



**Impact & Evaluation**

# **New Belongings Programme: Baseline evaluation report**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **The New Belongings programme**

New Belongings is a three-year programme being delivered by Coram Voice. The programme works with eight local authorities in England, supporting them to engage care leavers in service improvements using a co-production approach. With funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Segelman Trust the programme began in July 2019 and will run until July 2022.

Based on an approach developed by the Care Leavers' Foundation, Coram Voice has refined the New Belongings model. By working with a smaller cohort of eight local authorities over a longer period, using a range of mandatory tools and running multiple workshops with care leavers and local authority staff, the programme aims to encourage local authorities to improve their support for care leavers, based on engagement and involvement of young people as experts in their own experience.

### **This baseline evaluation**

Carried out by Coram's Impact and Evaluation team, this independent evaluation of the New Belongings Programme is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Using a range of tools such as the Baker and Dixon self-assessment for local authorities and the Your Life Beyond Care survey for care leavers, this evaluation report provides a baseline assessment of the starting point for the eight participating local authorities. These tools will be administered again in spring 2022, allowing pre- and post- data to be compared, which will enable the final evaluation report to describe any changes the New Belongings approach contributes to improving services for care leavers in participating local authorities.

### **The participating local authorities**

The application process to participate in the New Belongings Programme focused on local authorities' and their senior managers' commitment to embed the voice of care leavers in local authority decision-making processes. Other factors such as Ofsted ratings, geographical location and type of local authority were also taken into account to ensure that the programme recruited a variety of local authorities.

The local authorities are Coventry, Dorset, Hertfordshire, North Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Oldham, Stockport, and Wandsworth.

### **Local authorities' self-assessment**

Local authorities completed the Baker and Dixon 'leaving care services self-assessment' tool between June and October 2020. The scoring shows that six local authorities were found have an 'okay' performance at baseline, while another two local authorities were 'good'. However, this finding should be treated with some caution as some local authorities may deliberately have scored themselves more harshly to highlight areas where improvements were needed.

As a cohort the local authorities were shown to perform best in the Gold Standard area of 'having an adequate level of income' at baseline. The areas with poorer performance included 'managing day-to-day living' and 'having good health and well-being'.

## **Your Life Beyond Care survey**

The majority of care leavers in the New Belongings local authorities completed the baseline Your Life Beyond Care survey during the unprecedented Covid-19 lockdown restrictions between March and May 2020 (n=1,358). Across the eight local authorities there was a good overall response rate of 50% (range 29% to 81%).

The demographic profile of care leavers who responded to the survey broadly appears similar to care leavers who completed the same survey between 2017 and 2019 across 21 other local authorities (n=1,804). Although this comparison sample was collected prior to the Covid-19 pandemic most of the findings were very similar to the New Belongings survey findings.

A few differences stand out. Care leavers living in the New Belongings' local authorities were more likely to live in a rented flat or house than the Bright Spots comparison group (46% vs 38%), and less likely to live in supported accommodation (12% vs 21%). Significantly more care leavers in the New Belongings local authorities said that they were able to cope financially (63% vs 56%) and perhaps because of this, more felt able to afford their phone bill (82% vs 76%). New Belongings care leavers also had better access to the internet (88% vs 83%). Surprisingly, care leavers' average stress scores were lower in the covid-sample, compared to the stress scores in the pre-covid sample (7.17 vs 7.44) – an unexpected finding as we anticipated higher levels of stress as a result of the national lockdown.

However, responses to most of the survey questions, such as questions about young care leavers' relationships, life as a care leaver, day-to-day life, and feelings and aspirations, show that care leavers in the two samples had very similar experiences.

## **The impact of covid on programme delivery**

Although 2020 was a challenging year nationwide, as multiple lockdowns and ongoing social distancing rules prohibited face-to-face contact, the New Belongings Programme appears to have adapted well to the changing circumstances. By switching to virtual engagement early, the New Belongings team has been able to continue to engage both local authority staff and young people. This has ensured that all eight local authorities have progressed well.

## **Conclusion and next steps**

This evaluation report provides a baseline assessment of where the eight participating local authorities 'were at' at the beginning of the New Belongings Programme. The similarities identified between the New Belongings' survey findings

and the Bright Spots comparison group, despite the very different circumstances the surveys were completed, suggest that this provides a good baseline foundation.

This will allow the second and final evaluation report, due in summer 2022, to report on progress against the New Belongings programme's Theory of Change, and its overall objectives of improving services for care leavers.

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## 1. Introduction

New Belongings is a three-year programme being delivered by Coram Voice. The programme works with eight local authorities in England, supporting them to engage care leavers in service improvements using a co-production approach. With funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Segelman Trust the programme began in July 2019 and will run until July 2022.

Carried out by Coram's Impact and Evaluation team, this independent evaluation of the New Belongings Programme is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

### 1.1 Purpose of this report

This report provides a baseline assessment of where the eight participating local authorities 'are at' at the beginning of the New Belongings Programme. It covers the first of three programme phases, namely the engagement and planning phase.

Utilising a range of tools, including the 'Baker and Dixon' self-assessment for local authorities<sup>1</sup> and the Your Life Beyond Care survey for care leavers<sup>2</sup>, the programme gathered views and perceptions from multiple stakeholders at the baseline.

Working together with participating local authorities, these tools will be administered again in spring 2022 by the New Belongings Programme team, allowing pre- and post- data to be compared. This will enable the evaluation to describe any changes the New Belongings approach makes to improve services for care leavers.

## 2. Background to the New Belongings Programme

Developed by the Care Leavers' Foundation with funding from the Department of Education, the original New Belongings project ran in two phases in 2013-14 and 2015-16.<sup>3</sup> Working with 28 local authorities in phase two the primary aim was for local authorities to improve services for care leavers by applying the experience and expertise of care leavers themselves to facilitate change.

Having found a new home with Coram Voice, the New Belongings Programme was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Segelman Trust to run a three-year programme with a smaller cohort of local authorities. The programme is due to finish in July 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> To access the tool: <https://www.coram.org.uk/resource/baker-dixon-leaving-care-services-self-assessment-framework>

<sup>2</sup> For more information see: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots-2/>

<sup>3</sup> Care Leavers' Foundation (2016) [A guide to the New Belongings approach: a way forward for care leavers](#), (accessed 20 March 2021)

## Care leavers

Care leavers are young adults who have spent some of their childhood in the care of a local authority, for example, in foster care or a children's home. Some care leavers are entitled to support from the local authority that looked after them, and that support can continue until they are 25 years old.

### 2.1 Coram Voice

Coram Voice is a national charity for the voice of children in care that champions the rights of children to get their voices heard in decisions that matter to them. Established in 1975 as a children's rights organisation, Coram Voice became part of the Coram Group of charities in 2013 and works to improve the lives of children in care and care leavers through participation, advocacy, campaigning and research.

In addition to New Belongings, Coram Voice runs a range of programmes to enable care experienced children and young people to have their voice heard. Such programmes include:

- *Always Heard* – a national advocacy helpline and safety net for care experienced children and young people in England
- A network of independent advocates and independent visitors
- *Voices* – a national writing competition for care experienced children and young people
- *A National Voice* – the 'National Children in Care Council' for children in care and care leavers
- *Bright Spots* programme – a partnership with the University of Oxford that helps local authorities systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers about the things that are important to them through subjective well-being surveys.

The Bright Spots survey for care leavers is called Your Life Beyond Care and forms part of the New Belongings Programme. Another Bright Spots survey is aimed at children in care, and is called Your Life Your Care.

### 2.2 The New Belongings model

Based on an approach developed by the Care Leavers' Foundation, Coram Voice applied the previous project evaluation<sup>4</sup> and learning to refine the current New Belongings Programme.

Working with a smaller cohort of eight local authorities over a longer period, using a range of mandatory tools and running multiple workshops with care leavers and local authority staff, New Belongings has developed a model for improving support for care leavers based on engagement and involvement of young people as experts in their own experience.

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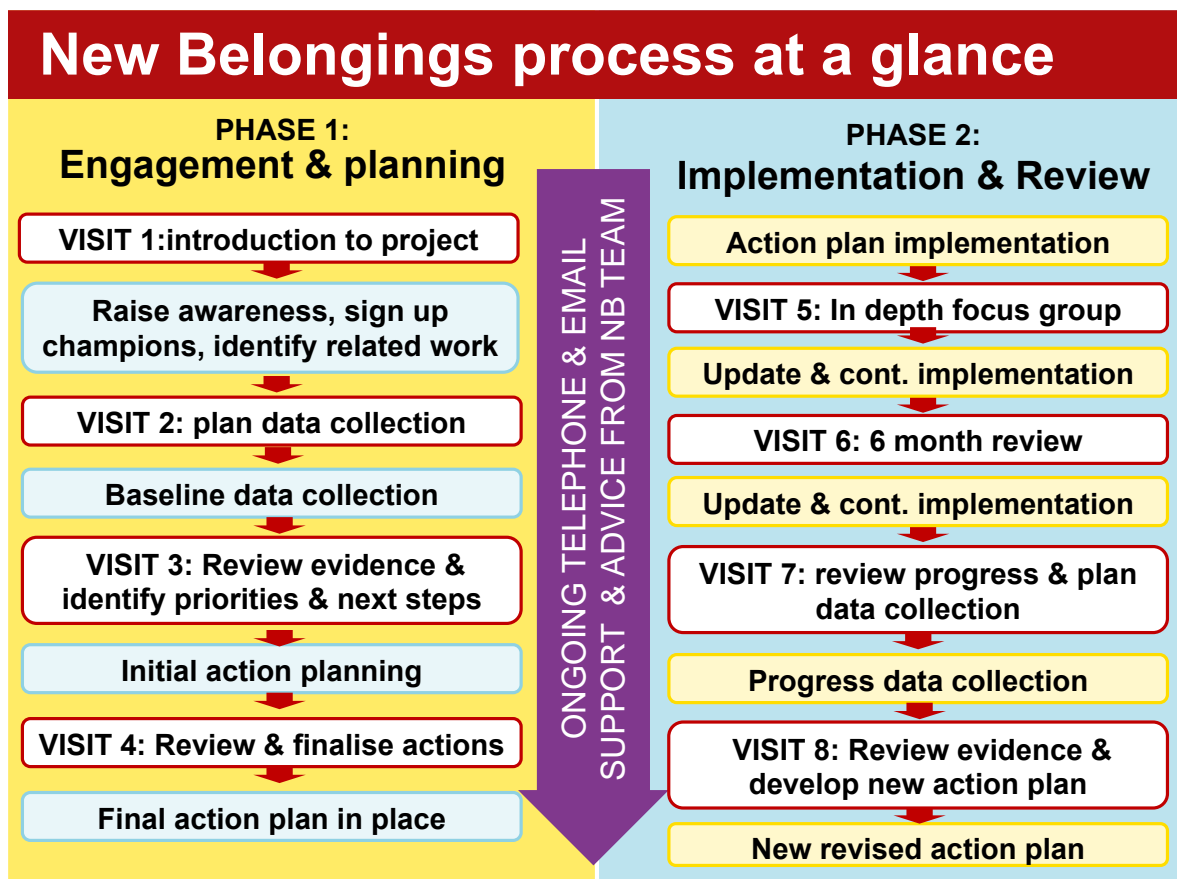
<sup>4</sup> Dixon, J. & Baker, C. (2016) [New Belongings: an evaluation. Research report](#), Department for Education. October 2016 (accessed 27 March 2021)



Working closely with each of the local authorities across three phases – (1) engagement and planning; (2) implementation; (3) review and planning – the programme team supports local authorities to:

- Collect baseline data of the experience of care leavers in their local authority using the Your Life Beyond Care survey and the ‘Baker and Dixon leaving care services self-assessment’ tool.
- Provide ongoing advice, guidance and support to local authorities to create an action plan, using the findings from baseline assessments to address areas for improvement.
- Support the local authority’s Care Leaver Forum to help identify key areas for change and implement the changes in the local authority using a co-production approach.
- Support the collection of follow-up data by repeating the Your Life Beyond Care survey and the Baker and Dixon leaving care services self-assessment tool.

The diagram below sets out how the New Belongings model is delivered across three phases and how programme activities are distributed over eight local authority visits.



The New Belongings team consists of a number of part-time members of staff, including a Programme Manager, a Senior Practice Adviser, a Participation Manager and a small number of Care Experienced Consultants, who are trained and

supported by Coram Voice. Together the team engages with senior leaders, key leaving care workers and young carers in each of the eight local authorities.

In collaboration with the Coram Impact & Evaluation team, the New Belongings team articulated the programme's Theory of Change, setting out how programme activities will lead to the goals and outcomes described below<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2.

## **New Belongings Programme Theory of Change**

The overall aim of the New Belongings Programme is to amplify and embed the voices of care leavers to create lasting improvements in local authority services for young care leavers. Through programme activities and engagement with local authorities and their care leavers, the programme aims to achieve the following goals and outcomes:

### **Ultimate goals**

- The learning from New Belongings means care leavers in England are well supported
- Care leavers have good subjective well-being
- Care leavers have good health and employment, education and training outcomes
- A successful methodology of embedding the voice of care leavers into local authority service improvements is created and can be scaled and replicated

### **Long-term outcomes**

- Children and young people have a good experience of leaving care in participating local authorities
- Participating local authorities provide a good service to children and young people leaving care
- Care leavers have trusting relationships with participating local authorities' personal advisers and key staff
- Local and national standards for care leavers are less varied and better reflect what is important to care leavers

### **Short-term outcomes**

- Care leavers are embedded in participating local authorities service decisions and developments
- Participating local authorities have established systematic processes of using co-production approaches to make decisions about services for care leavers
- Participating local authorities effectively co-produce decisions and developments to leaving care services with care leavers
- Care leavers feel included in the participating local authorities' decisions and developments to services
- Participating local authorities have good knowledge of what makes a good care leaving service and care leavers' needs

## 2.3 The impact of covid on programme delivery

Although 2020 was a challenging year nationwide, as multiple lockdowns and ongoing social distancing rules prohibited face-to-face contact, the New Belongings Programme appears to have adapted well to the changing circumstances. By switching to virtual engagement early, the New Belongings team has been able to continue to engage both local authority staff and young people. New Belongings has, for example, fed back findings from baseline data, increased the number of catch-up meetings and offered peer-learning sessions for local authority managers. This has ensured that all eight local authorities have progressed their action plans and while the time for implementing their plans has been reduced, an adjustment to the overall programme timescale will mean that local authorities have 2021 in which to implement their plans.

An internal review by the New Belongings team highlights the following implications of the covid pandemic on programme delivery and on how the participating local authorities responded to the changing circumstances:

- The eight authorities were just planning to start their YLBC survey when the first national lockdown started and understandably, they had to focus on operational issues to ensure that young people were safe, had food and felt able to adjust to the requirements of lockdown.
- There were also some issues with completing the self-assessment form - in findings the time for local authorities and partners to do the necessary work.
- The other development was the increased focus on supporting young people to complete the YLBC survey.
- All eight local authorities increased their level of contact with young care leavers and they saw the YLBC survey as an opportunity to have different conversations with their young people.
- Some local authorities offered financial incentives to do the survey – this was seen as a way to get some additional money to young people at a difficult time. Others used the survey as a way to engage young people in doing something when they were complaining about boredom and to check in with them afterwards about any difficult questions or feelings the survey had posed.

