

# **‘Moving On’ from Care into Adulthood Consultation**

**Analysis of Consultation Responses**

**Final Report**

January 2025

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# Executive Summary

The [‘Moving on’ from care into Adulthood](#) consultation was open from 11 July to 3 October 2024. The consultation sought views across 41 open questions which considered the various experiences of young people leaving care, including planning and preparation, Continuing Care, Aftercare, health and wellbeing support, education, employment and housing. It also considered how different groups of people leaving care may be uniquely affected by changes to the current support and services available. The consultation was open to all members of the public and especially sought the views of young people with care experience, kinship or foster families, the birth families of young people with care experience, and those across the care sector and beyond who support young people with care experience during their transition into adulthood.

In total, 69 responses were received from 22 individuals and 47 organisations, 17 of which had corporate parenting responsibilities. The consultation process also included 14 engagement sessions organised by the Scottish Government and its stakeholders.

## **Planning and preparation for moving on from care into adulthood**

Respondents were asked to provide insight, suggestions and examples of practice which might help the Scottish Government understand how support for young people, and those who care for them as they transition out of care, can be improved. Respondents emphasised the importance of including the young person and the adults who care for them more in the planning around the transition from care and creating a plan that best meets the individual needs of each young person. Respondents also suggested that better guidance and training be provided to staff members involved in assisting young people leaving care. Suggestions included training in trauma-informed approaches, a broader understanding of support and services available and a clearer understanding of statutory responsibilities. Respondents also felt there should be greater collaboration between services, including better information sharing, earlier planning and preparation for transitions, and that support should be person-centred, meeting the unique needs of each individual.

There was a clear consensus from respondents that a lack of resources and workforce capacity at a local level are barriers to implementing the suggestions recommended above. This was seen to impact how effectively staff engage with young people, and create a lack of continuity and stability among the teams assisting them. Other respondents highlighted structural issues, particularly interactions between different systems and processes that could be a barrier to starting the process of planning and preparing young people to leave care at a suitably early stage.

## **Accessing information, services and support**

Respondents were asked about the accessibility and availability of information, support and services for young people, and the adults in their lives, as they move on from care. Respondents felt that access to any support and guidance which help young people build life skills needed to come with consistency of care, whether that was from social workers, carers or other members of social care teams. Respondents felt these trusted adults should spend time with, and listen to, young people; building relationships with them, modelling healthy behaviours and attitudes, responding effectively to requests for assistance and actioning any plans. Others suggested that better access to relevant information, such as signposting to mental health and wellbeing support, housing assistance and community-based provision was needed.

Supporting young people to develop life skills was a common theme. The types of skills included financial management, self-care or relational skills, home economics and household management skills. Respondents thought those would be best delivered through certified modules or school courses, or from carers. Places like the Practice Pad, supported by Inverclyde Council, were highlighted as examples of best practice.

Several respondents highlighted the important role of advocacy as young people leave care. Support for young people from sources such as local authority Champions Boards or the third sector was seen as necessary in ensuring that their rights were respected. Others noted the importance of peer support from those with care experience and mentors in providing information from a trusted source.

Respondents were asked about the types of support young people leaving care may need if they return to live with their birth families. Potential support highlighted by respondents included continued support for the young person at home, emotional and mental wellbeing support, and access to financial and practical support. Respondents provided examples of good practice where services have worked together holistically, including dedicated practitioners or coordinators and wrap-around support. Descriptions of strategies and interventions included help in creating routines, learning life skills, improving relationships and maximising income.

Respondents highlighted using digital channels (particularly social media, websites and 'apps'), community events, workshops, and written material such as leaflets and books as the best ways to ensure young people with care experience and those who support them can easily access information about entitlements. Using a variety of communication methods was highlighted as the best approach, as it was suggested that some young people may struggle to afford technology to access digital resources. Others mentioned the importance of ensuring staff members who assist young people also provide information.

## **Continuing Care, Aftercare and Lifelong Support**

Several respondents expressed the view that the Continuing Care eligibility criteria should extend to other groups of young people with care experience who had stopped being 'looked after' before their 16th birthday. This included specific groups of young people such as those supported through a Section 11 Kinship Care Order or 'informal' kinship care, those impacted by a breakdown in their adoption and those in secure care immediately before ceasing to be 'looked after'. Some respondents called for Continuing Care to be provided to a wider group of young people in general, including those with any experience of care, regardless of whether they were still 'looked after' on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Conversely, some respondents felt there was no need to change the existing criteria.

