



# Evaluation of the Home and Belonging Initiative Case Studies

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Children in Scotland and Staf  
September 2022

# 1 Introduction

**In 2019, Children in Scotland and Staf (Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum) were appointed by the Life Changes Trust to evaluate the Home and Belonging initiative.**

Home and Belonging is a fund that was originally managed by the Life Changes Trust aimed at supporting young people with care experience as they move on from care and into their own home.

In total 11 projects were funded through the initiative. Ten projects ran for across the three years of the fund and one project only ran in Year 1. Projects conducted a range of activity through the Home and Belonging initiative with the aim of identifying new and innovative approaches to providing support and improving care leavers experiences.

**Our evaluation had the following three key outcomes:**

- Assessing the effectiveness of the initiative in increasing the wellbeing of young people with experience of care, particularly in relation to:
  - Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences of their home environment
  - Whether young people with experience of care have feelings of belonging and connection to their communities
  - Whether young people with experience of care have positive experiences transitioning out of their care placements.
- Assessing the extent to which working in collaboration, using co-design principles, has led to culture change within and across organisations
- Determining whether or not there are particularly strong practices that have the potential to be adopted more widely.

This document lays out the four case studies we developed to share stories from across the Home and Belonging Initiative.

[➔ If you want to find out more you can access the main report here.](#)

# 2 Case Studies

We have created four case studies which share stories from across the Home and Belonging initiative. These case studies were written by the project team during Year 2 and Year 3 and are based on information provided by staff and young people at the funded projects. They were given guidance and prompt questions which they completed and returned to us.

Children in Scotland and Staf used the information provided by the projects to write the case studies. The final text was checked with the projects.

**The following four projects participated in the Home and Belonging Case Studies:**



**Impact Arts**  
(completed in 2021)



**East Lothian Council**  
(completed in 2021)



**Link Living**  
(completed in 2022)



**Quarriers**  
(will be completed in 2023)

The Case Studies are presented in turn below.

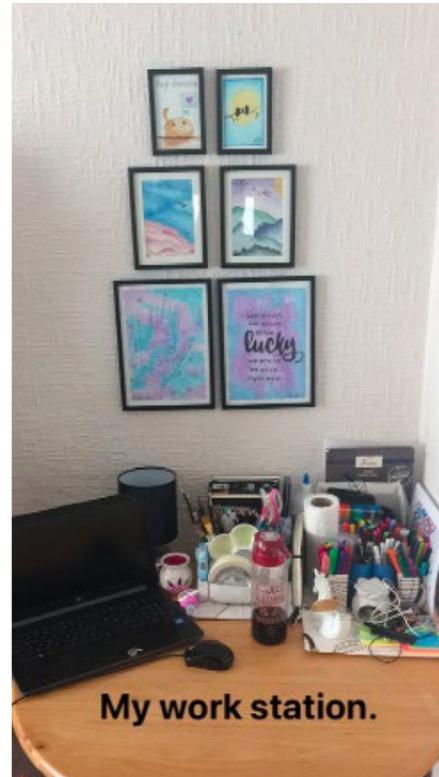
Evidence for case studies was gathered from four funded projects. Young people and staff have contributed to these. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

## Impact Arts

The Make It Your Own (MIYO) project delivered by Impact Arts supports young people with care experience to develop new skills by creating furnishings, decorating, and upcycling furniture for their home.

Jenna (23) began working with the MIYO project in May 2020, and worked with them for 12 weeks. She attended weekly one to one online workshops with staff from the project. Jenna also attended some group sessions with other young people and participated in a series of social media 'creative challenges'. Workshops took place online because of Covid-19 restrictions. Jenna made different products during her time with MIYO including posters and tactile comfort toys. Jenna also learned to market her work and develop her online presence.