## 3. The evaluation

Funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Coram's Impact and Evaluation team is carrying out an independent process evaluation of the New Belongings Programme over three years.

In 2019, the evaluation team worked with New Belongings to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluating the programme. This included:

- A Theory of Change - a statement of how and why a service is expected to achieve its aims.
- A Logic Model - a statement of what a programme or service consists of and what it intends to achieve.

- An Outcomes Framework setting out how to measure the expected short- and long-term outcomes of the programme.<sup>6</sup>

The evaluation considers the following three main questions:

1. Does New Belongings support local authorities to embed care leavers' opinions and experiences in the decisions and service developments made by participating local authorities?
  - What helps a local authority do this successfully?
  - What hinders a local authority?
2. Does New Belongings improve the participating local authorities' knowledge of what makes a good care leaving service for care leavers?
3. Does New Belongings improve the service that care leavers receive in the participating local authority?
  - Do care leavers have a better experience of leaving care support?

To help answer these questions, the evaluation uses a mixture of secondary data analysis, questionnaires and qualitative interviews with key local authority staff. The evaluation uses a pre- and post- programme approach, where data is collected at baseline and again towards the end of the programme.

The New Belongings Programme itself also uses a range of research methods and were responsible (in partnership with local authorities) for collecting local authority data to inform both the programme delivery and to support the evaluation.

For this baseline report, which covers the engagement and planning phase of the programme, the following evaluation activities were carried out:

- Analysis of care leavers' responses to the Your Life Beyond Care survey (n=1,258)
- Analysis of the Baker and Dixon leaving care services self-assessment (n=8)
- Interviews with local authority leads (n=5)
- Interview with New Belongings Programme Manager (n=1)
- Review of contextual local authority data, such as Ofsted reports, national statistics on looked-after children and care leavers (prepared by New Belongings), local offer documentation and local authorities' expressions of interest (n=8)
- Creation of pen portraits setting out detail about individual local authorities (n=8) (see Appendix 1)
- Review of meeting notes and evaluation summary from initial meetings between local authorities and New Belongings (prepared by New Belongings) (n=8).

Some data collected relied on what local authorities told us. We have not been able to verify or quantify all the claims. For further details about the data collected and analysed for this report, please see Appendix 3. Nevertheless, taken together this

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 2 for more detail.

provides a comprehensive data-set for this baseline assessment of the ‘engagement and planning’ stage of the NB programme.

While local authorities are named as partners of the New Belongings programme, any findings reported in this evaluation report has been anonymised (LA 1-8). The numbering remains constant throughout the report.

## **KEY BASELINE FINDINGS**

### **4. Characteristics of participating local authorities**

This section focuses on the characteristics of the eight participating local authorities at baseline, how they were selected and how their leaving care provision were doing at the engagement and planning stage.

More detail about individual local authorities is provided in the eight pen portraits in Appendix 1.

#### **4.1 Selection of local authorities**

The recruitment of local authorities took place during summer 2019. Prospective local authorities were asked to complete an expression of interest setting out why they wished to be involved with the programme and how they met the programme criteria. Local authorities were expected to demonstrate evidence of:

- A commitment to embed the voice of care leavers in the local authority decision-making process;
- The commitment of senior management to the programme, including at Director and Councillor level;
- An existing forum for care leavers, or the commitment to set one up, and coordinate this;
- Dedicated staff time to coordinate programme activities and to engage with care leavers;
- A commitment to join up services across the local authority and with external partners to support care leavers and create new opportunities;
- An identified local authority lead, with access to senior managers, to manage local authority engagement in the programme.

Sixteen local authorities applied – twice as many as the eight places available. As part of the selection process, the programme team reviewed each application against the outlined criteria. For local authorities that met the requirements, other factors such as their Ofsted rating, geographical location, type of local authority and number of care leavers were taken into account to ensure that the programme recruited a variety of local authorities.

Supporting information provided to potential local authorities at the recruitment phase shows that New Belongings originally intended to cluster local authorities to

enable them to support and learn from each other. For example, if they were geographically close, were statistical neighbours or ran services with similar structures. However, this became less prominent as the selection process progressed.

Among the eight selected local authorities, Stockport had previously been involved in the New Belongings Programme (2013 – 2016), while Hertfordshire and Wandsworth have carried out the Bright Spots survey with their children in care (Your Life Your Care). None of the 8 local authorities had previously undertaken the Your Life Beyond Care survey.

## 4.2 Context

Working with a small cohort of local authorities means that the New Belongings Programme targets a small proportion (5%) of top-tier local authorities in England. Nevertheless, the local authorities are diverse in terms of type of council, geographical location and whether they serve a mainly rural or urban population (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of New Belongings local authorities

Local authority	Type of local authority <sup>7</sup>	Region	Urban / rural classification <sup>8</sup>
Coventry City council	Metropolitan	West Midlands	Urban with city and town
Stockport Metropolitan Borough council	Metropolitan	North West	Urban with major conurbation
Oldham Borough Council	Metropolitan	North West	Urban with major conurbation
North Tyneside Borough council	Metropolitan	North East	Urban with major conurbation
North Yorkshire County council	Country council with seven district councils	North East	Largely rural
Hertfordshire County council	County council with ten district councils	East of England	Urban with city and town
Dorset Council	Unitary	South West	Urban with significant rural / Mainly rural <sup>9</sup>
Wandsworth council	London Borough	London	Urban with major conurbation

The size of the care leaver population also varied between participating local authorities, ranging from 135 to 694, as did the level of effectiveness as indicated by

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) [List of councils in England by type](#), (accessed 21 March 2021)

<sup>8</sup> ONS (2019) [Rural Urban Classification \(2011\) of Local authority Districts in England](#) (accessed 27 March)

<sup>9</sup> Dorset council is a new unitary council, hence not yet registered in the rural urban classification. East Dorset was classified as 'Urban with significant rural', while West and North Dorset were 'Mainly rural'.

their Ofsted inspection results. As shown in Table 2, six out of the eight local authorities were rated as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ for their care leaver service at the time they were selected for the programme.<sup>10</sup> Another two ‘required improvements’ to be good. This suggests that, as a cohort, the participating local authorities were in a good position to commit to a programme like New Belongings and to be able to implement programme actions to engage young care leavers in service development.

Table 2. Ofsted ratings (at baseline)

Inspection outcome	Children’s Services (overall effectiveness)		‘Experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers’ (effectiveness of sub-area)	
	New Belongings local authorities	Inspected local authorities (England) <sup>11</sup>	New Belongings local authorities	Inspected local authorities (England) <sup>12</sup>
Outstanding	1 (13%)	8 (5%)	2 (25%)	15 (10%)
Good	3 (38%)	62 (41%)	4 (50%)	62 (42%)
Requires improvement	4 (50%)	62 (41%)	2 (25%)	62 (42%)
Inadequate	0 (0%)	20 (13%)	0 (0%)	10 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 (101%)</b>	<b>152 (100%)</b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>	<b>149 (100%)</b>

### 4.3 Getting involved with New Belongings

The eight participating local authorities all applied to be part of New Belongings in 2019. During baseline evaluation interviews with local authority leads, we asked about their reasons for joining New Belongings and what they hoped to gain from their involvement. Those interviewed highlighted two main objectives – (1) to better engage with their care leavers, and (2) to raise the profile of care leavers council-wide.

With regard to better engagement, local authorities hoped to improve their participation with young care leavers, for example by becoming more creative in how they reach care leavers or by trialling new structures and methods for participation. There was also a clear wish among most participating local authorities to reach a larger cohort of care leavers, beyond those who typically engage through forums and meetings, in order to engage with care leavers that were more representative of their care leaver population.

Some local authorities specifically hoped to gain a more in-depth understanding of young people’s views, experiences and needs, especially from care leavers with specific experiences and needs, such as young people with disabilities or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

<sup>10</sup> Since the New Belongings programme started, North Tyneside has had a full Ofsted inspection in 2020 which rated the overall service ‘outstanding’ and the care leaver service ‘good’.

<sup>11</sup> Ofsted (2019) [Official Statistics: Children’s Social Care in England 2018-19](#) (accessed 17 March 2021)

<sup>12</sup> (Ofsted (2020) [Children’s social care data for the Ofsted Annual Report 2019-20](#) (accessed 27 March 2021)



*At the moment we get those that are engaged in offering [their] voice and feedback, we know who they are – they're either connected to Facebook, [name of organisation facilitating the council's participation] or the Care Leavers Forum, but in terms of challenging ourselves, what about the young people that don't want to communicate in either of those ways? How are we reaching their voices? Because they may have something different to tell us? That was really our attraction... [We hope] New Belongings is going to give us the opportunity to do that, and help us to do that because we are not collecting views in a systematic way... (local authority lead)*

Some local authority leads also wanted New Belongings to raise the profile of care leavers across their local authority. By raising the profile of care leavers, local authorities hoped that other departments, outside of Children's Services, would develop a better understanding of the council's corporate parenting role and become better advocates for care leavers, for example by becoming care leavers' champions or offering opportunities to care leavers. Working with an external organisation was also seen to raise the awareness of participation and the importance of listening to care leavers, as well as giving an impetus to get things done.

When local authority leads were asked if they anticipated any barriers or had any concerns about the programme, most said that they did not have any concerns as such. But a few recognised that within a busy local authority the main barrier would be managing the logistics of the programme, such as facilitating the distribution of the care leavers survey or gaining access to key people within the council, as the diaries of senior leaders often get booked up months in advance.

A few leads also speculated whether the local authority would be open and honest when completing the self-assessment or if they would be complacent and not want to acknowledge that service improvements may be needed.

#### **4.4 Existing mechanisms for listening to care leavers**

At the beginning of the programme, as evidenced in local authorities' expression of interest and evaluation interviews, participating local authorities used a range of mechanisms to engage with their young care leavers. All had established Children in Care Councils (CICC), generally for two age groups. Some CICCs included care leavers, while a few local authorities had separate forums for care leavers. CICCs were generally the main way for care leavers to influence or communicate with senior leaders. A number of local authorities also had a variety of meetings where care leavers and children in care could regularly share their views. One such six-weekly 'business meeting' in one local authority was attended by lead members of the Directors of Children's services and key staff, as well as young people, and was tasked with reporting back to the Corporate Parents Working Group.

A few local authorities worked in partnership with external organisations who were responsible for participation across the council, including the Children in Care Councils. One local authority had employed a young care experienced ambassador who was working part-time within their participation team. While another local

authority had recruited care leavers to establish a young people's panel as part of the recruitment process of leaving care workers.

A few local authorities used Facebook or other social media platforms to engage and communicate with their care leavers, for example by posting opportunities available to care leavers or by asking for feedback on specific issues.

However, although local authorities already used a range of methods to engage with their care leavers, local authority leads also identified some concerns around their current mechanisms of participation. While most local authority leads believed their council had well-functioning Children in Care Councils or Care Leavers Forums, some recognised that the young people who attended these meetings often only represented a small group of their care leaving population.

*In theory the mechanisms are there [to hear the views of care leavers], but not as effective as they could be, not as inclusive. [We] need to utilise different mechanisms, like social media, to really capture the feedback. At the moment, senior managers tend to go back to the same young people, rather than look at a wider cross-section. (Local authority lead)*

The depth of engagement and participation also varied, with one local authority lead describing their consultation work as 'a bit tokenistic' and 'lip service'. Another lead highlighted that while they often addressed small areas of concern, that directly related to care leavers' interests, they tended not to involve young people in the 'big decisions', such as local authority budget cuts or the restructuring of services.

Local authorities also described their engagement with young care leavers as more consultation-based, rather than co-production. Most participating local authorities had limited experiences of co-production and where young people had been involved in co-producing, for example the local care leavers' conference, they had generally only been involved in one element, rather than the whole process.

Finally, one local authority highlighted concerns around managing young people's expectations, for example why certain things could not be done, or could not be done right now. The lack of feedback about what had been changed as a result of care leavers' input was also highlighted by one local authority as an area of concern in their current practice.

#### **4.5 The Local Offer**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires all local authorities to publish a 'local offer for care leavers'. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from their local authority and any partner agencies in relation to six key areas:

- Health and well-being
- Relationships
- Education and training
- Employment
- Accommodation

- Participation in society

The local offer should include information about care leavers' statutory entitlements, as well as any discretionary support that their local authority chooses to provide. Guidance from the Department for Education highlights that when local authorities develop their local offer they are required to consult with 'relevant persons', such as care leavers or organisations that represent care leavers.<sup>13</sup>

All eight local authorities had a published local offer at baseline.<sup>14</sup> Some used their website to publish their local offer, others had a publication that was distributed to their care leavers, and some had both.

When asked about their local offer a few local authority leads were clear about what their offer included, its strengths and any areas for improvement. However, other local authority leads seemed to struggle to describe their local offer beyond the statutory requirements. While improving the local offer is not an explicit outcome for New Belongings, the programme expects that – as part of their action plans – local authorities will listen to their young people to come up with responses to local problems and to include those in their local offers.

Areas of their local offer that were highlighted as good by local authorities, included leaving care workers' personal and one-to-one relationships with care leavers, provision of mentoring and the availability of flexible staff during the evening and at weekends.

Areas that were identified as needing improving were generally around physical health and mental health in particular, or a wish to be able to provide more choice around accommodation. But as one local authority lead emphasised it was not enough to do well in one area, as different areas are interconnected when it comes to young people's lives:

*It's not just one thing, we've got to do all of it to make a difference – accommodation affects mental health, which affects finances, which affects educational opportunity etc. Every young person's story is different and what they need is different and we've got to listen carefully to what everyone needs to then commission and make decisions on how we design our services and our offer... (local authority lead)*

## **5. Local authorities' self-assessment**

### **5.1 A 'leaving care service self-assessment tool' for local authorities**

The Baker and Dixon 'leaving care services self-assessment' framework was originally developed to evaluate the previous round of the New Belongings

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<sup>13</sup> Department for Education (2018) [Local offer guidance: guidance for local authorities](#), February 2018 (accessed 21 January 2021)

<sup>14</sup> However, when conducting the analysis for the pen portraits in Appendix 1, we were unable to locate the local offer for Dorset.

programme, involving 28 local authorities in England.<sup>15</sup> Based on the New Belongings programme's ten 'gold standard' areas, the framework was developed to help local authorities self-assess their leaving care services in order to identify both good practice and areas for development. The tool was also used to evaluate the New Belongings programme.<sup>16</sup>

The self-assessment tool comprises ten areas identified by the New Belongings programme as reflecting young people's pathways to adulthood. For this third phase of New Belongings, the self-assessment tool was updated to include new legal duties and policies that local authorities should have in place.

The New Belongings Gold Standard Areas (2020) are:

1. Listening and responding to care leavers' views (as individuals and collectively)
2. Relationships – having people to count on for emotional support
3. Care leavers' entitlements – being informed and supported
4. Educated – to their potential
5. Employment – care leavers helped into work
6. Having good health and well-being
7. Being in safe and settled accommodation
8. Having an adequate level of income
9. Managing day-to-day living
10. Making sure support works for all care leavers

Within each of these ten areas, the assessment lists between 8 and 15 indicator statements (or items). In the current version of the Baker and Dixon (2020) tool there are a total of 106 separate statements, which local authorities must say to what extent they agree or disagree with.<sup>17</sup> Examples include 'Education professionals contribute to the Pathway Planning process' and 'Care leavers are involved in the recruitment, selection and training of staff and carers'. These answers are translated into scores, and summed. A high score indicates that local authorities are doing well in terms of their care leavers service, while a low score suggests that improvements can be made.