Similar suggestions were made about Aftercare, with several respondents suggesting the eligibility criteria should be extended to other groups of young people, particularly those who were no longer 'looked after' on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, several respondents felt there was only a need for more flexibility in Aftercare provision, based on a case-by-case assessment of a young person's needs, and others called for the upper age limit of 26 for receiving Aftercare to be removed. While some public bodies and social work organisations expressed the view that no change was needed, this was because they felt they already applied flexibility in providing discretionary Aftercare. Respondents were also aware that any change to the eligibility criteria was dependent on available funding, workload management and staffing, and whether flexible provision could adequately meet the individual needs of each young person.

A common theme was a need for greater awareness and access to information on young people's rights and corporate responsibilities. Respondents highlighted gaps in staff knowledge; including a clear understanding of processes, information about the consequences for young people of ending support early and what assistance should be provided by people with corporate parenting duties. Some respondents also mentioned that greater access to funding was needed to support the retention of staff and staff training.

A common theme highlighted was the importance of lifelong support, although the recommended level and types offered differed across respondents. Some suggested that specialist hubs or centres in each local authority could be dedicated to the needs of people with care experience, providing details about resources and guidance, and signposting to different types of statutory assistance available. Others thought that better or earlier assistance during the transition out of care could allow people to start adulthood with a more solid foundation. The importance of multi-agency collaboration was also reiterated. As with the views expressed on Continuing Care and Aftercare, respondents noted that the greatest challenges to providing lifelong care would be budgetary restrictions and resource constraints.

## **Support for specific groups of people leaving care**

Respondents were asked how support and services could best meet the needs of specific groups of young people leaving care. This included young people leaving secure care or Young Offender Institutions, those who had arrived in Scotland as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, young people with a disability and young parents.

A common theme was the importance of providing all young people with clear information and signposting as they transition out of care. This included signposting to more general resources, such as ensuring young people transitioning to new communities are aware of how to register with local dentists, GPs and mental health services; including trauma and grief counselling, to specific types of support and assistance, such as providing more comprehensive and specialised antenatal courses to young people leaving care who are pregnant or becoming parents.

Across the different groups, another common theme was the importance of maintaining relationships. In the case of secure care, respondents thought it was important that relationships with key workers, therapists or other trusted adults continued after a young person leaves care. Respondents also noted the importance of continuity of care for young people in Young Offender Institutions, ensuring stability when they leave. Several respondents highlighted the importance of an uncomplicated transition for a young person between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult mental health services.

The importance of reviewing national standards and protocols to ensure all young people get equal access to the support and services they need during their transition, regardless of where in Scotland they live, was another common theme. Respondents also noted the importance of clear care or pathway plans. Several respondents suggested clear guidance from the government would ensure multi-agency collaboration and learning, and information sharing across departments.

Care that is individualised to meet the unique circumstances of young people was another common theme. This included trauma-informed approaches, a gradual transition from care and responding to the needs and wishes of each young person regarding where they would like to live and what type of housing option would suit them best.

### **Forms of support for moving into adulthood**

Respondents were asked to consider the different types of support and services that could be provided to young people as they enter adulthood. A common theme was the benefit of peer support in helping young people as they leave care and in helping their caregivers establish support networks. Different requests were made, such as creating specific hubs and spaces within local communities or formalising peer support through frameworks based on what was seen as successful models, such as Grandmentors inter-generational mentoring project for young people with care experience.

Maintaining relationships between those who have left care and the adults who supported them while they were in care was another common theme. Some felt that continued support should be normalised and allowed in safe and transparent ways with clear limitations, whilst others felt it should be built into the care plan. Respondents noted the importance of dependability and of ensuring any relationship is maintained when a commitment has been made to do so. Respondents suggested implementing policies to enable supportive adults, carers or staff members to maintain relationships, including through access to communication platforms.

Respondents noted the following types of support should be available through access to dedicated helplines or out-of-hours services: life skills assistance, such as with emergency home or car repairs; signposting to public and third sector services, which may be able to provide further help; emotional and mental wellbeing support; crisis support, including access to emergency food assistance or support related to children; and financial support. Some respondents suggested that out-of-hours support should be delivered face-to-face wherever possible, particularly in crisis situations.

Ensuring priority access to physical and mental health services was a common theme. Respondents emphasised that as young people leave care, they often face a change of service provider when they need support. For example, as they transition out of CAMHS services, they may be put on waiting lists for adult community mental health services. Respondents noted this may require better resourcing for services and mentioned that long waiting lists made continued care difficult to access. To ensure a smooth transition between children's and adult health services, respondents noted the importance of multi-agency working, clear and gradual transition pathways and person-centred care.