Impact Arts staff helped Jenna to develop her existing creative abilities into a practical skillset. They encouraged and supported her to complete a social care qualification and enrol in a creative business course. Jenna believes the skills she learned by taking part in the project will help her now and in the long term. MIYO helped Jenna to think about her future goals and led her to create an Instagram page to showcase and sell her artwork.



Make it Your Own

“

*Chatting about my work and ideas made me realise that I want to pursue a creative career in the future ... I learned a lot about myself and what I want out of it*

Jenna

”

Jenna identified that encouragement and guidance from staff had an important impact on her self-confidence and affected her wider outlook on life.

“

*I think taking this leap of faith and trusting my instincts with the guidance, support and advice on offer from MIYO has again given me the confidence to believe and trust in myself in all areas of my life*

Jenna

”

Betty and Sharon, two staff members at Impact Arts, told us how participants had responded well to the project's collaborative approach. Despite some of the young people involved coming from chaotic backgrounds, staff were able to tailor the sessions to suit the participants' needs and interests. This particularly worked for Jenna as she had a young child she cares for on her own. Staff provided a series of pre-recorded sessions for Jenna to participate in as well as providing packs that Jenna could use with her child, which made it easier for her to participate.

Betty and Sharon also told us how they are learning from the project and from working with young people like Jenna by taking issues like childcare and mental health into account in their planning and delivery.

The person-centred approach used by the project helped increase participants' confidence and support their mental wellbeing during a particularly difficult time. Jenna shared details of her own experience of lockdown:

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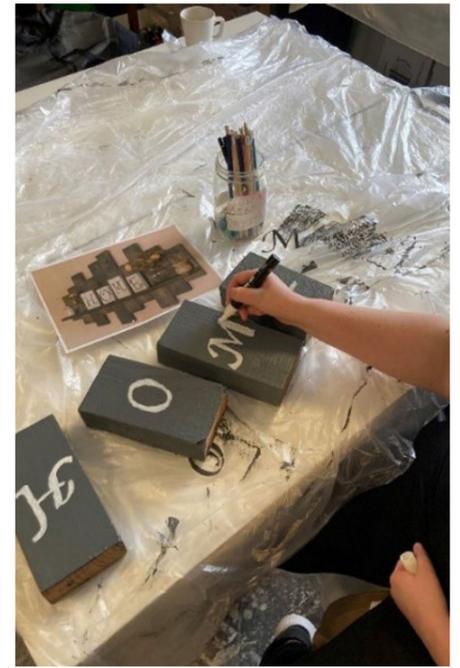
*I've been suffering from mental health issues since I was young and with the lockdown being introduced it got significantly worse... MIYO has helped me tremendously as it pulled me out of a haze so to speak. Lockdown had got to the point where it felt like Groundhog Day, so the programme gave me something else to focus on*

Jenna

”

Betty and Sharon told us that lots of the young people they were working with had not only developed practical skills to use around the house, they were also building coping strategies for times when they struggled with poor mental health.

Over the course of the pandemic, Impact Arts staff have been able to offer a mixture of face-to-face and virtual meetings as restrictions have changed. This flexibility meant they could continue working with young people and seeing positive changes in their lives.



Jenna told us about the longer-lasting impact that the project had on her.

**“**  
*I think the biggest way that the project will affect my future is to believe in myself more, both artistically and generally. I will always look back on artwork I made, new techniques I learned and the positive feedback I received. MIYO has been a huge motivator*

Evaluation Panel Member

MIYO's blended approach of virtual and in-person sessions, combined with its person-centred therapeutic activities, highlight good practice that could be adopted more widely across organisations. The golden thread running throughout the MIYO project is relationships. Jenna sums up the importance of these personal relationships and connections at the heart of the MIYO project.

**“**  
*All the staff at Impact Arts are phenomenal. They are so kind and are incredibly easy to talk to. I think I especially connected with Sharon as she gave me quite a bit of parental advice...she has been the person I have looked up to the most recently*

Jenna

Jenna is looking forward to growing her business and is optimistic about the future. She continues to stay in touch with Impact Arts staff through wellbeing chats and by engaging with online opportunities. The project has helped her to take more control over and pride in her home environment which appears to be making her happier at home.