### 5.1.1 Completing the self-assessment tool

For this third phase of New Belongings, the Baker and Dixon tool was made mandatory, and the eight participating local authorities completed the self-assessment at baseline between June and October 2020, and they will complete it again at the end of the programme in spring 2022.

While it was up to each local authority to decide how and who completed the self-assessment form, the New Belongings team recommended that local authorities should organise a discussion group to review the answers. Bringing together representatives from a range of roles and positions, each area of the tool should be debated and evidence provided in order for participants to agree the final version.

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<sup>15</sup> Dixon, J. & Baker, C. (2016) [New Belongings: an evaluation. Research report](#), Department for Education. October 2016

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Agree at present (4), Mostly agree (3), Mostly disagree (2), Disagree at present (1).

The assessment form asked local authorities to describe how the self-assessment was completed, and the responses highlight the significant resources and time local authorities committed to completing the self-assessment. Many of the local authorities sought feedback from internal and external partner agencies, ran specialist groups across multiple teams and departments, and involved strategic groups, teams of personal advisors and social workers to gather views on local authorities' care leaving services:

*Relevant sections of the self-assessment were sent to key partners both external and internal. We also ran a workshop with staff from Through Care to gather their views and spent a management away day completing [the assessment]. All this information was then brought together to complete the self-assessment. (Local authority lead)*

*The self-assessment was completed across a period of four weeks by ten specialist, virtual working groups, each of which focussed on a set of questions. (Local authority lead)*

At the outset, this demonstrates a high level of commitment to the New Belongings programme among the participating local authorities.

## 5.2 A cohort of eight local authorities

The data gathered from the eight self-assessment forms was used to explore how local authorities were doing at baseline – which were doing well and which were struggling to meet the benchmark of a gold standard service.

A scoring parameter was constructed for the 2015-16 evaluation of New Belongings by summing the scores for all gold standard items.<sup>18</sup> This was adjusted for this evaluation to account for the higher number of items in the revised Baker and Dixon assessment (2020). The minimum score was 106 (minimum one point for each of the 106 items), while the maximum possible score was 424 (maximum four points per item) (table 3).

The overall average score was 302 – meaning that as a cohort the average performance was 'okay'.

Individually, all the eight local authorities fell into the top two constructed performance categories. Two local authorities (25%) were categorised as 'good' and six (75%) were doing 'okay' in terms of their self-assessed performance at baseline.

Table 3. Performance categories

	Category	Scoring parameters	Description	Number	Percentage
1	'Good' performance	Top third (scoring 424 – 325)	Local authority mostly in agreement with	2	25%

<sup>18</sup> Dixon, J. & Baker, C. (2016) [New Belongings: an evaluation. Research report](#), Department for Education. October 2016

			every statement (e.g. scoring 4 or 3)		
2	'Okay' performance	Middle third (scoring 324 – 223)	Local authority mixed responses	6	75%
3	'Poor' performance	Bottom third (scoring 222 – 106)	Local authority disagreed with every statement (e.g. scoring 2 or 1).	0	0

This is a lower proportion of local authorities who scored 'good' at baseline (25%) than the 45% of the cohort of 19 local authorities who completed the baseline self-assessment tool in the previous phase of the New Belongings programme<sup>19</sup>. However, based on interviews with local authority leads and the New Belonging programme team in this third phase, it is our impression that some local authorities in this sample deliberately scored themselves more harshly, in order to highlight areas where improvements were needed.

### 5.2.1 Performance within the ten 'gold standard' areas

To get a sense of which gold standard areas were being delivered well at baseline and which were perceived as areas for development across the cohort, we calculated the average score for each gold standard area. This was used to rank the gold standard areas in order of performance, with higher average scores indicating better overall performance.

As a group the local authorities were performing best in the area of 'having an adequate level of income' (Table 4). This was also the highest performing standard area within the 2015-16 evaluation, which may reflect the statutory duties relating to this area making practices more embedded within the local authorities. However, the table also highlights the small average differences between the top seven areas, suggesting that the tool may need a larger scoring range (for example out of 10 or 100, rather than 4) to be able to identify finer distinctions within a cohort.

The areas with poorer performance included 'managing day-to-day living' and 'having good health and well-being'. These were also the lowest scoring areas in the 2015-16 evaluation, which may suggest a more widespread pattern beyond the New Belongings local authorities.

Table 4. Gold standard areas in order of performance at baseline, from best to worst

Rank	Gold standard area	Mean (average score out of 4)	Mean (average score out of 100%)
1	Area 8. Having an adequate level of income	2.99	75%
2	Area 2. Relationships – having people to count on for emotional support	2.97	74%

<sup>19</sup> Although 28 local authorities participated in the previous New Belongings Programme, only 19 local authorities completed the self-assessment at baseline. For more detail, see Dixon, J. & Baker, C. (2016) [New Belonging: an evaluation](#). Research report, October 2016, page 43.

3	Area 7. Being in safe and settled accommodation	2.96	74%
4	Area 1. Listening and responding to care leavers' views	2.93	73%
5	Area 10. Making sure support works for all care leavers	2.89	72%
6	Area 5. Employment – care leavers helped into work	2.88	72%
7	Area 4. Educated – to their potential	2.86	71%
8	Area 3. Care leavers' entitlements	2.70	68%
9	Area 9. Managing day-to-day living	2.61	65%
10	Area 6. Having good health and well-being	2.56	64%

To understanding which indicators within the ten 'gold standard' areas were being delivered well and which required more attention, a similar process of analysis was carried out with all 106 indicators. Taking the average score generated from the cohort of eight participating local authorities, table 5 below shows the top 10 performing indicators and table 6 shows the ten lowest ranking indicators.

While there have been some revisions to the assessment tool since it was first developed, three indicators also featured in the ten highest scoring items in the previous analysis of 19 local authorities. These were 'all care leavers have a named allocated worker'; 'care leavers receive a 'setting up home' allowance'; and 'strategic leaders are committed to improving leaving care services' (ranked 1, 4 and 5 in the table below). Comments made by local authorities in relation to individual indicators show that the statutory requirements of having a named worker and having access to a setting up home allowance were well-established practices across the eight local authorities.

Table 5. Ten highest scoring items at baseline (ranked highest to lowest)

Rank	Area / Item	Item description	Mean (average score out of 4)	Mean (average score out of 100%)
1	2 / B	All care leavers have a named allocated worker	3.75	94%
2	7 / C	Services work together to avoid care leavers becoming 'intentionally' homeless	3.63	91%
3	8 / C	Financial assistance is provided to young people when they are in a crisis	3.63	91%
4	8 / D	Care leavers receive a 'setting up home' allowance (at least £2,000) that is sufficient to ensure they have all the essentials they need	3.63	91%
5	1 / A	Strategic leaders are committed to improving leaving care services in line with the Children and Social Work Act corporate parenting principles	3.50	88%
6	2 / D	We make sure all care leavers, staff and carers know that young people can keep PA support up to age 25 (if they wish) or return for support after age 21	3.50	88%
7	4 / E	Young people are helped with moving and supported to settle into University	3.50	88%

8	7 / F	We provide practical support with moving into and furnishing care leavers' homes	3.50	88%
9	7 / L	All care leavers are given the opportunity and encouraged to stay put with foster carers should they wish to	3.50	88%
10	1 / F	Our local authority celebrates care leavers' achievements	3.38	84%

The lowest scoring indicators varied across five 'gold standard' areas (see table 6 below). Some related to care leavers knowing about their entitlements or managing day-to-day living. The provision of health and well-being featured highly among the indicators that require more attention, such as having health professionals contribute to Pathway Planning, and systems for transferring to adult services. Among the indicators with the lowest score, three also featured in the 2016 study of 19 local authorities, including 'preparation support is designed and run with care experienced young people'; 'young people generally report that they find pathway planning helpful', and 'the availability of 'staying put in residential care' (ranked 102, 103 and 106 in the table below).

Table 6. The ten lowest scoring items at baseline (ranked highest to lowest)

Rank	Area / Item	Top 10 gold standard item	Mean (average score out of 4)	Mean (average score out of 100%)
97	2 / F	We value the expertise of older care leavers who can act as 'peer supporters'/role models	2.25	56%
98	3 / I	Care leavers are given and take up opportunities for volunteering in the local authority and community	2.25	56%
99	3 / M	We regularly get feedback from care leavers to check how satisfied they are with the support they receive in relation to their entitlements	2.25	56%
100	3 / B	All adults supporting care leavers have a copy of the local offer and make sure young people access their entitlements	2.13	53%
101	6 / E	Health professionals contribute to the Pathway Planning process (assessment, review and actions)	2.13	53%
102	9 / D	Our preparation support is designed and run either by, or with, young people who have experience of leaving care. It focuses on both practical and emotional skills.	2.13	53%
103	9 / F	Young people generally report that they find pathway planning helpful in supporting them day-to-day	2.13	53%
104	6 / A	Care leavers transferring to adult services report a smooth transition in support	2.00	50%
105	6 / D	Links are established with CAMHS and community mental health services to ensure care leavers are given priority access to targeted services	2.00	50%
106	7 / M	Staying close in residential care is available in our authority	1.88	47%



Overall, comments made by local authorities show that individual local authorities recognise when provision is either not currently available or has not been a priority, and as a whole are able to identify possible ideas for improvements and future actions:

*We need to work with health colleagues to ensure that a priority route is established for Care Leavers to receive the mental health support they need. Groups, such as trauma support groups, are not designed with care leavers in mind... (Local authority self-assessment)*

*Currently there are no specific mental health services for UASC young people and this is a significant gap. The team urgently needs trauma-based counselling in multiple languages, but we have not yet identified any services offering this... (Local authority self-assessment)*

### 5.3 Individual local authorities' self-assessment scores

The overall analysis of the Baker and Dixon self-assessment scores, showed variations between the participating eight local authorities, with some local authorities scoring better overall and within the ten 'gold standard' areas. Our calculation of the average performance, according to the local authorities' self-assessment at baseline, suggests that local authorities with an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating for their care leavers services also had the highest Baker and Dixon score, while those local authorities who 'require improvements' according to their Ofsted rating scored the least (Table 7). However, it is important to note that some local authorities in the sample appear to have deliberately scored themselves harshly, in order to highlight areas where improvements were needed.

Table 7. Self-assessed performance at baseline across 10 'gold standard' areas

Local authority	Mean (average score out of 4)	Mean (average score out of 100%)
Local Authority 5	3.29	82%
Local Authority 4	3.24	81%
Local Authority 1	2.96	74%
Local Authority 3	2.91	73%
Local Authority 7	2.74	69%
Local Authority 8	2.74	69%
Local Authority 6	2.59	65%
Local Authority 2	2.19	55%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>71%</b>

The same pattern can be seen in Table 8 which breaks down these overall self-assessment scores into each of the 'gold standard' areas, highlighting the varied scores between and within each local authority.

The three-colour scale demonstrates the highest scores in green, the lowest scores in (dark) orange and the midpoint (50 percentile) in yellow.

Table 8. Performance at baseline in 10 gold standard areas (average score out of 4)

<b>Area / local authority</b>	<b>LA 1</b>	<b>LA 2</b>	<b>LA 3</b>	<b>LA 4</b>	<b>LA 5</b>	<b>LA 6</b>	<b>LA 7</b>	<b>LA 8</b>
1. Listening and responding to care leavers' views	3.20	2.80	2.80	2.90	3.40	2.40	2.80	3.10
2. Relationships: having people to count on for emotional support	3.15	2.38	2.92	3.62	3.62	2.38	2.92	2.77
3. Care leavers' entitlements	2.69	2.08	2.62	3.31	3.46	2.54	2.38	2.54
4. Supporting care leavers with their education	3.00	2.00	3.25	3.00	3.00	2.88	2.75	3.00
5. Employment: helping care leavers into work	3.20	1.70	2.50	3.30	3.70	2.40	3.10	3.10
6. Having good health and well-being	2.30	3.00	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.30	2.50	2.30
7. Being in safe and settled accommodation	3.47	1.93	2.87	3.60	3.40	2.73	3.20	2.47
8. Supporting care leavers to manage money	3.64	2.09	3.36	3.36	3.00	2.91	2.64	2.91
9. Managing day-to-day living	2.50	1.50	2.88	3.38	3.00	2.63	2.63	2.38
10. Making sure support works for all care leavers	2.50	2.38	3.25	3.25	3.63	2.75	2.50	2.88

As part of the first phase of the New Belongings programme, engagement and planning, the Baker and Dixon self-assessment scores were used by each local authority to help inform their action plan, to be instigated during the second phase, implementation. The New Belonging team also used the completed assessments to collect good practice examples to promote and share learning.

All eight local authorities will complete the Baker and Dixon self-assessment again in spring 2022, at the end of the New Belongings Programme. We will report on the pre- and -post programme assessments in our final evaluation report.

## **6. Care leavers' views about their well-being**

### **6.1 The Your Life Beyond Care Survey**

The Your Life Beyond Care survey was originally developed in 2017 by Coram Voice for the Bright Spots Programme to measure the well-being of care-experienced young adults. Based on a literature review, seminars with professionals and a series of workshops with young care leavers, the programme developed and tested a survey to capture care leavers' views about their own well-being.<sup>20</sup>

The survey, which consists of 41 questions, focuses on four key well-being domains (relationships, life as a care leaver, day-to-day life, and feelings and aspirations)<sup>21</sup>. The survey also includes well-being scales used, for example by the Office for National Statistics, as part of annual population surveys. This allows Your Life Beyond Care findings to be compared to the well-being of young people in the general population.

As part of the Bright Spots Programme, the survey was completed by 1,804 care leavers across 21 other local authorities in England between 2017 and 2019. This national Bright Spots sample provides a useful comparison for survey findings coming out of the New Belongings programme.

#### **6.1.1 Completing the Your Life Beyond Care survey**

Care leavers in New Belongings local authorities completed the baseline survey during unprecedented Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Care experienced young adults aged 16 to 25 years old in seven of the New Belongings local authorities completed the Your Life Beyond Care survey between March and May 2020. In the other local authority, the survey was rolled out between May and September 2020.

Care leavers were invited to complete the survey online by their Leaving Care Personal Advisor (PA), but paper surveys were also available and used in cases where young people did not have access to the internet or where the young person preferred this method. Care leavers were sent messages via social media and text to

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<sup>20</sup> For more details about the development of the 'Your Life Beyond Care' survey, see: Briheim-Crookall, L. et al. (2020) [What makes life good? Care leavers' views on their well-being](#), 10,000 Voices Publication (accessed 28th February 2021)

<sup>21</sup> These domains address areas, such as the people in your life, being a care leaver, housing, living independently, taking part in society, feelings and well-being.

encourage survey take-up, and in two local authorities care leavers received a shopping voucher as an incentive to complete the survey.

Young people completed the survey anonymously, and any names or other identifying information was removed by the researchers prior to analysis.