Respondents raised the impact of Scotland's housing crisis on young people leaving care. A lack of good quality, appropriate housing was a common theme throughout responses. Others spoke about the potential high costs associated with private rental markets which made saving or paying for other basic needs, such as transport to work, challenging. Several respondents described a lack of access to housing support, whilst others mentioned the issues that can arise when moving across local authority boundaries. To ensure those leaving care have sufficient support as they move into their first home, respondents thought they would benefit from access to training and practical assistance in developing life skills, including budgeting and registering for utilities. Others noted the importance of social and emotional support to reduce the risk of isolation and to help young people integrate into their new communities.

Another common theme was that young people should be consulted on their views and choices when they are leaving care and that these should be reviewed with them on an ongoing basis. Others felt that young people should have access to advocacy support to ensure they are being listened to and that their preferences and needs are heard.

While respondents generally felt that current funding support for further and higher education students with care experience was very good, improving awareness of the available grants was suggested. Other possible improvements included making the grant application process more accessible for all people with care experience, such as making it easier to provide supporting evidence and providing a consistent funding package across the full period of study. Respondents suggested improved support would allow students in further and higher education to successfully complete their studies, such as flexible learning pathways, access to hybrid or part-time teaching and personalised support. Some respondents highlighted the benefits of guidance from course leaders and tutors, while others suggested that colleges and universities could foster better collaboration with social work teams to ensure the needs of students with care experience are met.

When asked what would help young people find fulfilling work, develop their skills and build confidence in the workplace, a common theme was that more work experience programmes would be beneficial, particularly early on, after leaving school to assist in identifying skills and interests. Career advice and guidance being provided either through school, peer or mentorship schemes, or during care planning meetings, was recommended by several respondents.

Another common theme was the need to reduce stigma through raising awareness of care experience by fellow students or employers. This included increasing understanding of The Promise and providing more trauma-informed training sessions for line managers, human resource managers and other staff working with people with care experience across public and private sectors, and in educational settings.

## **Conclusions**

There was consensus throughout the consultation responses on the approaches and actions required to support young people as they transition out of care into adulthood. Key recurring themes included the importance of multi-agency collaboration, staff upskilling on the supports available, trauma-informed training and taking a person-centred, flexible approach to support. While there was wide support for improvements, respondents noted that without further funding and training, many of the approaches highlighted could be difficult to implement.

Alongside other evidence, the consultation responses and engagement sessions provide valuable insight from those with lived experience and those who support them. This will help ensure that the Scottish Government can work effectively with their partners and stakeholders to make the necessary changes so that all young people in Scotland with experience of care can reach their full potential.



# 1. Introduction

## Background

In February 2020, Scotland's Independent Care Review published [The Promise](#). The Promise told Scotland what it must do to make sure it reached its ambition that all children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential. The Scottish Government is committed to making sure that all of Scotland's children and young people with care experience are given the support they need to help them move on from care into adulthood and more independent living.

On 11 July 2024, the government published a consultation on ['Moving On' from care into adulthood](#). Across 41 open questions, the consultation sought views on areas such as planning and preparation, Continuing Care, Aftercare, health and wellbeing support, education, employment and housing.

The consultation ran from 11 July to 3 October 2024. It was open to all members of the public and especially sought the views of those with care experience, kinship or foster carers, members of the birth family of a young person with care experience and those who support young people with care experience during their transition to adulthood. The online consultation was complemented by 14 engagement sessions organised by the Scottish Government and its stakeholders.

The consultation was intended to align with, and build upon, other planned or established activity. This included the 'Moving On' survey and '100 Days of Listening' completed as part of the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum's (STAF's) Moving On Change Programme and the Care Inspectorate's Thematic Review on transitions for care experienced young people.

The consultation was developed as one of a series to help inform how the government and its partners can keep The Promise, including on Children's Hearings Redesign, the definition of care experience and the future of foster care. The [responses](#) to the consultation would be used by the Scottish Government to widen the existing evidence base and help to explore:

- The good practice already happening and having a positive impact for young people leaving care.
- What is missing in our scaffolding of support for young people leaving care
- The potential solutions to the issues and challenges facing delivery partners and young people leaving care.
- The best way to deliver the required changes, as highlighted in The Promise.

