⁵ [Aberlour. \(2024\). *Response to Scottish Government's Care Leaver Payment: Consultation on policy proposals.*](#)

support they want and need for a number of years, and the key messages remain the same.

We believe that the Scottish Government should continue to refer to the evidence gathered in the Independent Care Review and recommendations of The Promise⁶ to guide the provision of support for children and young people. Until clear progress has been evidenced, resource should be focused on implementing the provision set out in existing legislation and taking steps to embed the foundations of The Promise across wider society.

We recognise that taking action on the recommendations outlined in this consultation response will require significant resourcing and there will be a need for prioritisation.

However, Children in Scotland is of the view that funding limitations should not be driving decisions on the level of support young people are eligible for. Instead, decision making about provision for care experienced children and young people should be led by the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024⁷ and Getting it right for every child⁸, the national approach to supporting children's wellbeing. Article 1 of the UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18, however, many young people will begin their transition from care into adulthood from the age of 16 or 17. With the introduction of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, it is increasingly important for Scotland to consider how the eligibility criteria for any package of support upholds the rights of all care experienced children and young people. We recommend that a needs-led approach is taken rather than focused specifically on the age of the young person seeking support. This would allow for a more inclusive approach, ensuring that people with experience of care have access to support that fits their needs.

Peer support and maintaining lifelong links

26. In what ways would you like to see peer support used by people leaving care and/or caregivers during a young person's transition from care into adulthood?

In our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹, we learned about the benefits of holistic peer support and how this was used by funded projects to improve young people's experience of their transition from care into adulthood.

⁶ [Independent Care Review. \(2020\). The Promise.](#)

⁷ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024.](#)

⁸ [Scottish Government. \(2022\). Getting it right for every child - Policy Statement.](#)

One example was demonstrated by a project led by East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University, called My Place⁹. This project aimed to partner care experienced young people in tenancies with students, who were supported to adopt a mentoring role and offer practical support. The Home and Belonging case studies provide an insight into the experience of Kim and Quan, two care experienced young people who were seeking asylum in the UK. Kim and Quan were partnered with a peer flatmate, Marisa, who quickly built strong and trusting relationships with one another.

"We are happy in our home and feel safe."

(Kim, participant in My Place project)⁹

As explored in our case studies, the benefits to Kim and Quan extended beyond support with housing and the development of skills for independent living. With support from each other and Marisa, they were both able to make progress in learning English as a second language and develop friendships. They also shared that with the support of Marisa and My Place staff, they were able to feel more welcome in their local community.

This example of a holistic approach to peer support has been shown to be effective in supporting both Kim and Quan in their transition into adulthood. We recommend that similar approaches are considered, where opportunities for peer support are embedded in service provision for care experienced young people.

27. Do you know of any examples where peer support networks have had a positive impact on the experience of leaving care, either for care leavers or those who supported them?

In our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹, we found that care experienced young people benefitted from peer support through the network of young people involved in the funded projects.

Across all Home and Belonging projects, there was evidence of young people building meaningful relationships with other young people and staff. The evaluation demonstrates how trusting relationships were built, and how care experienced young people made use of these support networks to help navigate the challenges they were experiencing throughout the transition to independent living. The funded projects were also shown to increase people's opportunities to socialise with peers, with many young people

⁹ [Children in Scotland, and Staf. \(2022\). Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative: Case Studies.](#)

reporting positive group dynamics and viewing their projects as a “second family”¹.

Health and wellbeing

30. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure care leavers have access to services which support their physical health, and mental health and wellbeing?

Children in Scotland recognise that young people transitioning from care into adulthood do not always have access to the key services which support their health and wellbeing. The Independent Care Review⁶ made clear that the current model for mental health support for care experienced children and young people is not working. The Promise calls for improved access to timely support for, but not limited to, people with experience of care. This should be criteria-free, with the aim of providing support without perpetuating stigma.

It should also be recognised that an individual's standard of living has an impact on their health and wellbeing, including where they live and access to basic essentials. A key focus of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹ was to support health, wellbeing and relationships. Our evaluation of the initiative highlighted projects that supported young people to access specialist health and wellbeing services, and other projects that provided relationship-based holistic support for their wellbeing. Young people reported feeling more confident and motivated as a result of their involvement in the funded projects. Our evaluation confirms how young people benefit from access to holistic support that is tailored to their individual needs. More information about the health and wellbeing support provided can be found in our evaluation of the initiative.

The need for a holistic approach to supporting care experienced young people is outlined by Staf in their report on 100 Days of Listening¹⁰. The report makes reference to the complexities of the current mental health system and highlights a model which makes accessing support easier for those who need it. This approach involves the co-location of health practitioners with a focus on care experienced young people within support teams, which simplifies the experience both in terms of practical support and in navigating the health system.

31. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure a smooth transition is made between children and adult physical health services, mental health services and wellbeing services?

¹⁰ [Staf. \(2024\). 100 Days of Listening.](#)

Children in Scotland is supportive of the recommendations outlined in the 100 Days of Listening¹⁰ report. In the report, Staf sets the context of the challenges associated with transitioning from children's services to adult services. Staf state that age-based criteria is not always effective in meeting the needs of young people, and that a needs-led approach should be implemented. We also support their call for the implementation of established, agreed pathways from children's services to adult services that take consideration of the individual needs of young people. These recommendations were led specifically by the views of people with experience of care who have advocated for access to lifelong support.

Housing

32. Please tell us about any good practice you are aware of that supports young people leaving care to find a home that meets their needs.