Within the eight local authorities, 2,492 care leavers had the opportunity to complete the survey, and 1,258 responded – an overall response rate of 50%. However, with response rates ranging from 29% to 81%, some local authorities were more successful than others in engaging their care leavers with the survey.

Table 9. Your Life Beyond Care baseline survey response rate

Local Authority	Number of care leavers invited	Number of surveys completed	Response rate (%)
Local Authority 1	383	251	66%
Local Authority 2	226	75	33%
Local Authority 3	751	216	29%
Local Authority 4	162	75	46%
Local Authority 5	250	180	72%
Local Authority 6	190	123	65%
Local Authority 7	200	161	81%
Local Authority 8	331	177	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,492</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>50%</b>

Nevertheless, the overall response rate of 50% is remarkable compared to the national Bright Spots sample of 21 other local authorities, where an average of 39% completed the survey.<sup>22</sup>

As part of the New Belongings Programme, participating local authorities have each received a report with baseline findings setting out the responses of care leavers in their local authorities – and this information has fed into the development of their action plan.

## 6.2 Findings from Your Life Beyond Care Survey at baseline

This section looks at the baseline findings for all the responding care leavers (n=1,258) in the eight local authorities in the New Belongings programme.

Where possible, survey findings are compared to data on young people in the general population, and more specifically to the average responses of care leavers across 21 local authorities who participated in Your Life Beyond Care in 2017-19 (n=

<sup>22</sup> Briheim-Crookall, L. et al. (2020) '[What makes life good? Care leavers' views on their well-being](#)', 10,000 Voices Publication (accessed 28th February 2021)

1,804).<sup>23</sup> Where comparisons are not highlighted in the text the findings were similar.<sup>24</sup>

## 6.2.1 The demographics of respondents

### Age

Two-thirds of the care leavers who responded to the survey were 18 to 20 years old (65%), while one-third were aged between 21 and 25 years old (33%).

Only 14 young people were aged 16 to 17 years (1%) – this is a smaller proportion than the 9% in the national Bright Spots sample.

Table 10: Age group of young people who completed the survey

Age group	Number	Percentage
16 to 17 years	14	1%
18 to 20 years	806	65%
21 to 25 years	405	33%
26 years or older	7	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,232</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Gender

The same proportion of female and male care leavers completed the survey (49%). Twelve young people self-defined as ‘other’ (1%), while 17 ‘preferred not to say’ (1%).

### Ethnicity

The majority of young people who completed the survey identified as white (65%). This is a similar proportion to young people in the national Bright Spots sample (62%).

Table 11: Ethnicity of young people who completed the survey

	Number	Percentage
White	822	65%
Black	161	13%
Asian	100	8%
Mixed background	62	5%
Other	62	5%
Prefer not to say	37	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,244</b>	<b>99%<sup>25</sup></b>

<sup>23</sup> See [‘What makes life good? Care leavers’ views on their well-being’](#) for a comprehensive account of the study and findings, including comments written by care leavers.

<sup>24</sup> In general, differences of 2% or less were described as similar (in a few cases 3% for smaller answer categories). When the average percentage was 5% more or less the data were weighted and statistical tests run for significant difference between the two samples. A statistically significant result means that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

<sup>25</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## Long-term health problems or disabilities

Care leavers were asked if they had a long-term health condition or disability that limited their day-to-day activities. Of the 1,232 young people who answered the question, 317 (26%) wrote they had a long-term health condition or disability, while 834 (68%) stated they did not. Six per cent preferred not to answer the question.

The proportion of young care leavers with a disability in the New Belongings sample (26%) was similar to the national Bright Spots sample (24%), but markedly higher than the 14% of young people in the general population of England in 2019.<sup>26</sup>

## Care leavers who were parents or pregnant

More than one-in-five young carers (21%) wrote that they were parents and/or expecting a child. This was a similar proportion of parents compared to the national Bright Spots sample (19%).

## Length of time spent in care

Care leavers were asked how many years they had been in care for. Over half (59%) of the 1,254 young people who answered the question had been in care for more than four years. Almost one-third (31%) had been in care for more than seven years, while 53 young people (5%) had been in care for less than a year. Again, this distribution was similar to the national Bright Spots sample.

Table 12. Number of years spent in care

Time spent in care	Number	Percentage
Less than a year	53	4%
1 to 3 years	403	32%
4 to 7 years	351	28%
More than 7 years	389	31%
I don't know	58	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>101%<sup>27</sup></b>

Overall, the demographic profile of young care leavers who responded to the Your Life Beyond Care survey in 2020 as part of the New Belongings programme, appears broadly similar to the national Bright Spots comparison sample in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, prevalence of disability and being a parent.

### 6.2.2 Living independently

Recognising the importance of where we live and the impact that living conditions can have on our health and well-being, young care leavers were asked several questions about their living arrangements and how they felt about their home.

<sup>26</sup> ONS (2020) [Young people's well-being measures](#). Office for National Statistics. (accessed 26 February 2021)

<sup>27</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The largest proportion, almost half of care leavers (46%) lived in a rented flat or house. This is a noticeably larger proportion than young care leavers in the Bright Spots sample (38%) who lived in rented accommodation.

One-in-eight respondents (12%) lived in supported accommodation, such as hostels. This is a markedly smaller proportion than the 21% of care leavers in the Bright Spots sample who lived in supported accommodations.

When young people gave details of ‘other’ living arrangements (9%), they often noted living in a shared house, with partner’s family, in a caravan, secure unit or care home.

Table 13. Type of housing

Housing type	Number	Percentage
Rented flat or house	580	46%
Supported accommodation	153	12%
With foster carers ('stay put')	138	11%
With parents or other relatives	120	10%
Supported lodgings	44	4%
College or university	34	4%
Homeless	26	2%
Short stay or emergency accommodation	18	1%
Home or flat owner	18	1%
In custody	12	1%
Other	111	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>101%<sup>28</sup></b>

Feeling safe and settled in the accommodation you live is important to general well-being, but safety is also one of the key matters considered during local authorities’ assessment of the quality of young care leavers’ accommodation.

Most young care leavers (68%) in the New Belongings sample reported feeling safe in their home. This is a higher proportion than care leavers in the national Bright Spot sample, which found that 64% of young people ‘always’ felt safe in their home.

However, a quarter (25%) of New Belonging care leavers only felt safe ‘sometimes’, while 88 young people (7%) wrote they ‘hardly ever or never’ felt safe in their home. In comparison, 29% of care leavers in the Bright Spots sample felt safe ‘sometimes’ and 8% ‘hardly ever or never’ felt safe.

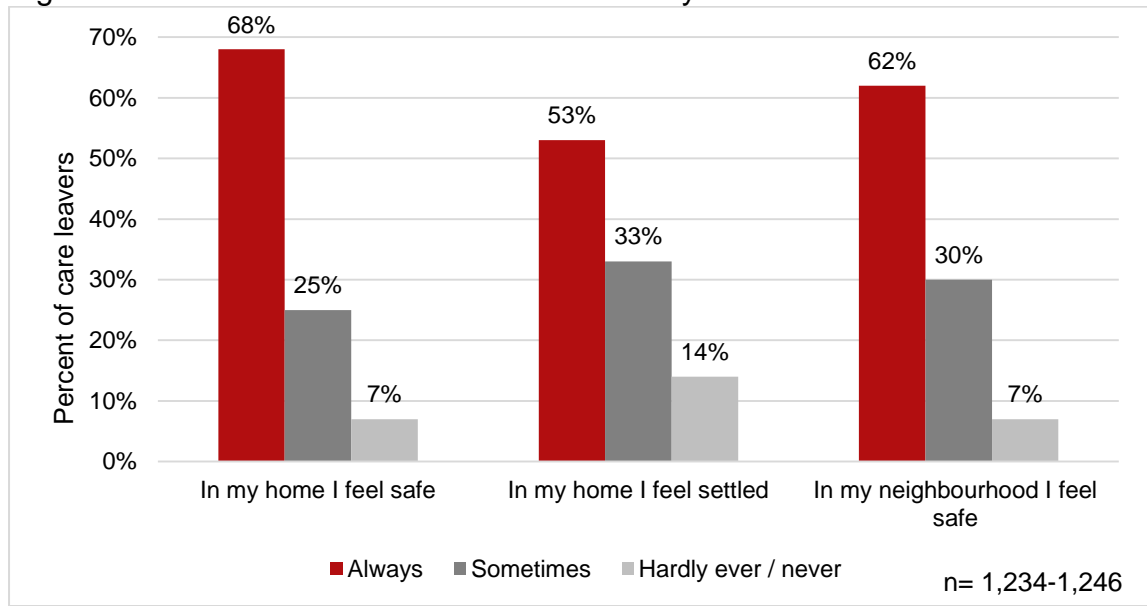
Just over half (53%) of respondents in the New Belongings sample felt settled in their home, but a large proportion (47%) only felt settled ‘sometimes’ or ‘hardly ever’.

Almost two-thirds of care leavers (62%) ‘always’ felt safe in their neighbourhoods. According to national statistics, 80% of 16 to 24 years olds in the general population reported feeling fairly or very safe walking alone after dark.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>29</sup> ONS (2020) [Young people’s well-being measures](#). Office for National Statistics (accessed 26 February 2021)

Figure 1. How care leavers felt about where they lived



To find out whether care leavers perceived their current accommodation as suitable, the survey asked ‘is where you live now right for you?’ The majority of care leavers (70%) responded ‘mainly yes’, but almost one-third (30%) responded ‘mainly no’. This is a similar proportion to care leavers’ responses in the national Bright Spots sample, but a lower proportion of care leavers (aged 19 to 21) who according to national statistics are in ‘accommodation considered to be suitable’ in 2020 (85%)<sup>30</sup>. This, and previous Bright Spots survey findings, highlights a gap between what care leavers say is the right accommodation for them and what is considered suitable accommodation by their local authority.

While not exactly the same question, when young people aged 16 to 24 in the general population were asked by the Office for National Statistics in 2020 how satisfied they were with their accommodation, 84% reported they were fairly or very satisfied<sup>31</sup> – a higher proportion than young people in both care leaver samples.

## Employment, education and training

Engaging in fulfilling activities, such as education, training, volunteering or work is important to young people’s quality of life. Being unemployed can influence a young person’s sense of purpose and reduce their social connections, and consequently have a negative impact on their subjective well-being. Young care leavers were asked ‘right now, are you in education, employment or training?’. A large proportion of respondents (39%) were not in education, employment or training (NEET). A slightly smaller proportion of care leavers were engaged in education (35%), while over one-in-five were working (22%).

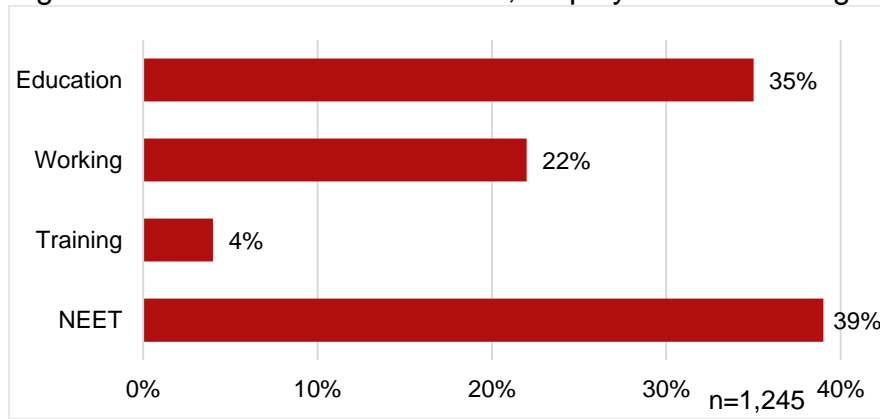
<sup>30</sup> Children looked after in England including adoptions (2020) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2020> (accessed 4th June 2021)

<sup>31</sup> ONS (2020) [Young people’s well-being measures](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/young-peoples-well-being-measures/2020). Office for National Statistics (accessed 26 February 2021)



As this survey question changed in 2019, there is no direct comparison with the Bright Spots sample. However, national statistics show that 39% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 years in England were NEET in 2020<sup>32</sup>. This suggests that the New Belongings sample is representative of young care leavers nationally in terms of their activities.

Figure 2. Care leavers in education, employment or training



Those care leavers who were not in education, employment or training were asked why. Among the 469 young people who answered the question, around one-in-four wrote that they had an illness or a disability (27%), while 7% were caring for their child/ren. More than half provided another reason for why they were not in education, employment or training.

### Coping financially

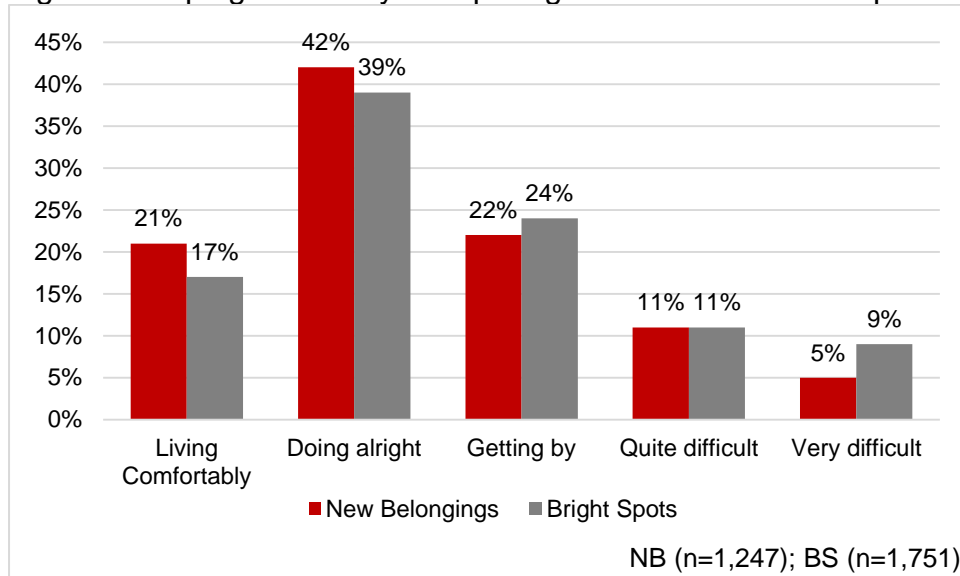
Being worried about having enough money can significantly impact young people’s well-being. Care leavers were asked if they were able to cope financially. The majority of respondents (63%) wrote that they were ‘doing alright’ or ‘living comfortably’. This is a larger proportion than in the Bright Spot sample (56%). This difference between the two samples is small, but statistically significant.<sup>33</sup>

One-in-six respondents (16%) in the New Belongings sample was finding it ‘quite difficult’ or very difficult’ to cope financially, compared to 20% of care leavers in the Bright Spots sample.

<sup>32</sup> Children looked after in England including adoptions (2020) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2020> (accessed 4th June 2021)

<sup>33</sup> The difference is statistically significant (p=0.003), but the effect is small (Phi -.059).

Figure 3. Coping financially: comparing two care leavers sample



### Access to smart phones and the internet

Having access to the internet and a smartphone can help young care leavers connect with their friends and family, as well as provide access to information, advice and entertainment. This would have been particularly important to young people during the national Covid-19 lockdown, which placed severe restrictions on face-to-face contact.