## Respondent profile

In total, 69 written consultation responses were received. Most were submitted via the online consultation platform, Citizen Space. Those received in an alternative format, for example, an email response or PDF document, were reviewed separately by the research team.

Individuals provided 22 responses to the consultation, with the remaining 47 responses received from organisations. Table 1 shows the number of each type of respondent.

<b>Table 1: Respondent profile</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of total sample</b>
<b>Individuals</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Organisations</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>68%</b>
- Local authority / Health and Social Care Partnership <sup>1</sup>	15	22%
- Policy / advocacy / support	9	13%
- Other third sector	7	10%
- Social work / youth justice	6	9%
- Fostering and adoption	4	6%
- Other public body	2	3%
- Other	4	6%

Seventeen of the organisations which responded to the consultation have corporate parenting responsibilities. These include 10 local authorities (and 3 Health and Social Care Partnerships), Public Health Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Children’s Hearings Scotland, and the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration. A full list of the organisations which responded to the consultation and gave permission for their responses to be published is included in Appendix B.

The analysis also included notes collated from 14 engagement events organised by the Scottish Government and its stakeholders. These sessions were broadly structured around the consultation paper, however, also provided an open forum for attendees to discuss the issues being considered more widely. Throughout this report, we highlight either where the discussion at these sessions aligned with the themes arising from the formal consultation responses, or where unique perspectives were raised.

### **Analysis approach**

The Lines Between was commissioned to provide a robust, independent analysis of the responses to the public consultation. The main purpose of this consultation analysis is to understand the full range of views and suggestions expressed by young people with care experience and those supporting them to allow the Scottish Government to consider and inform change which will improve transitions out of care into adulthood. This report provides a thematic analysis of responses based on the analysis approach outlined below.

Reflecting the number, experience and knowledge of respondents, it is not practical to detail every response in this report. Some respondents, especially organisations, shared lengthy submissions reflecting their specific area of expertise and these responses are referenced where possible. Full responses to the consultation, where permission for publication was granted, can be found on the [Scottish Government’s consultation hub](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Two responses were submitted by one local authority.

## Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis identifies the key themes across responses to each question. The research team developed a draft coding framework based on a review of the consultation questions and a sample of responses. During the coding process, new codes were created if additional themes emerged.

In a small number of instances, where a response received via email or in a PDF document contained information that did not align with specific questions, analysts exercised judgment around the most relevant place to include this material for analysis purposes.

In addition to analysing Citizen Space responses, notes from the consultation events were reviewed to explore whether the discussions reflected the themes evident in the Citizen Space responses, and to identify any differences in opinion or new themes compared to the Citizen Space responses. The themes raised at the events typically aligned with the Citizen Space responses, however, any additional or unique perspectives are noted in this report.

Where appropriate, quotes from the full range of 69 consultation responses are included to illustrate key points and provide useful examples, insights and contextual information.

When reviewing the qualitative analysis in this report, we would ask the reader to consider the following:

- Public consultations invite everyone to express their views; individuals and organisations interested in the topic are more likely to respond than those without a direct or known interest. This self-selection means the views of respondents do not necessarily represent the views of the entire population, or of everyone with an interest in this topic.
- Because of the range of consultation questions, not all respondents answered each question, and those who did answer provided varying levels of detail. The qualitative analysis is therefore only based on the information provided by those who commented.
- Differences between the views expressed in the qualitative responses of individuals and organisations, or between the types of organisation, have been noted. If no specific differences are highlighted, then a theme was raised by a mix of respondents.
- Many respondents repeatedly raised the same issues or suggestions in answer to multiple questions, albeit in relation to the specific focus of the question. All views and points raised are included in this report, however, analysts exercised judgment about the most relevant place to include each theme to minimise repetition.
- It is respected that the views expressed by respondents are informed by their own experiences, understanding and perceptions of the issues in question. Where responses may not represent current legislation or recommended guidance and practice, this was highlighted to analysts by the Scottish Government as part of the analysis process.

## Weight of opinion

This report presents the themes identified in responses from most to least commonly mentioned. All themes, including views shared by small numbers of respondents, are covered; a view expressed by a very small number of participants is not given less weight than more general comments shared by a majority.

Similarly, all responses have an equal weighting. We recognise this means a response from an individual has the same weight as the response from an organisation which may represent many members, however, this approach ensures all views are presented.