## East Lothian

My Place is a peer flatmate project based in East Lothian, led by Queen Margaret University and East Lothian Council. It aims to partner care experienced young people in tenancies with students. Peer flatmates are volunteers who live in the house and are co-tenants with the young people. They adopt a mentoring role, providing practical support to young people to develop their independent living skills and help them to navigate the shared living environment. A range of training and support is provided to peer flatmates to prepare for the role and, due to the nature of the role, formal interviews are carried out to determine suitability. As it is a voluntary role it is unpaid. However, peer flatmates are not expected to pay rent for the time they live within the houses.



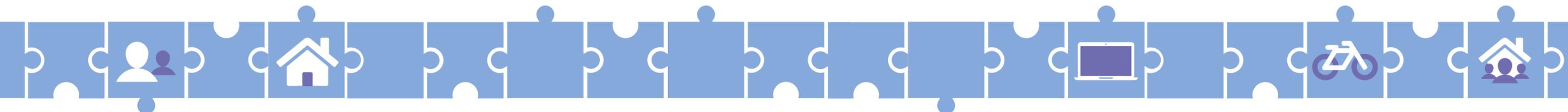
Kim and Quan, originally from Vietnam, are two young people the project is supporting. Both were in vulnerable positions that led to them being exploited, abused, and trafficked under false pretences of a better life in Scotland. They were homeless, and without a main care-giver back in Vietnam, applied for asylum in the UK.

Kim and Quan moved into My Place, which provides a regular home within the community, in February 2020. They now have support from a peer flatmate, the Rock Trust and the 15+ Through Care and After Care Service in East Lothian.

Initially, there was a brief period without a peer flatmate. During this time, My Place project staff helped Kim and Quan access grants to purchase bikes and laptops. The bikes helped Kim and Quan with their wellbeing, allowing them to exercise and explore the local area. The laptops meant they could enrol in an English as a Second Language course, supporting them to develop their language skills and increasing their opportunities for study and employment.



Once introduced to their peer flatmate Marisa, Kim and Quan quickly built up a strong, trusting relationship with her. The flatmates would cook and eat together, giving Kim and Quan a chance to talk about day-to-day life and other issues that they may be facing. They also worked together to maintain their house and garden.



Kim and Quan highlight the importance of their relationship with Marisa:



*We are happy in our home and feel safe*

Kim



Marisa also clearly values the relationship she has with Kim and Quan:



*I love their company and both are very respectful towards me. We help each other out during mealtimes and sit most nights having dinner and chatting about their days*

Marisa



The friendship and guidance they have received from Marisa has helped Kim and Quan become more confident and settled in the local community and they have gradually become more independent.



*We normally go to Tesco or Aldi for our food shop and the post office for topping up utilities. I feel the boys are becoming more confident/comfortable going by themselves. We have also been for walks down the promenade or along the beach*

Marisa



Kim and Quan’s limited knowledge of English has been a challenge, but My Place project staff have used a range of supports, including translators and Google Translate, to aid communication. Kim and Quan’s English has improved since taking their ESOL course – they are both keen to learn and insist on receiving information in English. Having written information makes it easier for Kim and Quan to translate the information if they need to. Project staff at the My Place project continue to support Kim and Quan to learn and they have plans to deliver sexual health and relationships training with them. Working with Kim and Quan has also helped staff on the project develop their knowledge of supporting people for whom English is a second language and those who are unaccompanied asylum seekers.

My Place staff have also helped Kim and Quan to build links with a nearby church, whose congregation includes other Vietnamese young people. This has helped Kim and Quan develop new friendships and feel more accepted, welcome and stable in the local community. The minister has commented that Kim and Quan now feel part of the church ‘family’.