Among the young care leavers who responded to the survey, smartphone ownership and internet usage were high. The vast majority of care leavers had a smartphone (94%) – a comparable proportion to their peers aged 16 to 24 years in the general population (96% in 2020).<sup>34</sup>

While most care leavers could connect to the internet at home (88%), they were less likely to be able to do so than the general population – 93% of UK households had internet access in 2019.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, compared to care leavers in the national Bright Spots sample (completed 2017-2019), internet access among care leavers in the New Belongings local authorities was higher (88% vs 83%). Again, this difference between the two samples is small, but statistically significant.<sup>36</sup>

Around four-in-five care leavers said they could afford their mobile phone bills (82%), while around one-in-five said they could not (18%). It is a statistically significant smaller proportion of care leavers who could *not* afford their mobile phone bill, compared to the Bright Spots sample (24%).

<sup>34</sup> Statista (2020) [Smartphone ownership penetration in the United Kingdom \(UK\) in 2012- 2020, by age](#) (accessed 30 March 2021)

<sup>35</sup> ONS (2020) [Internet access - households and individuals](#), Office for National Statistics (accessed 1 March 2021).

<sup>36</sup> The difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), but the effect is small (Phi -.070).

### 6.2.3 Life as a care leaver

Leaving care workers (also known as Personal Advisors or PAs) have an important role in terms of providing advice and support, and co-ordinating services for young people leaving care. As part of the survey, all care leavers were asked if they knew who their current leaving care worker was.

The vast majority (96%) of young care experienced adults wrote that they knew who their leaving care worker was – a statistically significant difference compared to the 93% of care leavers in the Bright Spots sample who knew their leaving care worker.<sup>37</sup> However, 51 young people (4%) did not know their leaving care worker.

In terms of how easy it was to get in touch with their leaving care worker, three-quarters (75%) thought it was easy ‘all or most of the time’ – compared to 71% in the comparison sample. Considering that young people completed the survey at a challenging time for all, including local authorities, where staff often had to work from home, this is an encouraging finding for the New Belongings local authorities.

During the development of the survey, care experienced young people identified ‘trust’ as an important feature of their relationship with leaving care workers. In the New Belongings sample, more than four-in-five care leavers (83%) trusted their leaving care worker ‘all or most of the time’, 14% trusted them ‘sometimes’, and 3% reported that they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ trusted their leaving care worker.

As well as knowing about, trusting and being able to get in touch with their leaving care worker, the continuity of workers is also important. Hence, the survey asked how many workers respondents had had in the past 12 months. Almost two-thirds (64%) wrote that they had only one worker – a larger proportion than the 60% of care leavers in the comparison sample who had had only one worker.

Nevertheless, one-third mentioned having two or more leaving care workers in the past year (34%), of which 10% had had three or more workers.

Table 14. Number of leaving care workers in the last 12 months

Number of leaving care workers	Number	Percentage
One worker	796	64%
Two workers	309	25%
Three or more workers	119	10%
No worker allocated	28	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,252</b>	<b>101%<sup>38</sup></b>

Pathway planning involves a local authority and young person setting goals and outlining the support needed to reach those goals. Together with young people, leaving care workers develop and review the young person’s pathway plan. When asked how involved they felt in their pathway planning, the majority of young care leavers (65%) wrote they felt involved ‘all or most of the time’. This is a larger proportion of care leavers in the New Belongings sample who felt involved in their pathway planning compared to the comparison group (62%).

<sup>37</sup> The difference is statistically significant ( $p=0.0001$ ), but the effect is small (Phi  $-0.069$ ).

<sup>38</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

However, a quarter (24%) only felt involved 'sometimes', while 53 young people (4%) 'hardly ever or never' felt involved with their pathway planning. Eighty-one young people (6%) did not have a pathway plan or did not know what it was.

For a young person to understand why they came into care, and to have opportunities to discuss the reasons why this happened, are important and fundamental to their development, identify and emotional well-being.<sup>39</sup> Within the New Belonging sample of young care leavers, most (80%) felt that someone had sufficiently explained why they had been looked after, 14% wanted to know more and 6% thought that no-one had explained the circumstances. These findings correspond with the findings from the national Bright Spots sample.

### 6.2.4 Relationships

Having good and supportive relationships are important for emotional well-being, quality of life and can help reduce social isolation. A lack of friendship is furthermore associated with loneliness, anxiety and a range of adverse mental health outcomes.<sup>40</sup> The survey asked a range of questions about the people (and animals) in care leavers' lives, and their relationships. One such question was, 'do you have a really good friend?'

The majority of care leavers (86%) felt they had a really good friend, while 14% believed they did not. This is a similar proportion of care leavers (15%) in the national Bright Spots sample who felt they did not have a good friend.

Focusing on young people's resilience, having a trusted person in your life can act as a protective factor when experiencing stressful life events. Most care leavers (87%) felt that they had a person they could trust, who helped them and who would stick by them no matter what, but 13% (165 young people) wrote they did not. When asked who gave them emotional support, the three most frequently selected categories of relationships were friends (57%), leaving care worker (54%) and partners (35%).<sup>41</sup> Sixty young people felt they did not have anyone who gave them emotional support. The 54% of care leavers who got emotional support from their leaving care worker compares to 45% in the Bright Spots sample.

The survey also asked about other protective factors, such as having someone who listens to you. As figure 4 below shows, the majority of care experienced young adults felt that they had someone in their life who listened to them (94%); told them when they had done well (89%); and believed that they would be a success (89%).

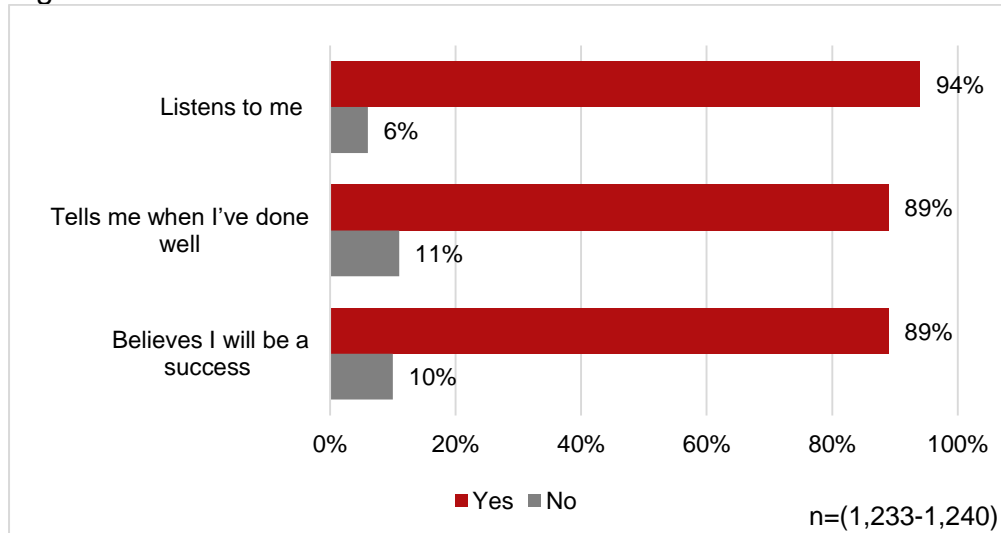
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<sup>39</sup> Briheim-Crookall, L. et al. (2020) [What makes life good? Care leavers' views on their well-being](#), London: 10,000 Voices Publication (accessed 28th February 2021)

<sup>40</sup> Baker (2017) [Care leavers' views on their transition to adulthood: a rapid review of evidence](#), London: Coram Voice (accessed 17 March 2021)

<sup>41</sup> The 14 categories were: foster carer; residential staff; leaving care worker; counsellor/mental health professional; education professional; other care leaver; friends; partner; mum; dad; brother /sister; other relative; own child(ren); pet; and 'I don't have anyone'.

Figure 4. Care leavers: I have someone who...



Finally, recognising that some people find pets to be a source of comfort and companionship, care leavers were also asked whether they had a pet or not. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) mentioned not having a pet, while one-thirds (33%) wrote that they did have a pet. This is a statistically significantly larger proportion of pet owners, compared to care leavers in the national Bright Spots sample (33% vs 28%).<sup>42</sup>

### 6.2.5 Feelings and emotions and well-being

The Your Life Beyond Care survey explores a range of feelings and emotions that are linked to young people's overall sense of well-being. This section focuses on anxiety, stress and a range of positive and negative feelings, such as feeling optimistic, proud, lonely and angry. It also addresses how young care leavers feel about their future, as well as their goals and plans going forward.

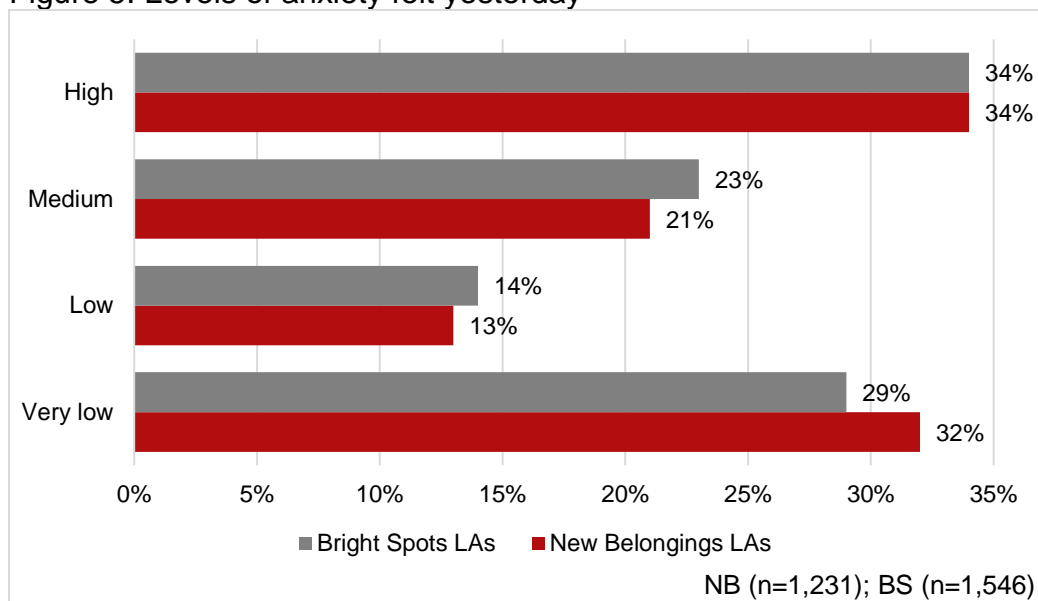
Care leavers were asked on an 11-point scale 'how anxious did you feel yesterday?' Figure 5, below, shows that one-third of young people (34%) who responded to the question reported high anxiety yesterday.<sup>43</sup> While this figure is in line with young care leavers in the Bright Spots sample, it is noticeably larger than the proportion of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the general population who felt highly anxious prior to the Covid-19 pandemic (22%).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The difference is statistically significant ( $p=0.008$ ), but the effect is small (Phi  $-.048$ ).

<sup>43</sup> The 11-point anxiety scale: Very low (0-1); low (2-3); medium (4-5); high (6-10).

<sup>44</sup> ONS (2020) [Young people's well-being measures](#). Office for National Statistics. (accessed 26 February 2021)

Figure 5. Levels of anxiety felt yesterday



Leaving care and gaining independence can bring both freedom and stress, as young people have to take responsibility for all aspects of their life. The survey therefore included a validated stress scale, comprised of four questions (see figure 6 below), to explore how well young people thought they were coping.<sup>45</sup>

The average ‘stress scores’ of care leavers within the New Belongings local authorities was 7.17. This was a higher stress score<sup>46</sup>, than peers in the general population (average score 6.66)<sup>47</sup>, but a lower level of stress compared to care leavers in the national Bright Spots sample (average score 7.44). This was an unexpected finding, as we anticipated higher levels of stress during the first Covid-19 lockdown, compared to the pre-covid Bright Spots sample.

Interestingly, over half of care leavers (55%) felt confident about their ability to handle personal problems – this is a higher proportion than care leavers (50%) in the national Bright Spots sample.

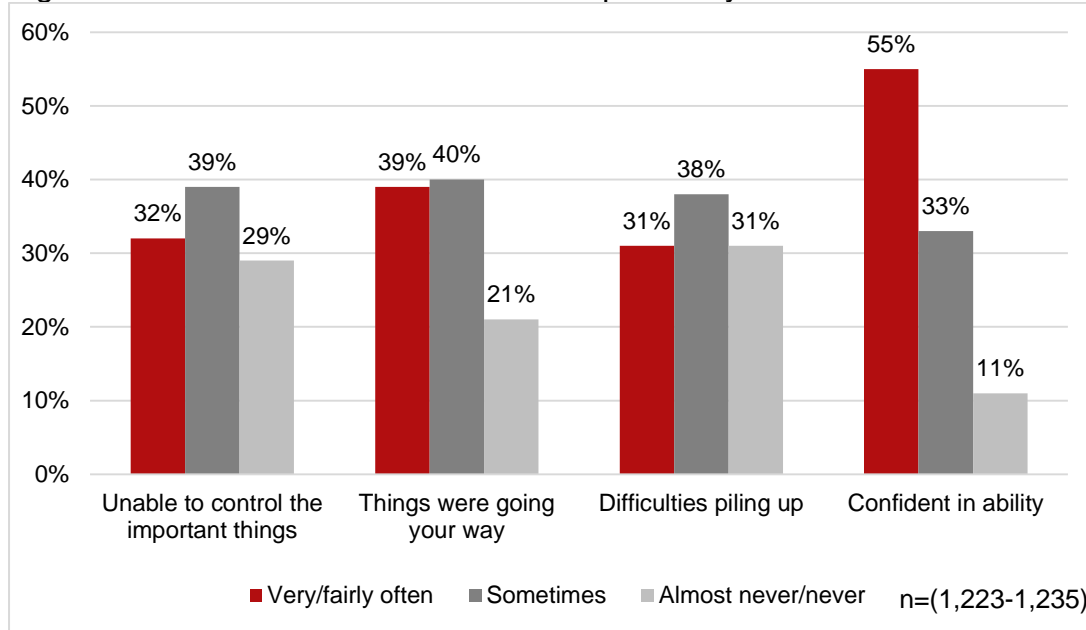
However, many care leavers also struggled with difficulties in their lives. Around three in ten care leavers felt ‘very or fairly often’ (29%) unable to control the important things in life, while a similar proportion (31%) had in the last month felt that ‘difficulties were piling up higher than they could solve them’.

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24, 385-396.

<sup>46</sup> The four questions are scored on a scale from 0-4 with a maximum of 16 and minimum of 0. High scores indicate a higher level of stress.

<sup>47</sup> Warttig, S. L. et al. (2013) New, normative, English-sample data for the Short Form Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4), *Journal of Health Psychology*, 18(12),1617–1628.

Figure 6. Measures of stress and how frequent they were in the last month



To explore the range of different positive and negative emotions care leavers experience, they were also asked ‘in the past few weeks how often have you felt...’ ‘full of energy’, ‘optimistic’, ‘proud’, ‘angry’, ‘lonely’ and ‘afraid’.

In terms of positive emotions, the majority felt at least occasionally ‘full of energy’ (80%), optimistic (83%) and proud (76%). While two-thirds of respondents also at least occasionally felt angry (66%) and lonely (67%), more than half (55%) wrote that they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ felt afraid in the last few weeks.