Qualitative analysis of open-ended questions does not permit the quantification of results. However, to assist the reader in interpreting the findings, a framework is used to convey the most to least commonly identified themes from the written responses to each question:

- **A common theme** raised by around a quarter of respondents or more.
- **Several** respondents, a theme raised by between 10 and 15 respondents.
- **Some** respondents, a theme raised by between 5 and 9 respondents.
- **A few / a small number**, fewer than 5 respondents, a less commonly mentioned theme.
- **Two/one** respondent; a singular comment or a view identified in only one or two responses.

This framework is used solely to present the prevalence of themes within the consultation responses. This does not necessarily represent the importance of a theme, given the subjective nature of attributing importance and the self-selection of consultation respondents.

## 2. Planning and preparation for moving on from care into adulthood

This chapter presents the analysis of the first two consultation questions, which aimed to enhance the Scottish Government’s understanding of how better support for young people who are care experienced, caregivers and care providers can help ensure positive transitions for young people leaving care.

Planning and preparation for transitions should begin as early as possible and the young person, supported by the adults in their lives, should be at the heart of all planning and decision making. However, it is recognised that caregivers and care providers are facing increased pressures and challenges linked to matters such as workforce capacity and numbers, as well as the current financial climate.

Q1. How can we ensure that young people, and those who support them, are given enough time, advice and resources to effectively prepare them for moving on from care?

### Improvements in support for young people

Over three quarters of respondents answered Q1. The most common theme raised was the need for high-quality support for young people, including the need to involve them in decision making processes. Aspects of support highlighted by respondents included ensuring a needs-based response to individuals, sufficiently resourced provision offering a choice of options, and adopting a staged approach where planning is an ongoing process. The need to put young people at the centre of planning, ensuring that they are fully aware of their rights and entitlements, was emphasised. This was reiterated by a few different organisations in relation to the recent incorporation of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Difficulties sourcing information or support was highlighted by some, as were inconsistencies between geographic or service areas.

“In all transitions, it is clear there needs to be more future planning involved – whether that be transitioning to independent living, education, adult services or employment, etc. Care-experienced young people have told us that they feel a lot of anxiety about their future and feel that they are not present in the decision making process on their own transitions.” - Aberlour

“At times no one appears to be listening. Take a different approach: Talk to me and then my carer. Talk to me, before ticking the boxes. Talk to the person sat in front of you today, before you read my paperwork. Get to know me. Make decisions with me, not for me.” - Shared Lives Plus

## **Better engagement with professionals and staff**

Ensuring the needs, wants and hopes of children are understood and supported by staff was pointed out as a vital component of supporting them as they leave care. Respondents called for staff involved in preparing young people for leaving care to have access to training or guidance. They also suggested addressing workforce retention and capacity issues. Ensuring consistency in processes, continuity of relationships and information sharing were suggested ways in which professionals could better support the preparation of young people for leaving care. Respondents highlighted the need for staff supporting young people to have an understanding of their rights and entitlements, as well as their own statutory obligations.

## **Start planning and preparation early**

The need to prepare young people as early as possible was a common theme. Advantages of this were given, including that young people would be able to find out about their rights and available supports, test options and give time for support to be put in place.

Some respondents noted that a child or young person's sense of safety and security could be impacted when discussions about leaving care begin and it was felt important to handle these conversations sensitively. Children's Hearings Scotland also noted that young people should be empowered to hold service providers "to account if a clearly defined set of core standards and entitlements are not met."

## **Examples of suitable support or information**

Several respondents gave suggestions for support or information that would benefit young people preparing to leave care. These included support with employment, housing or health assessments. Help with managing finances was mentioned by some and other aspects of living independently were mentioned, such as help learning how to cook, clean and wash clothes. Specific resources such as; access to a transition flat; offering Money House, an SQA accredited programme on financial literacy skills; therapeutic life story work and a 'Moving On rucksack' with useful advice on entitlements, were highlighted. Examples that could be replicated included a Direct Work Bag used by practitioners in Glasgow, something similar to Shannon's Box for young people and access to digital resources such as ABZ Works for employability.

Suggestions for helping manage finances included addressing anxieties associated with struggling financially, helping with budgeting and shopping, paying bills or finding work and clearly promoting available financial support that is easy to access.

Using technology to support young people, such as digital solutions to provide a 'one stop' shop for information on resources available to you was suggested by a few respondents. Others suggested more focus on talking with young people to prepare them adequately or that improvements to joint working arrangements across services should be prioritised when providing support.