The holistic approach of the My Place project appears to be benefiting Kim and Quan. The friendship and guidance provided by the Peer Flatmate scheme, combined with the more structured learning opportunities and support to access resources the My Place staff have provided, has helped Kim and Quan to feel settled and well-integrated into their home and local area.

## LinkLiving

The Supporting our Young Adults (SOYA) project delivered by LinkLiving provides housing and practical support for young people leaving care.

SOYA offers young people a temporary flat and support to develop life skills. Support is available 12 hours a day, seven days a week during their stay. The project helps young people to become more independent and to have the stability to plan for their future. It also helps young people to find their own, permanent tenancies when they are ready to move on.



Jason (24) is one of the young people who is being supported by the SOYA project. Jason got involved in the project in 2019 when he presented as homeless. Jason had experienced trauma at different points in his life and had been let down by other services and professionals and initially he did not fully trust the staff at SOYA. The project allows relationships with staff to develop at a pace the young person feels comfortable with. For Jason, this has taken a long time, but he now has positive relationships with all staff on the project and this has benefitted him greatly.

Jason appreciates the support he receives from project staff and will now actively invite staff members to support him at meetings he needs to attend. Project workers Brian and Kyle feel that embedding a relationship-based, trauma-informed practice has been instrumental in supporting Jason. They feel that actively listening, setting clear boundaries and supporting him, based on his individual needs, have been key to developing these positive relationships.

Staff member Kyle reflects on the importance of trust in helping Jason to make changes in his life:



*A standout moment would be where Jason, who has been let down by services and lost trust in professionals, was able to regain an ability to trust, thereby allowing access to support and then able to turn his life around*

Kyle



Jason receives support from a range of different SOYA staff which means he has several supporting relationships in his life. Having a consistent pool of staff provides stability and consistency for Jason and it also gives him the freedom to work with different people and to identify which relationships he values and gains most from.

Jason is pleased that he can access support when required, and in ways that suit him. SOYA staff are in the office for 12 hours a day and are available to help young people involved in the project at any time during this period. Jason has said he appreciates “people being in the office when help is needed”. Importantly, the staff support provided is at arm’s length and engagement is entirely led by what Jason wants. This has helped Jason to build his independence and decide when he needs help. As Jason’s involvement in the project has continued, his engagement with the support on offer has massively increased. He has been able to reach out when things have become overwhelming and he has needed additional support.

Throughout his time at SOYA, Jason has improved his budgeting and cooking skills. He has had opportunities to get involved in volunteering and fundraising. The SOYA project has also provided support in looking after his training flat. He now leads a busy and healthy lifestyle and enjoys swimming and cycling to keep himself fit.

SOYA has supported Jason to get his own secure tenancy In July 2022. Jason worked with staff members to locate and secure his new flat and feels his life has improved because of the move. He will continue to access housing support for some time to ensure that this continues.



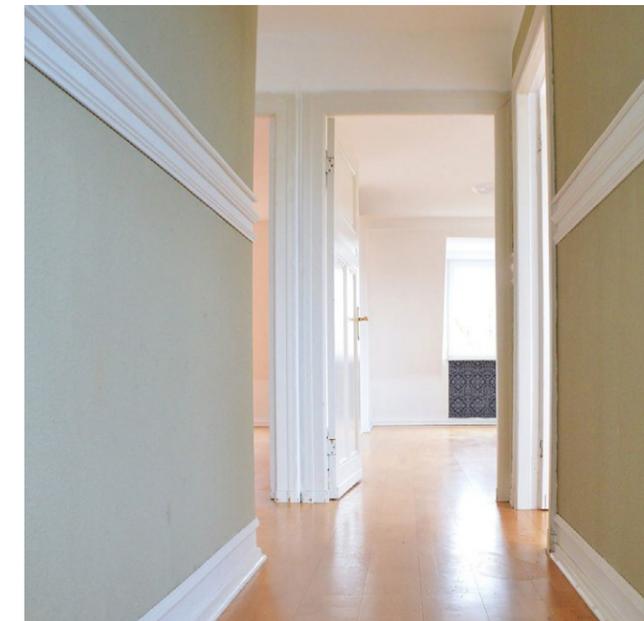
“  
***I feel safer having a secure place to live... I feel more stable***  
 Jason”