Chronic loneliness, as in ‘always’ feeling lonely, has been linked with poor physical and mental health and low well-being.<sup>48</sup> In this survey, one-third of young people (33%) ‘hardly ever or never’ felt lonely, but about one-in-five (21%) recorded that they ‘always or often’ felt lonely. This is a similar proportion to care leavers in the Bright Spot comparison sample (22%) who felt lonely pre-pandemic, suggesting that the national lockdown had little impact on whether care leavers felt lonely or not.

While there is no comparison data for full of energy or feeling optimistic, the other feelings were in line with the Bright Spots sample of care leavers.

<sup>48</sup> ONS (2018) [Loneliness - What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?](#) Office for National Statistics. (accessed 18 March 2021)

Figure 7. Positive and negative feelings in the last few weeks

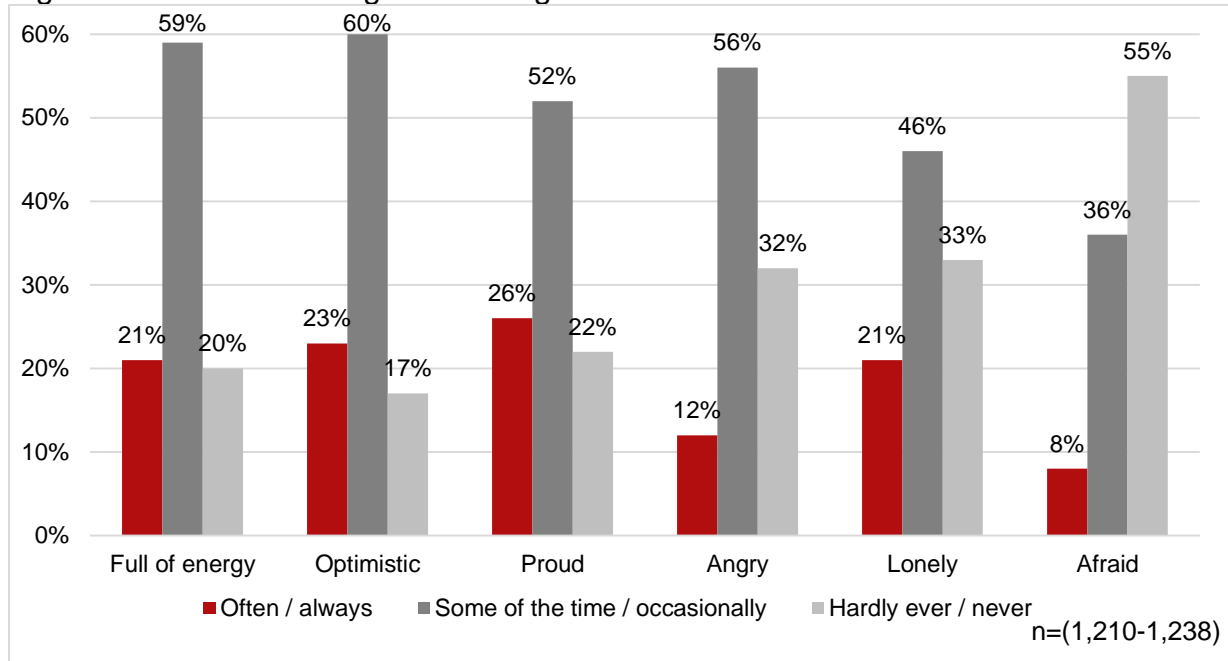


Table 15 shows that almost half of care leavers in the New Belongings sample and in the Bright Spot sample reported ‘high’ or ‘very high’ happiness the previous day (46% and 47%), compared to 76% of young people (16 to 24 years) in the general population.<sup>49</sup>

In terms of overall satisfaction with their life, 19% of care leavers in the New Belongings sample reported ‘very high’ overall life satisfaction compared to 16% of care leavers in the Bright Spot sample. A quarter of care leavers in both samples reported low life satisfaction (both 26%) – a noticeable higher proportion compared to the 3% of young people in the general population.

When young people were asked ‘to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?’, 24% of care leavers in the New Belonging sample had ‘very high’ satisfaction scores, similar to care leavers in the Bright Sport sample (22%), but lower than the general population (31%).

Table 15. How care leavers feel about their life

	Happy yesterday		Satisfaction with life		Life worthwhile	
	New Belongings	Bright Spots	New Belongings	Bright Spots	New Belonging	Bright Spots
Low	27%	26%	26%	26%	23%	23%
Moderate	28%	27%	30%	31%	28%	29%
High	25%	26%	26%	27%	25%	26%
Very high	21%	21%	19%	16%	24%	22%
Total	101%	100%	101%	100%	100%	100%

(NB: n=1,235 / 1,230 / 1,219; BS: n=1,697 / 1,698 / 1,681)

<sup>49</sup> ONS (2020) [Young people’s well-being measures](#). Office for National Statistics. (accessed 12 August 2021)



Finally, care leavers were asked ‘how positive are you about your future’. Their answers, on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 0 was not at all positive and 10 was completely positive), show that half of the young carer leavers felt very highly positive (31%) or highly positive (23%) about their future. However, one-in-five (20%) had a low level of positivity about their future (ratings of 0 to 4) and about one-quarter (26%) felt moderately positive (ratings of 5 to 6) about their future.

The majority of young care leavers (88%) ‘mostly agreed’ when asked if they had ‘goals and plans for the future’ – 148 young people (12%) ‘mostly disagreed.’ This was very similar to the Bright Spots sample of care leavers (87% and 13%).

### 6.2.6 Summary of survey findings

The demographic characteristics of young care leavers who responded to the Your Life Beyond Care survey in 2020 as part of the New Belongings programme, broadly appears similar to young care leavers who completed the survey as part of the Bright Spots Programme across 21 local authorities in England between 2017 and 2019. And while the two samples were collated in different local authorities and during very different circumstances in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the findings are very similar.

A few differences stand out. Care leavers living in the New Belongings local authorities were more likely to live in a rented flat or house than the Bright Spots comparison group (46% vs 38%), and less likely to live in supported accommodation (12% vs 21%). They were also statistically significantly more likely to have a pet (33% vs 28%). Financially, significantly more care leavers in the New Belongings local authorities said that they were able to cope (63% vs 56%) and perhaps because of this, significantly more felt able to afford their phone bill (82% vs 76%). New Belongings care leavers had significantly better access to the internet (88% vs 83%), but as internet access has increased in the general population over the years, this may be a result of general improvements in the time between the two surveys.

Having highlighted these differences, many of the findings were remarkably similar considering the circumstances. Despite the majority of the New Belonging care leavers completing the survey during the strictest national lockdown in March to May 2020, responses to well-being questions, such as anxiety, loneliness, happiness and life satisfaction showed very similar scores compared to the pre-pandemic Bright Spots sample. In fact, the analysis showed that average stress scores during Covid were lower than the pre-covid scores (7.17 vs 7.44) – an unexpected finding as we might have anticipated higher levels of stress as a result of the national lockdown.

While the New Belongings findings appear broadly in line with the Bright Spots findings, the survey results still demonstrate areas for improvements within the eight local authorities. For example, on average, 32% of care leavers did not always safe in their own home; 34% had had two or more leaving care workers in the last 12 months; 29% often felt unable to control important things in their lives; and 21% always or often felt lonely. This highlights that even in local authorities where services for care leavers were scored outstanding by Ofsted, a substantial proportion

of care leavers continue to struggle and could benefit from improved services to care leavers.

### 6.3 'Bright Spots'

As part of the Your life Beyond Care survey analysis and reporting carried out by the New Belongings programme, local authorities were awarded a 'Bright Spot' when findings in specific domains showed that care leavers were doing significantly better statistically, compared to local authorities in the national Bright Spots sample, or when care leavers reported the same or higher well-being than young people in the general population. 'Bright Spots' were developed to indicate a 'good news' story, where findings highlight a positive aspect of practice in individual local authorities.

The table below shows the number of Bright Spots the eight local authorities received at baseline. The total of number of domains where Bright Spots were available was 34.

Table 16: Number of Bright Spots by local authority

Local authority	Number of Bright Spots
Local Authority 1	5
Local Authority 2	5
Local Authority 3	5
Local Authority 3	9
Local Authority 5	7
Local Authority 6	9
Local Authority 7	4
Local Authority 8	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

The domains where local authorities as a group received the most Bright Spots were 'trust in leaving care worker' (5), 'contact with leaving care worker' (4), 'continuity of leaving care worker' (4) and 'having access to the internet at home' (4).

## 7. Conclusion and next steps

New Belongings, now in its third phase, works with local authorities to engage young care leavers in service improvements using a co-production approach. The programme, as delivered by Coram Voice, works with a small cohort of eight local authorities over a longer period, using a range of mandatory data collection tools, with the overall aim of improving support for care leavers, based on engagement and the involvement of young people as experts in their own experience.

This evaluation report has provided a baseline assessment of where the eight participating local authorities 'were at' at the beginning of the New Belongings Programme. Knowing the situation at the starting point is crucial for tracking change over time. The similarities between the New Belongings' survey findings and the Bright Spots comparison group, despite the very different circumstances during which the surveys were completed, provides a good baseline foundation for post data to be evaluated against.

New Belongings will work with participating local authorities to repeat data collection using the Baker and Dixon assessment tool and the Your Life Beyond Care survey in early spring 2022, before the programme finishes in July 2022. This will allow the second and final evaluation report, due in summer 2022, to report on progress against the programme's Theory of Change, and its overall objectives of improving services for care leavers. The follow-up evaluation report will detail the action plans developed as part of the programme's work with the eight local authorities and their progress in terms of service improvements. It will also compare pre- and post-data to describe any changes the New Belongings approach makes to improve services for care leavers.

## Appendix 1: Baseline Pen Portraits

Within the context of the New Belongings programme, a pen portrait is an informal description of a local authority and their leaving care service. The primary purpose of these pen portraits is to document the journey, story or trajectory of participating local authorities using a narrative approach over the course of the evaluation. The pen portraits will help understand the context of each local authority, the services provided to care leavers and the local authority's experience and commitment to participation and co-production.

The pen portraits were produced in January 2021, based on information provided by local authorities in their 'expression of interest' made prior to selection (July 2019); additional data gathered by the New Belonging team during the engagement and planning phase (September 2019 to October 2020), and interviews with local authority leads conducted by the evaluation team during spring 2020.

### 1. Coventry City Council

#### Starting point

In 2018-19, Coventry City Council had 105 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years, and 237 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years. It had 703 children who were looked after by the local authority in March 2019. This was a 20% per cent increase since 2015, above the national average (12.5%).

In 2017, Ofsted rated the experiences and progress of care leavers 'good'. However, as Coventry was part way through an improvement journey the overall judgement of the service was that it 'requires improvement'.

Coventry's Children in Care Council (CICC) also includes care leavers. The CICC is divided into two groups – 'Little Voices' for children under 12 and 'Voices in Care' for children aged from 12 up to their early twenties. Despite several attempts, the council has so far been unable to establish a separate Care Leavers forum. In 2017, Ofsted highlighted that '*managers listen carefully to what children have to say and use their ideas to improve services. An active and effective Children in Care Council, known as 'Voices of Care', is supported well by specialist workers and includes representatives from all age groups of children looked after. The Children in Care*

*Council is consulted on a wide range of issues and meets regularly with elected members and senior managers’.*

Coventry’s Participation Service Group, which is made up of three members of staff, oversees the Youth Parliament, Children in Care Council and other areas of participation, for example around disability.

### Overview of current offer

According to the EOI, care leavers were closely involved in developing the local offer, with two young people sitting on the project team.

The local offer, for example provides mentoring schemes for care leavers, including opportunities for council staff to mentor young people, and a scheme where young people mentor other young people. Care leavers who do apprenticeships within the council are paid the national living wage and the council also provides a leisure pass for all care leaver plus a friend.

The Chief Executive hosted the launch of the local offer together with local businesses, which was perceived as very successful by the local authority.

### Buy-in from local authority

The Expression of Interest (EOI) for the New Belongings Programme was supported by the Children’s Services Leadership Team. The local authority lead for the New Belongings programme is the Operational Lead – Through Care and Edge of Care, supported by a Team Leader – Leaving Care.

The Through Care service works with approximately 700 looked after children and care leavers (looked-after children aged 12 years up – through to care leavers aged 25 years), it employs 70 staff, including social workers, personal advisors, housing support officers, careers advisers and a few specialist posts.

The council is a pilot authority for the Leaving Well programme that aims to improve outcomes for care leavers. A digital tool which forms the core approach of the programme has been embedded into practice. Coventry also worked with Channel 4 to produce the programme Superkids, broadcast in 2018, where poet Lemn Sissay engaged a group of young people to tell their story through poetry in order to challenge prejudices around being looked after and leaving care.

### Hoping to achieve

Coventry already believes it has a good track record of participation and involving care leavers in decisions, especially in relation to the development of its local offer. However, the council hopes to involve a larger cohort of young care leavers, in order to work with a wider and more representative group of young people leaving care in Coventry.

## 2. Dorset Council

## Starting point

Dorset Council is a new council created on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, following a local government reorganisation, where nine council merged into two new unitary authorities – of which Dorset Council is one.

Dorset Council had 412 children who were looked after in March 2019. In 2018-19, there were 61 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years in Dorset, and 205 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years.

In 2016, Ofsted rated Children's Services in Dorset as requiring improvement. The experiences and progress of care leavers were also judged to 'require improvement'. Issues highlighted in Ofsted's report, focused on care leavers' inconsistent access to information about their entitlements (there is, for example, no brochure available) and the high proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training.

Dorset has an active Care Leavers Forum, which meets monthly to design and deliver campaigns. The forum has developed information packs for children in care and co-produce 'plan' documents with the aim of better meeting the needs of children in care. The forum regularly attends the Corporate Parenting Board, and is seen to influence services and policies that impact them directly.

The Participation People, a charity that runs youth voice, engagement and participation programmes across England, leads Dorset's Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and Junior in Care Council, as well as other participation in Dorset, like the Young Researchers' group.

## Overview of current offer

No information was available on Dorset's local offer. A pdf brochure was unavailable in 2019 and the page on Dorset's website named 'local offer to care leavers' listed no information at the time of producing this pen portrait.<sup>50</sup>

## Buy-in from local authority

According to the EOI, members of Dorset's Children's Services Leadership Team have all stated their commitment to participating in the New Belongings Programme. The recently appointed Chief Executive has attended the Corporate Parenting Board and listened to young people.

The Service Manager responsible for children in care and care leavers will lead on the New Belongings programme. This post reports directly to the Corporate Director of Children's Social Care and has access to the Director of Children's Services and other senior leaders.

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-social-care/children-in-care/local-offer-for-care-leavers/local-offer-for-care-leavers.aspx> [accessed 20 January 2021]. Data on Dorset's local offer has since been made available here.

## Hoping to achieve

Dorset Council would like to increase engagement in their Care Leavers' Forum, including those young people considered 'hardest to reach', and find new ways of engaging a wider group of young people.

### 3. Hertfordshire County Council

#### Starting point

In 2018-19, Hertfordshire Country Council had 172 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years, and 522 aged 19 to 21 years.