“Pathway plans designed to prepare young people for leaving care must include information about the services available to improve care leavers’ financial literacy skills if they are to make them feel confident about making the transition to more independent living.” – MyBnk

### **Person-centred support**

The need to meet the individual needs of each young person leaving care was noted by several respondents. This included delivering support in a holistic way, as and when needed and reflective of their preferences. Factors that were felt to be important to consider included social networks, reasons for transitioning out of care, staff contacts, available resources and the age and stage of the young person. Points here included that information and signposting should occur on an ongoing basis as young people approach adulthood, and that social workers should be aware of the need for early pathway planning. Additionally, one respondent felt the social determinants of health and wellbeing should be addressed such as housing, education, employment, income and access to services.

“It feels important to recognise that there isn’t a defined line or age at which a child ‘in’ care no longer requires care. Replicating the support structures that exist within family is very difficult for ‘state apparatus’ though. It is probably more realistic and useful to think about the type of information people may need at different stages of life and have that available and easily accessible – including signposting to statutory services or the third sector who can provide in-person supports.” - Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

### **Effective multi-agency working**

A strong multi-agency awareness and response was considered by several respondents to be important when helping young people prepare for leaving care. This included both joint working by staff teams and multi-agency planning processes. Specific suggestions included joint training sessions or information sharing on transitions or mapping journeys, using approaches such as ‘Getting it right for every child’ (GIRFEC) and ‘Looked After Child’ reviews, and ensuring collective leadership. The importance of multi-agency working was also reflected across responses throughout the consultation and at engagement events held with stakeholders.

### **Provide support beyond the transition**

Providing support following the transition phase was mentioned by several respondents. This was felt to be a valuable way to strengthen the resilience of support packages, better supporting those less ready to transition and as a way of enabling tapered support. The positive impact of such support on young people was highlighted, both in terms of supporting independent living and improving wellbeing.

“Moving on from care’ is not a one off, single event. Any child developing into adulthood in 2024 will require different supports at different times in order to navigate the complexity of adult life. It feels important to recognise that there isn’t a defined line or age at which a child ‘in’ care no longer requires care. This implies that there might need to be some lifelong support available, or potentially available, should a care experienced adult ever need additional supports.” – Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

### **Other themes**

A range of other themes were raised by some respondents, including providing advocacy, the need for consistency of support across Scotland, meeting any specialist need of young people such as mental health or additional support needs, providing information in specific settings and ensuring good regulation or legislative frameworks.

Q2. Are there any barriers to starting the process of planning and preparing for young people leaving care at an early stage?

### **Lack of resources**

Three quarters of respondents left a comment to Q2. A common theme was the suggestion that a lack of resources, staff or suitable support were barriers to starting the preparation process for young people leaving care. The availability or quality of services was thought to vary across Scotland, or was considered to be delivered on a short-term basis or difficult to source. Suitable housing provision was highlighted as being particularly challenging, as was staff continuity and capacity. Other factors included difficulties accessing assessments, a lack of consistent or flexible support such as foster care retainers or step-down support services, particularly in rural areas, and funding constraints impacting on available supports.

### **Lack of engagement with young people**

Another common theme was that a lack of engagement with young people, for a variety of reasons, was perceived to be a barrier to starting preparation for leaving care. Reasons for a lack of engagement were either centred on service related issues or on young people’s willingness to engage.

Respondents raised professional concerns about increasing anxiety in young people who did not feel ready to leave care, a lack of communication due to staff turnover or capacity issues, the short-term nature of services, early endings or unstable placements, and the impact of moving on to adult services and the lack of continuity with a trusted adult.

A perceived lack of trust was also raised by respondents as a reason why lack of engagement might occur. One organisation shared reasons why some specific groups of young people might not engage, including outstanding criminal charges, vulnerable behaviour, mental health difficulties or neurodevelopmental needs. The nature of adolescence itself was also highlighted as being a challenge by a few respondents. Aberdeen City Council highlighted the perceived disconnect between what young people can be expected to achieve, compared to the reality of their experiences and the impact of complex trauma on executive functioning.



### **Alignment between processes or systems**

Aligned with the above theme, several respondents expressed a view that the system could act as a barrier to starting preparation with children and young people. These barriers included limits to support caused by the interactions between different systems and processes, a lack of forward planning or conversely, a sense of planning 'endings' instead of ensuring quality scaffolding and maintaining a sense of childhood. For example, the need to focus on fulfilling statutory duties at the expense of preventative work, or being risk averse rather than making decisions in a person-centred way.

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration reported that waiting for the outcome or review of a Compulsory Supervision Order, which could take some time, as a barrier to effective throughcare and aftercare planning. Other respondents highlighted issues within the system which might impact effective preparation for moving on, such as changing placements or the perception that practice is age, rather than needs, driven.