Children in Scotland identified many positive examples of projects supporting young people leaving care to find housing in our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹. One example of this is the Supporting our Young Adults (SOYA) project delivered by LinkLiving, which was highlighted in our Home and Belonging case studies⁹.

This project, funded by Life Changes Trust, provided housing and practical support for young people transitioning from care into adulthood. SOYA offered young people a temporary flat and support to develop life skills. The project also helped young people to find their own permanent tenancies when they are ready to move on from the project. Jason, who was 24 at the time of his involvement in the project, is one of the many young people who benefited from the relationship-based, trauma-informed approach of staff working with him.

In 2019, Jason moved into temporary accommodation where he had access to a team of supportive staff 12 hours each day, 7 days a week. He shared that he appreciated "people being in the office when help is needed". Importantly, staff gave Jason the time and space to decide when he needed help, allowing him to build life skills independently.

When Jason was ready to move on from his temporary accommodation, he was supported by SOYA staff members to identify and move to his own secure tenancy, and he continued to receive housing support through this transition.

"I feel safer having a secure place to live... I feel more stable."

(Jason, participant in SOYA project)⁹

This project demonstrates the benefits of implementing relationships-based and trauma-informed approaches to guide young people through their transition into adulthood. By giving Jason choice and control, SOYA were able to provide him with the right support whilst living in temporary accommodation. He was also given practical support and time to prepare for moving into a secure tenancy when he was ready.

Although the project funded by Life Changes Trust was short-term, LinkLiving have recognised the impact of working in a relationship-based, trauma-informed way and have committed to embedding this in their work to help young people access support that meets their needs.

In our case studies, you can read more examples of funded projects that aimed to support young people transitioning from care into their own home.

33. What do you think are the main barriers in securing appropriate housing for a young person with care experience?

The evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative highlighted a number of barriers experienced by young people moving from care into their own home.

The most significant barrier identified was the limited housing options available to care experienced young people. The lack of appropriate housing stock across several areas in Scotland means that young people are unlikely to have choice or control over where they live. It was clear that without the Home and Belonging Initiative, some young people would have been placed in homes lacking basic essentials. The evaluation of funded projects also exposed gaps in housing policy in relation to consideration of the impact of trauma and care experience.

In order to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care into adulthood, there must be a change to remove the barriers to securing housing. This would require investment in increased housing stock and further consideration of the needs of care leavers, with housing that is move-in ready and includes all essentials. Young people should be able to make choices about the location of their accommodation, personalisation of their space, and the option to have pets. Additionally, relationship-based, trauma-informed support should be available to ease the transition, without punitive measures that worsen their situation.

34. How can we ensure there is sufficient support, planning and preparation provided to care leavers moving into their own accommodation for the first time?

As highlighted in our answer to question 32, the provision of support, planning and preparation for young people moving into their own accommodation should be underpinned by trauma-informed policy. Young people should be able to access support in their own time, in their own terms.

In their report on 100 Days of Listening¹⁰, Staf calls for Scotland to ensure that all young people are moved into their own tenancy in a planned, supportive way that aligns with their needs and abilities. In cases where an urgent move to a safe place is required, appropriate supports must be in place to ensure that the tenancy is stable.

Additionally, we support Staf in their call for an extension to eligibility criteria of individual local authorities' housing support to include all care leavers within an area, regardless of where they originated from. This would help to make provision of housing support more equitable and prevent a number of young people from missing out on the support they need.

36. How can we ensure the views and needs of people leaving care are taken into account when decisions are made about where they should live when they leave care?

We believe that all steps taken to ensure an individual's views and needs are considered in decision making about where they should live following their transition out of care should be informed by The Promise⁶. Voice is named as one of the foundations of The Promise, and Scotland's Plan 24-30¹¹ calls for a compassionate, caring decision-making culture that is focused on the needs of individuals.

In our evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative¹, we found that the University of the Highlands and Islands and Who Cares? Scotland project highlights what can be achieved by undertaking a co-design approach. The project focused on supporting young people to engage with their corporate parents, resulting in changes to the work of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Corporate Parenting Board continued to work directly with the project's Shetland Crew group to set the Board's agenda, giving care experienced young people increased opportunity to have their voices heard in a meaningful way.

This highlights how making significant changes to governance and approach can amplify children's and young people's views, ensuring their best interests are central to planning and decision making. We believe that Scotland

¹¹ [The Promise Scotland. \(2024\). Plan 24-30.](#)

should learn from this example of co-design, which demonstrates a willingness to put care experienced young people at the centre of decisions about their lives at a strategic level.

Summary

We urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the transition from care to adulthood is underpinned by trauma-informed policies and approaches that allow for relationship-based practice. This key recommendation is shaped by the views, experiences and hopes that have been shared by people with experience of care for years.

In order to Keep the Promise by 2030, it is important to shift the focus toward implementation of existing legislation that already outlines provision of support for care-experienced young people. Additionally, we recommend that there is further investment and prioritisation of resource to ensure that care experienced young people have access to support that fits their needs. Young people need tailored support that reflects their individual needs rather than being constrained by age-based criteria.

We recommend that the Scottish Government takes learning from the examples we have provided of existing models of support, including peer networks, health and wellbeing support and housing support, to identify approaches that should be taken forward.

For more information, please contact:

David Mackay

Head of Policy, Projects, and Participation

Children in Scotland

Email: dmackay@childreninscotland.org.uk