The number of looked-after children fell in Hertfordshire from 1,009 children in 2014 to 890 children in 2018, a decrease of 12%. This is contrary to the national trend, which saw a 9.6% increase. During the same period, the proportion of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) looked after by the local authority increased by 75% from 48 to 84 children.

Overall, Ofsted found Children's Services in Hertfordshire to be 'good' in 2018, while the 'impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families' was rated 'outstanding' and the 'experiences and progress of care leavers' was 'good'. Ofsted highlighted that the Children in Care Council (CHICC) was 'strong, active and influential' and had made a 'significant contribution to the development and roll-out of the Outcome Bees framework'.

The Children in Care Council has been running since 2009. The council is split into three groups, including a Care Leavers Group (18+) which meets monthly. Hertfordshire Council also has a young commissioners programme, where young people receive training before getting involved in the commissioning and inspection of services. The Participation Team, which is responsible for running the CHICC groups, as well as other participation offers, has 4 FTE staff.

According to Hertfordshire Care Leavers' Strategy 2019-22, a Care Leavers Survey, conducted by telephone, took place annually until 2018 where the council joined the New Belongings Programme. Hertfordshire has run the Bright Spots Your Life, Your Care survey for children in care previously.

#### Overview of current offer

Hertfordshire's local offer was co-produced with care leavers and other relevant stakeholders. The offer provides information and advice, in order for young care leavers to understand their entitlements and access appropriate services.

The council recently developed a specific service for care leavers, which falls under the responsibility of the children looked after (CLA) team. This means that there is now more continuity for young people, with no handovers from being looked after to leaving care. The number of young people that personal advisors are responsible for has reportedly also been reduced, in order to better develop relationship-based practice.

In 2018, Hertfordshire published a pledge for care leavers aged 18 to 25 years, which focuses on being safe, healthy, ambitious, resilient, independent and happy – these are the six ‘outcome bees’.<sup>51</sup> The pledge was developed with young people from the Children in Care Council, based on what care leavers said was most important to them.

### Buy-in from local authority

According to the EOI, the Director of Children’s Services is fully committed to the New Belongings programme. The local authority lead for the New Belongings programme is the Strategy and Development manager for Services for Young People based within Children’s Services. This role includes responsibilities for ‘the voice of the child’ work within the Corporate Parenting Board.

Care Leavers are invited to attend a six-monthly meeting with the Operations Director and Heads of Service.

### Hoping to achieve

Hertfordshire hopes to learn from other local authorities involved in New Belongings Programme in order to build such learning into how the local authority engages with and provides new opportunities for young care leavers.

The local authority also wants to develop mechanisms for involving young people more widely.

## 4. North Tyneside Council

### Starting point

In March 2018, North Tyneside had 35 young people aged 17 and 18 and 100 young people aged 19 to 21 years leaving care. North Tyneside saw a drop in its number of looked after children between 2014 and 2018, from 305 to 282 children – a 8% decrease.

The latest Ofsted report (2017) judged Children’s Services in North Tyneside ‘good’, while the ‘experiences and progress of care leavers’ were rated ‘outstanding’. The report highlighted that staff were ‘extremely effective in staying in touch with young people’ and that the local authority is ‘highly aspirational for care leavers’. One council initiative ‘Care2Work’ was shown to have benefitted care leavers through work experiences, apprenticeships and traineeships within the local authority.

North Tyneside has an established Children in Care Council (CiCC), split into two groups – one for younger children and one for older children. The CiCC also works

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/professionals-and-volunteers/hertfordshires-6-outcome-bees.aspx> [accessed 20 January 2021].

as part of the regional North East CiCC, which organises a yearly conference and presents to Corporate Parenting Forums across local authorities and senior leadership.

The CiCC is managed within the Participation and Advocacy team through team leader and senior manager support. North Tyneside has a young person's ambassador, who represents the CiCC and care leavers, and gets involved with any work to improve North Tyneside's local offer. As a care leaver, the young person's ambassador is employed part-time through the Participation and Advocacy team.

A care leaver strategy is currently in the process of being written.

### Overview of current offer

The Leaving Care Service works jointly with the Safe & Support teams when young people turn 17 years old, to ensure there is no stark transition between the two services. Joint assessments are carried out with young people, looking at goals, life story work and practical issues. The Leaving Care Service emphasises personal support and one-to-one relationships, and aims to build in personal time with young people, as well as functional activities. The local authority lead highlighted that some personal advisors have worked with their young people for 7 to 8 years.

North Tyneside has a centrally located drop-in service, where young people can come for a cup of tea and to have contact with their PA or the duty worker. Drop-ins for the Connexions service, Prince's Trust and a representative from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are also in place. Care leavers who apply for an apprenticeship within the council are guaranteed an interview.

As part of the local offer, care leavers can access fares and clothing for interviews, £100 towards short courses and an 'Ease Card' for them and a friend to access for free local authority leisure centres.

A range of accommodation is available, including the council-run supported accommodation 'Starting Point', which offer trainer flats and shared flats with outreach support.

### Buy-in from local authority

The EIO highlights how involvement in the New Belongings programme is supported by the Assistant Director, Director of Children and Adult Services, as well as the lead cabinet member responsible for Children's Services. The work will be managed by the senior manager for special projects, which includes management of the Leaving Care Team and supported accommodation, supported by a team manager responsible for care leavers.

As a small council, staff and young people are perceived to have relatively easy access to senior management.



## Hoping to achieve

The council hopes to extend the involvement of young people to the wider population of care leavers, so as not having to rely too much on the small number of care leavers attending the Children in Care Council.

The local authority also wants to promote the agenda of listening to young people across the council, and for senior managers and partners to be more committed to care leavers aged 18 and over, and for care leavers needs and voices be on the agenda for the planning of all services.

## 5. North Yorkshire County Council

### Starting point

North Yorkshire had 66 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old and 174 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years in March 2018.

The council saw a small decrease (5%) in the number of looked-after children between 2014 and 2018, falling from 460 to 437 children. In 2018, the council had 18 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who were looked after by North Yorkshire.

The latest Ofsted report (2018) rated Children's Services in North Yorkshire as 'outstanding'. The 'experiences and progress of care leavers' was also 'outstanding'. The report highlights the commitment to ensuring that children and young people remain close to families and that a variety of communication methods are used to encourage care leavers 'to think ahead, develop effective safety plans and consider the long-term impact of decisions'.

As a large council, North Yorkshire County Council is a two-tier authority, which includes seven district councils. Most recently, the county and district councils collaborated to develop a joint looked-after children and care leaver strategy, which reportedly led to a joint commitment to improve their local offer.

There is an existing Young People's Council (YPC) within North Yorkshire that meets monthly to discuss the improvements needed to the support care-experienced young people receive. The YPC also meets directly with the Director of Children's Services and other senior managers to provide feedback. North Yorkshire recently held its first Care Leavers Conference, which was attended by 60 local care leavers.

North Yorkshire has three pledges for its youngest and oldest children in care and its care leavers that sets out what they can expect 'from the adults who support you'.

### Overview of current offer

Before developing its local offer North Yorkshire consulted with some young carers across the county, which helped shape the content and priorities, and ultimately the decision-making process.

As part of the local offer, care leavers can access free gym memberships, work experiences and guaranteed interviews within the council, as well as council tax reductions, and support to access a dentist and optician. The Leaving Care team also includes specialist workers, such as a life coach who is a qualified clinical psychologist; a communication worker trained in speech and language therapy; and Family Group Conference (FGC) workers who can help young people reconnect with people in their lives who can support them in the future.

There is a drive within the Leaving Care Team to make the local offer a more personalised offer in order to support the specific needs and goals of individual young care leavers.

### Buy-in from local authority

According to the EOI, the Corporate Director and Lead Member Counsellor are both fully committed to young care leavers, and frequently attend events such as the Care Leavers Conference, Christmas dinners, the Young People's Council and Young Achiever of the Month. The Head of Looked after Children, Care Leavers and Youth Justice has been identified as the local authority lead for the New Belongings Programme. A Senior Leaving Care worker with a remit for participation and policy will also, together with the council's Participation and Youth Work Apprentice, be involved in the programme.

### Hoping to achieve

Being part of the New Belongings Programme has already raised awareness within the council about the importance of using a structured approach to engage young care leavers more widely, for example through the use of the Bright Spots survey and the Baker and Dixon self-assessment. It is hoped that working with an external organisation will give the impetus to embed such systems and to keep improving services for the benefit of care leavers in North Yorkshire.

## 6. Oldham Council

### Starting point

In March 2018, Oldham had 44 care leavers aged 17 and 18 and 99 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years. Oldham saw a noticeable rise in its number of looked-after children between 2014 and 2018, from 394 to 551 children – a 40% increase.

The latest available Ofsted report, from 2019, judged Oldham's Children's Services to 'require improvement' to be good. The 'experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers' also 'require improvement' to be good. While Ofsted recognised that work to improve services had begun to take place, such work had yet to have an impact for most children. The report highlighted 'the views of children in care are increasingly sought and there is evidence of this having a positive impact on service delivery'.

Oldham has an established Children in Care Council (CICC), which meets weekly and includes care leavers. The CICC sits within Oldham's wider Youth Voice Family, as one of four youth groups that represent the voices of young people in Oldham. The CICC is part of the North West Children in Care group, which also engages in national work. The children and young people who are part of Oldham's CICC, are also members of Oldham's Corporate Parenting Panel. Children in care and care leavers have led workshops and presented to the panel, and the CICC has a standing agenda item at each panel meeting.

The Children in Care Council recently brought a motion to the local authority, who together with the Clinical Commissioning Group, agreed to fund free prescription certificates for those care leavers who currently pay for their prescriptions. This partnership is perceived by Oldham as a good example of the council listening to the voices of young care leavers.

Oldham runs an annual survey for children in care and care leavers.

### Overview of current offer

Services for care leavers sit within the After Care team, who are part of Children in Care services. The After Care team is responsible for the support, advice and other services Oldham offers its young care leavers.

In addition to the support that local authorities must provide according to the Children Leaving Care Act (2000), Oldham offers free prescription certificates to care leavers aged 16 to 25 year-olds, who would usually pay for items prescribed by their doctor.

Care leavers are also eligible for council tax exception up until the age of 21 years.

Care leavers are also exempt for the intentionally homeless criteria and the local authority therefore has a duty to provide temporary and permanent accommodation for young homeless care leavers.

### Buy-in from local authority

According to the EIO, Oldham's involvement in the New Belongings Programme is supported by the Director of Children's Services, who emphasises strategic buy-in across children's services, the wider local authority and its partners.

'Care leavers' and 'the child's voice' form two out of three priorities within Oldham's current Corporate Parenting Business plan and these priorities are also central to Oldham's most recent Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The recent agreement and funding to provide care leavers with free annual prescription certificates, as a result of the Children in Care Council motion to the full council, appear to have galvanised Oldham's focus on involving young people in service delivery.

## Hoping to achieve

Not known

## 7. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

### Starting point

At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, Stockport had 47 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old and 130 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years. According to national statistics, Stockport saw a 21% increase in its number of looked-after children in the period between 2014 and 2018, rising from 298 to 362 children.

The latest full Ofsted inspection in 2017 judged children's services in Stockport 'good'. The 'experiences and progress of care leavers' was also 'good'. The report highlighted that 'staff and managers are extremely effective at keeping in touch with young people, especially in trying to maintain contact even with those who are more difficult to engage' and 'the authority is increasingly listening to [care leavers], including keeping contact well beyond the age of 28'. Ofsted's judgement of 'good' was confirmed in 2019 during a focused visit.

Stockport was previously part of the New Belongings Programme, and the council has highlighted how this helped provide a platform to raise awareness among senior leaders and staff about care leavers and the council's role as corporate parents. The council runs a Care Leavers Champion Scheme for senior leaders in the council to raise awareness, promote corporate parenting and create opportunities for care leavers.

The council runs a Children in Care Council and also has a separate Care Leavers Forum that meets every fortnight. Pure Insight, a local charity, is contracted by the council to provide a care leavers mentoring scheme and they also provide additional services and support to care leavers up to the age of 28, such as a café, activities, counselling and engagement. Supported by the Leaving Care Team, the Pure Insight engagement worker leads on participation with care leavers, including regular newsletters, a Facebook page and more formal groups, such as the Care Leavers Forum.

The Care Leavers Forum attends regular business meetings with the Lead Counsellor for Children, Family Services and Education, the Director for Children's Services and other key senior officers every six weeks 'to share work progress, challenges and celebrate achievements'. A mum's reference group, for care leavers who are parents, recently delivered training for midwives and a presentation at the Stockport Family Social Work Day conference.

### Overview of current offer

Support for care leavers is delivered within an integrated model of working for all children, young people and their families in Stockport, across education, health and care up to 25 years. The leaving care team is central to 'the team around the care

leaver', which involves working closely with partnership agencies to address needs around health, emotional well-being, benefits, education, housing and transition to adult services. Workers from these partner agencies have dedicated time to provide specialist support as part of the team around the care leaver.

Stockport worked with a group of approximately 15 young people to develop its local offer and to co-produce the content, design and look for the website setting out the council's local offer. The local offer covers information, advice and entitlements across domains, such as housing, education, emotional and mental health, and leisure activities. In terms of specific offers, care leavers in Stockport can access free gym membership, access to all museums and heritage sites in Stockport, council tax exception and free prescriptions. Stockport council have a contract with Pure Insight Charity to run a mentoring scheme and this is used by over 100 young care leavers, and the scheme continues to develop.

Recognising that young care leavers often move between and across council boundaries, Stockport is actively involved in partnership work to provide a consistent local offer across Greater Manchester.

### Buy-in from local authority

Emphasising its previous positive experiences of being a part of the New Belongings Programme, especially relating to reflection, sharing of practice and learning, and service improvements, the EIO highlights the council's keen interest and buy-in to the programme at senior level and councillors, but also among members of the Care Leavers Forum.

### Hoping to achieve

Stockport is hoping to build on previous experiences of the New Belongings programme and to use the structured tools and materials, such as the Bright Spots survey and Baker and Dixon self-assessment tool, in order to collect care leavers' views in a more systematic and evidence-informed way to inform improvements.

## 8. London Borough of Wandsworth

### Starting point

Wandsworth had 75 care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old and 149 care leavers aged 19 to 21 years old in March 2018. The council saw a substantial increase (50%) in the number of looked-after children between 2014 and 2018, rising from 205 to 307 children.

In 2018, the council had 25 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who were looked after, up from 12 children in 2014. The council estimates that about 20% of its care leavers are asylum-seeking young adults.

The latest full Ofsted inspection (2018) judged Children's Services in Wandsworth to 'require improvement to be good'. The 'experiences and progress of care leavers'

was rated 'good'. This is an improvement on Ofsted's 2015 inspection that found Wandsworth's Children's Services to be 'inadequate' overall. The 2018 report highlighted that 'the quality of services for care leavers has greatly improved' and that 'Wandsworth's Children Living In Care Council (CLICK) is strong and very effective; it enables children to participate fully in a range of activities and support groups, and to influence policy development.'

Acknowledging that the council had limited engagement with its care leavers prior to 2017, it has since focused on actively engaging young care leavers in decision-making processes. The local authority runs two participation groups, CLICK for young people aged 13 to 18 years and Future Voice for care leavers aged 18 years and older. Future Voice meets once a month in order to 'create a stronger voice to influence positive changes to the services young people receive'. Representatives from the two groups feed back directly to the Children's Services Directorate and the Corporate Parenting Panel. The groups are supported by Wandsworth's participation team.