### **Lack of staff awareness or expertise**

Several respondents highlighted the lack of knowledge or skills of staff to begin preparing children or young people for adulthood. Being able to provide financial education, an awareness of entitlements or supports, including being prioritised for support, and the impact of trauma were all cited as gaps. Another issue raised was the ability of staff to manage discussions around transitions effectively. Comments included that staff could be risk averse, unaware of their responsibilities, lack confidence or have low expectations. It was also acknowledged that some staff may prefer to prioritise calm after a crisis move, which might be perceived as a barrier. For instance, one individual felt staff wanted to focus on keeping a child safe and in a stable environment, building a positive long standing relationship rather than discussing them leaving care.

Suggested actions which could be taken to address these issues included creating the correct conditions for staff; including sufficient resources, such as suitable housing and support, addressing recruitment challenges, encouraging the shift towards preventative approaches and adopting a robust care planning process, underpinned by 'Getting it right for every child', which promotes independence, rather than dependence.

### **Delays in accessing support**

A lack of timely support was raised as a perceived barrier by some respondents. Limited time to plan ahead or review plans was highlighted, as were long waiting lists for placements, leading to placements only accepting emergency or short term placements, and the involvement of social workers only during times of crisis.

### **3. Accessing information, services and support**

This chapter presents an analysis of questions about the information that is available to young people moving on from care, and the adults in their life. The questions explore what information is required and how this can be made available in an accessible and timely manner. More specifically, Q4 to Q6 examine information and support requirements for young people who return home to live with their birth family, Q7 to Q9 cover Continuing Care, Q10 to Q12 Aftercare and Q13 and Q14 lifelong care.

Q3. How can we ensure young people receive the right support and guidance to build the life skills they need for adulthood before they move on from care?

#### **Improved consistency of support**

Three quarters of respondents commented at Q3. A common theme was the need for consistent support, notably from a key, trusted adult. This was emphasised both in responses to Q3 and across other questions. Suggestions for who could act as a trusted adult included adults in clubs or the community, social workers, foster carers and mentors. However, the quality of the relationship was considered more relevant than any specific role. Respondents felt a trusted adult should spend time listening to young people, build a relationship, model healthy behaviours and attitudes, respond effectively and action any plans, as well as stick to commitments made. The benefits of relationship-based support were given. This included providing someone young people could rely on if other supports fell through, linking them with relevant services and offering a sense of security and safety.

#### **Better access to support or information**

Another common theme across the consultation questions was the need for improved information and support for children and young people moving on from care. Respondents highlighted issues with the availability of, and access to, supports such as adapted information resources, mental health and wellbeing supports, suitable housing options and community-based provision. Ensuring young people receive the right guidance and support to meet their individual needs and enable flexible choices was often noted. For instance, East Lothian Council Children's Services shared details of their tenancy award schemes, which they considered helpful and usually in line with young people's readiness to move on. They suggested an expansion of similar initiatives could be useful.

#### **Suggested life skills delivery**

The types of life skills young people leaving care might need, or how life skills initiatives could be provided, was another common theme. Suggested life skills included financial management skills, such as paying bills and budgeting, self-care or relational skills, home economics and household management skills.

Ways of delivering life skills included:

- Using certificated modules.
- Through carers or schools.
- Developing a shared understanding of what life skills mean.
- Ensuring knowledge is translated into skills.

“By providing them with the opportunities to develop basic skills; ensuring that both foster carers and residential staff have this as part of their care plan and it is reviewed on a regular basis.” - Individual

Inverclyde Council’s Practice Pad was shared as an example of good practice. Practice Pad provides a house where young people can learn independent living skills through overnight experiences or longer stays.

“This initiative aims to better prepare them for taking on the responsibility of their own tenancies, give them space to consider if moving on at that time is right for them, and to reduce failed tenancies.” - Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf)

### **Improved planning or multi-agency arrangements**

Providing a needs-led, individualised response through robust pathways for young people was recommended by several respondents. It was suggested that this could be achieved through better assessment, planning and review processes. Better joint planning and working was recommended in the following areas:

- Evidencing the GIRFEC approach in pathways planning.
- Additional specialist assessments or planning for those with specific additional support needs.
- Clarification of the role of wider corporate parents working together.