The support Jason has received from SOYA has helped him to learn new skills and move on to live independently in his own secure tenancy. He has also begun to build positive relationships with both statutory and voluntary services for the first time in his adult life. LinkLiving has recognised the impact of working in a relationship-based, trauma-informed way and will continue to help young people to access support on their terms and in their own time.

## Quarriers

The ‘My Place’ project delivered by Quarriers provides funding, mentorship and practical support for young people leaving care and moving into their own tenancies.

Alexia (19) has been working with the Quarriers My Place project for five months since Quarriers received a referral from the social work throughcare and aftercare team. In that time, she has moved into her own tenancy and has been able to design it in a way that makes her feel ‘at home’. Throughout her time with the My Place project, Alexia has learned vital skills to help her in life, including budgeting. She has also received financial support to buy second-hand items and worked with staff on the project to utilise the space within her home.



Quarriers staff member James worked with Alexia for three weeks before she moved into her new flat. Unfortunately, the move into her new tenancy was far from straightforward.

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***Alexia had only recently received the keys and the flat was completely empty – no flooring or furniture, completely undecorated etc.... needless to say, it was an extremely stressful situation and time for Alexia***  
 James”

Working with James, Alexia got support with financial management, prioritising activities, and sourcing second-hand items. They worked together to decorate and furnish the flat in a sustainable way. Despite all the challenges, Alexia feels happy in her new flat and proud to have a place to call her home.

“  
***The opportunities I've had for help with decorating my flat have helped me a lot. If it wasn't for this, it wouldn't look this way the now...I've really enjoyed putting my style in my flat***  
 Alexia”

James explained that the ‘My Place’ project is set up to be young person-led in a way that empowers them to feel supported whilst making their own choices. James has worked alongside Alexia to help her to understand the choices she is making and offer advice. Ultimately, this approach supports the young person to make a fully informed decision of their own.

“

*Working with Alexia (and the other young people I support) has reinforced the importance of supports being ‘needs-led’, driven by the wants and wishes of the young person*

James

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During her time working with the project, Alexia has developed her confidence, she has become less shy and more willing to make decisions about the flat on her own. She has also become far more positive about the future and has set herself clear goals to work towards. She also has the skills and support in place to help her achieve these goals.

“

*Being more confident has impacted my life by allowing me to be more outgoing and talkative in social situations, something that would have made me feel anxious and nervous beforehand. I am also standing up for myself more, by feeling comfortable in voicing my opinions... when I’m out and about I’m more confident as I don’t overthink things or think that people are judging me; I don’t care what people think now.*

Alexia

”

Having good relationships built on effective communication with staff like James is one of the key aspects of the ‘My Place’ project for Alexia. In particular, she really values that people care about her and listen to her. It was also important to Alexia that she had one-to-one time with Quarriers staff when they can talk about anything.

“

*“I’ve met some really nice, understanding and kind people... Relationships come and go but the ones that stay have the biggest impacts as they really care and listen to you and want you to do well.*

Alexia

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Staff at the project feel that Alexia knows they have her best interests at heart and that having people to talk to as well as offer her advice has been of real benefit to her.

Family relationships are important to Alexia and having her flat and the support to maintain it has helped sustain and develop these relationships. Having a space she is proud of has made Alexia feel more comfortable to invite her brothers over for family meals. Alexia also has a young son who she is working hard to gain full custody of, and she believes that having her own house will support her with this.

Being involved with the Quarriers ‘My Place’ project has helped Alexia to make new friends and to develop a better understanding of the relationships she wants in her life and what will be good for her. Alexia is looking towards the future and has recently received an unconditional offer to study Social Science at college.