The participation team regularly consults with children in care and is involved in the distribution and follow-up of Coram's Bright Spots Your Life, Your Care survey. The team also engaged young care leavers more widely through a care leavers survey, which helped inform the development of its local offer.

Together with CLICK, Wandsworth has redesigned its two pledges, one for young people in care and one for young people aged 16+. The Wandsworth care leavers pledge sets out what young care leavers can expect in the areas of 'health and safety', 'enjoy and achieve', 'managing money' and 'positive contribution'.

### Overview of current offer

Future First, Wandsworth's Care Leavers Service, is responsible for delivering information, advice, support and Partway Planning to young care experienced people in Wandsworth. When developing its local offer, the council consulted with a group of care leavers who gave their views and opinions on the design and content of this offer.

Examples of what Wandsworth provides through its local offer include council tax exception; up to £20 a month towards a physical activity or to access leisure centres; mentoring; access to education, training and employment (ETE) advisors; and substance misuse and well-being support through the Leaving Care counsellor.

### Buy-in from local authority

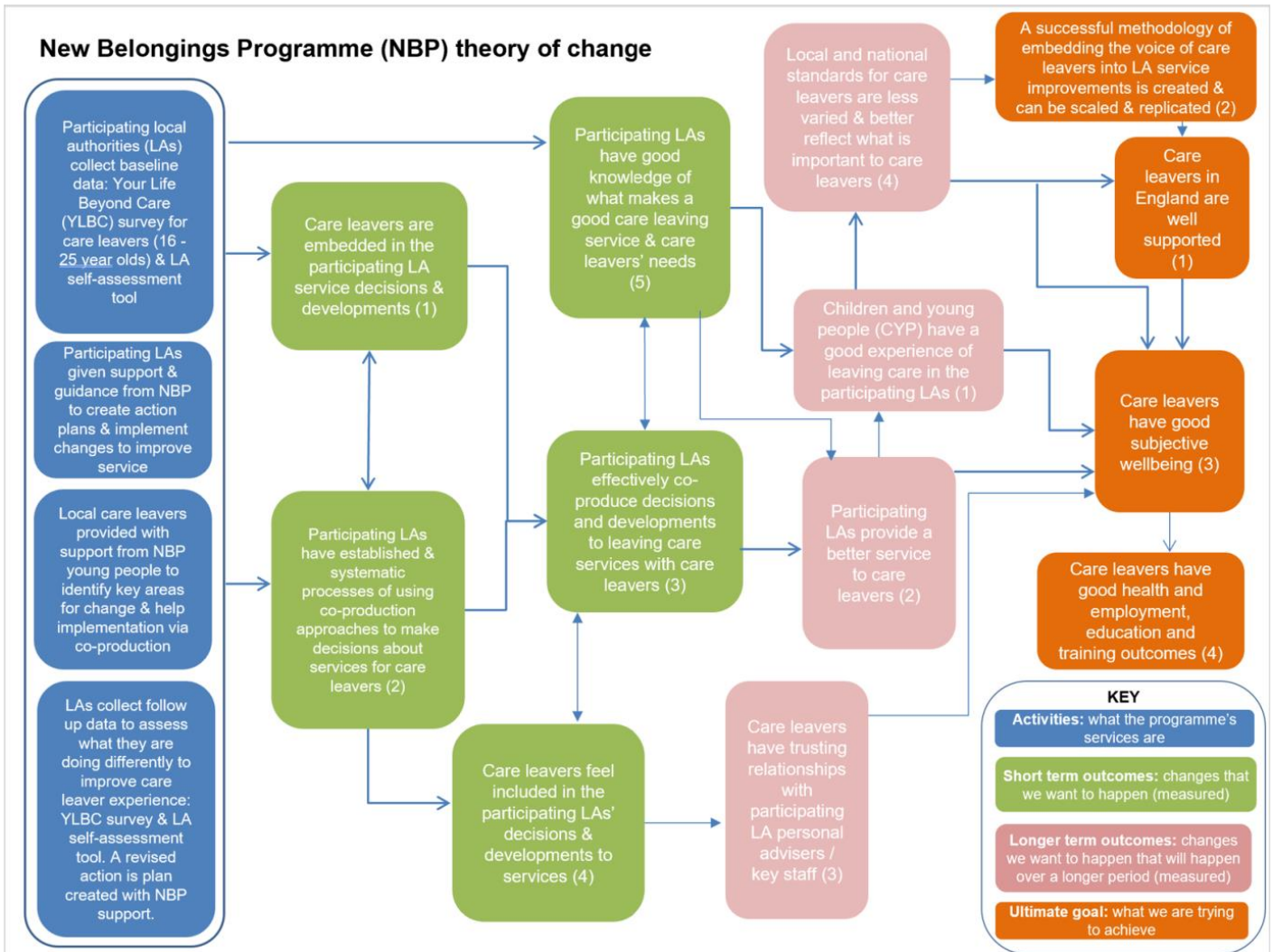
According to Wandsworth's EIO, the council intends to use the New Belongings Programme to drive its participation agenda. Senior leaders, such as the Director of Children's Services, the Chief Executive Officer, who also chairs the Corporate Parenting Panel, and the Lead Member for Children and Corporate Parenting, have all articulated their support for the programme. While work has already begun to improve the engagement of care leavers in Wandsworth, senior leaders have acknowledged that participation in the New Belongings Programme will support work to better understand the needs and views of young care leavers.

## Hoping to achieve

One of Wandsworth's priorities is to increase the number of care leavers who engage with the participation team. The council wants to consult with a more diverse group of care leavers, in particular with young people at risk of exploitation, those who are in or have left custody, have mental or physical health issues, and older care leavers (20 years or older). The aim is to ensure that care leaver participation is representative of the council's cohort of young care experienced people.

The council furthermore hopes to strengthen strategic buy-in from both internal and external stakeholders.

## Appendix 2: The evaluation framework





## New Belongings Programme (NBP) logic model

**PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION:** The Coram Voice NBP will support 8 local authorities (LAs) to engage care leavers in service improvement using a co-production approach teamed with the Bright Spots methodology. The project is funded for 3 years (2019 to 2022) by the Esmee Fairburn Foundation and the Segelman Trust (£350K). The 8 LAs taking part in the programme are: 1. Coventry City Council 2. Dorset Council 3. Hertfordshire County Council 4. North Tyneside Council 5. North Yorkshire County Council 6. Oldham Council 7. Stockport Council 8. Wandsworth Borough Council.

AIM	DELIVERY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	ULTIMATE GOAL
<p>To amplify &amp; embed the voice of care leavers to create lasting improvements in local authority (LA) services for young people leaving care</p>	<p><b>Project team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Policy &amp; Practice Development</li> <li>• NBP manager</li> <li>• 6 – 8 trained, care experienced young people (16 – 26 years old)</li> </ul> <p><b>Key deliverables</b></p> <p><b>Collect 8 sets of baseline data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each LA will complete a baseline Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC) survey and LA self-assessment tool</li> <li>• NBP will support each LA with dissemination &amp; data collection, analyse results and write report</li> </ul> <p><b>Create 8 initial action plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After baseline data collection, NBP will support each LA to write an action plan to address improvement areas</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to each LA over 2 years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBP young people (supported by NBP participation lead) will support local care leavers groups through 8 workshops</li> <li>• NBP team will provide ongoing support to LA leads</li> </ul> <p><b>Collect follow up data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each LA will complete a follow up YLBC survey &amp; LA self-assessment tool approximately 24 months on to assess differences in results</li> </ul> <p><b>Review and revise action plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBP team will support each LA to review their action plans &amp; develop 8 revised action plans</li> </ul> <p><b>Local, regional and national learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NBP team will hold 3 national peer learning seminars &amp; write 1 report about findings from the 8 LAs to disseminate nationally</li> </ul>	<p><b>Locally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 baseline YLBC survey reports &amp; LA self-assessments</li> <li>• 8 initial action plans</li> <li>• 64 workshops run by NBP young people (8 per LA) for local care leavers to understand key issues, develop action plans, support implementation &amp; establish co-production approaches</li> <li>• 8 follow up YLBC survey reports &amp; LA self-assessments</li> <li>• 8 revised action plans</li> </ul> <p><b>Nationally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 national peer learning seminars</li> <li>• 1 final national report of findings &amp; learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short term</b></p> <p>(1) Care leavers are embedded in participating LA service decisions &amp; developments</p> <p>(2) Participating LAs have established &amp; systematic processes of using co-production approaches to make decisions about services for care leavers</p> <p>(3) Participating LAs effectively co-produce decisions &amp; developments to leaving care services with care leavers</p> <p>(4) Care leavers feel included in the participating LAs' decisions &amp; developments to services</p> <p>(5) Participating LAs have good knowledge of what makes a good care leaving service &amp; care leavers' needs</p> <p><b>Long term</b></p> <p>(1) Children &amp; young people (CYP) have a good experience of leaving care in participating LAs</p> <p>(2) Participating LAs provide a good service to CYP leaving care</p> <p>(3) Care leavers have trusting relationships with participating LA personal advisers/ key staff</p> <p>(4) Local and national standards for care leavers are less varied &amp; better reflect what is important to care leavers.</p>	<p>(1) The learning from NBP means care leavers in England are well supported</p> <p>(2) Care leavers have good subjective wellbeing</p> <p>(3) Care leavers have good health and employment, education and training outcomes</p> <p>(4) A successful methodology of embedding the voice of care leavers into LA service improvements is created &amp; can be scaled &amp; replicated</p>

**POLICY CONTEXT:** At year ending 31 March 2017, there were 35,710 care leavers aged 18 to 21 years old in England. This increased from 33,650 in 2015. There is a lot of variation in the experience and service care leavers receive across England. For example, in 2018 over 50% of local authority care leaver services required improvement (LAIT, 2018).

### New Belongings Programme outcomes measurement framework for short term outcomes

Short term outcome	Indicators	Measurements
(1) Care leavers are <b>embedded</b> in the participating LA service decisions & developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Care leavers feel involved in decisions and improvements to LA services</li> <li>b. Care leavers' opinions are used systematically to develop and improve LA services for care leavers</li> <li>c. Evidence of care leaver input into LA action plans and reviews</li> <li>d. LA has effective processes in place that successfully include care leavers in decision making &amp; implementing change</li> <li>e. Small differences between the results of the Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by LA staff &amp; version completed by care leavers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Areas 1 (<i>service responsiveness to views of carer leavers</i>) and 2 (<i>entitlements: being informed and supported</i>) of <b>Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by LA</b></li> <li>b. Areas 1 (<i>service responsiveness to views of carer leavers</i>) and 2 (<i>entitlements: being informed and supported</i>) of <b>Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by care leavers</b></li> <li>c. Findings from <b>evaluation questions used in workshops with care leavers</b> (3 workshops per LA run by NBP)</li> <li>d. <b>Qualitative interviews with key LA staff</b> in each local authority at two time points (middle and end of programme). Some of these interviews will be developed into two case studies with more details about the effect of the NB programme</li> </ul>
(2) Participating LAs have <b>established &amp; systematic processes of using co-production</b> approaches to make decisions about services for care leavers	Same indicators as outcome (1)	Same measurements as outcome (1).
(3) Participating <b>LAs effectively co-produce decisions &amp; developments</b> to leaving care services with care leavers	Same indicators as outcome (1).	Same measurements as outcome (1).
(4) Care leavers <b>feel included</b> in the participating LAs' decisions & developments to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Care leavers feel involved in decisions and improvements to LA services</li> <li>b. Small differences between the results of the Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by LA staff &amp; version completed by care leavers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Findings from <b>evaluation questions used in workshops with care leavers</b> (3 workshops per LA run by NBP)</li> <li>b. Areas 1 (<i>service responsiveness to views of carer leavers</i>) and 2 (<i>entitlements: being informed and supported</i>) of <b>Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by care leavers</b></li> </ul>
(5) Participating LAs have <b>good knowledge</b> of what makes a good care leaving service & care leavers' needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. LA can say what is important to local care leavers</li> <li>b. LA can say what the needs of local care leavers are</li> <li>c. Findings from YLBC are embedded into LA action plans and service changes</li> <li>d. Small differences between the results of the Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by LA staff &amp; version completed by care leavers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Qualitative interviews with key LA staff in each local authority at two time points (middle and end of programme)</li> <li>b. Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool completed by LA (all areas)</li> </ul>

### New Belongings Programme outcomes measurement framework for long term outcomes

Long term outcome	Indicators	Measurements
(1) Children & young people (CYP) have a <b>good experience of leaving care</b> in participating LAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Young people feel happy with their experience of leaving care</li> <li>b. Young people have a good relationship with their LA personal adviser (and other relevant staff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Areas 2 to 10 in the <b>Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool (below) completed by care leavers</b></li> <li>b. <b>YLBC survey results</b> from questions 3 and 4</li> <li>c. Findings from <b>evaluation questions used in workshops with care leavers</b> (3 workshops per LA run by NBP)</li> </ul> <p><b>Areas 2 to 10 of Baker Dixon tool:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Entitlements: being informed and supported</li> <li>3. Educated to their potential</li> <li>4. Helped into work (employability)</li> <li>5. Having good health and wellbeing</li> <li>6. Being in safe and settled accommodation</li> <li>7. Having an adequate level of income</li> <li>8. Having people to count on for emotional support</li> <li>9. Being able to manage day to day life</li> <li>10. Services that are used by more vulnerable care leavers</li> </ol>
(2) Participating <b>LAs provide a good service</b> to CYP leaving care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Young people feel happy with their experience of leaving care</li> <li>b. Young people have a good relationship with their LA personal adviser (and other relevant staff)</li> <li>c. LA provides a service to care leavers that meets or exceeds minimum statutory requirements i.e. financial support, housing support, education and employment support etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Areas 2 to 10 in the <b>Baker Dixon LA self-assessment tool (above) completed by LA</b></li> <li>b. <b>YLBC survey results</b> from questions 3 and 4</li> <li>c. Findings from evaluation questions used in workshops with care leavers (3 workshops per LA run by NBP)</li> </ul>
(3) Care leavers have <b>trusting relationships</b> with participating LAs personal advisers / key LA staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Young people have a good relationship with their LA personal adviser (and other relevant staff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>YLBC survey results</b> from questions 7 and 8</li> <li>b. Findings from evaluation questions used in workshops with care leavers (3 workshops per LA run by NBP)</li> </ul>
(4) Local and national standards for children in care are <b>less varied &amp; better reflect what is important to care leavers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. There is less variation in the service provided to care leavers across different LAs</li> <li>b. Participating local authorities share learning and good practice between them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Analysis of consistency of Dixon Baker LA self-assessment tool responses between participating LAs (completed by LAs)</li> <li>b. Monitoring of the three national peer learning seminars – do they take place? How well were they attended? What was the feedback?</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: Baseline data

Baseline data gathered about each local authority								
	Coventry	Dorset	Hertford-shire	North Tyne-side	North York-shire	Old-ham	Stock-port	Wands-worth
Ofsted information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LAC / Care leavers statistics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Baker and Dixon assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EOI document	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluation interview with LA lead	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Initial LA / NB meeting evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bright Spots survey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Offer details	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