“Young people should get supported according to need rather than age, what you need to be able to have those things. The start of the conversation shouldn’t be about moving out before checking ‘are you ready’ i.e. what skills you already have. This should consistently part of pathways planning at the earlier stage i.e. how to build the skills.” – Individual

### **Increased awareness and understanding**

Several respondents suggested an enhanced awareness and understanding among staff supporting young people preparing to leave care. A better understanding of the issues faced by young people preparing to leave care was suggested, such as recognition of the impact of trauma, transitions and challenges faced. In addition, the need to have a thorough understanding of available supports and entitlements was emphasised, particularly among those who have a key role in supporting young people, such as those adopting a trusted adult role. Guidance, toolkits and training were suggested as ways to achieve this.

### **Address relational or wellbeing needs**

Providing emotional support or recording emotional needs in plans was recommended by some respondents. Suggestions included recording evidence of 'readiness' of young people to discuss moving on, providing mental health support and addressing how to set and manage boundaries and navigate health care.

### **Improved access to representation**

Ensuring adequate support for children and young people regarding who could represent them or encouraging self-representation was suggested by several respondents. This included individual representation through advocacy, carers or peer support, and through collective representation such as local Champions Boards. Stirling Council highlighted work its Champions Board had undertaken on tenancy sustainability and developing life skills through their 'pre-tenancy preparation'. This work assists young people in developing skills before they are ready to embark on qualifications such as the SQA Tenancy Skills Award. Goal 17 Ltd mentioned the benefits of voluntary support and mentoring, which they provide. They suggested that this provides support to people with care experience and also provides people with greater insight into care experience, giving them the knowledge to champion care issues within the community.

### **Access to practical support**

Ensuring young people had access to practical support was advocated by some respondents. Meeting immediate needs for shelter, food, warmth and digital access was recommended, along with access to, or help understanding, documents such as pay slips, National Insurance or tax contributions. West Lothian Council noted they had developed an 'independence checklist' to consider the practical knowledge and experience young people need prior to leaving care.

Less mentioned themes, in order of prevalence, included providing better access to training for social workers, better support for those with additional support needs and provision of service directories.

### **Enhanced involvement of carers**

Some respondents felt providing training or support for carers would be useful or suggested improved involvement of carers in planning discussions. Suggestions for training were aligned to those noted for professionals above. Examples include understanding their role in relation to transitions or encouraging trauma-informed and reparative parenting approaches. Meeting carers' needs for support, such as therapy, preventative or intensive support, or advocacy was also recommended by these respondents.

### **Support when returning to live with birth families**

As noted in the consultation paper, The Promise states that families who have had a child removed should not be abandoned. These families must continue to be provided with therapeutic support, advocacy and engagement in line with the principles of intensive family support.

Some young people leaving care return home to live with their birth family and the Scottish Government wishes to support families to ensure it is safe and in the best interest of the young person when doing so.

Q4. What services and support should be considered and provided to a care leaver who returns home to live with their birth family?

### **Ensure families have access to support**

Two thirds of respondents answered Q4. Providing family-based support when a young person returns to the family home was a common theme. This support was felt important to be delivered to the whole family, including siblings, or to parents themselves for the purpose of enabling sustained and robust arrangements. A range of ways this could be achieved were suggested, including through mediation, family therapy, parenting support, opportunities to 'drop-in', support groups and intensive or 24/7 support. Some highlighted difficulties sourcing such support or noted the current focus was on supporting the young person, not their family. For instance, Barnardo's Scotland noted that community-based family support would be "hugely beneficial" to young people leaving care who return to live with their birth parents. Barnardo's Scotland response was clear that positive progress has been made with initiatives such as the Scottish Government's Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, however, did note that more needs to be done.

### **Continued support for young people**

Another common theme was calls for ongoing support for young people, like that described above, such as advocacy, information and support. For instance, the British Psychological Society felt young people should be offered supported time out of the house, for example to engage in activities or education, which could provide respite from family and any issues occurring within the family home.

Several respondents also advocated for emotional and wellbeing support for young people to help address trauma and navigate family relationships. Several respondents called for enhanced communication with young people, such as contact with a trusted adult or regular 'check-ins' with a professional. Enabling understanding of the reasons for the original removal from family care was suggested by one individual. Adequate planning was also recommended by some, to prepare families and the young person for the return home.

Aberlour mentioned the Glasgow Intensive Family Support Service, where they have been commissioned to provide a 'whole family' approach to supporting young people.

"The support around the family is crucial to managing these relationships and building resilience within the home environment to help all members of the family gain the tools and skills necessary to maintain positive and healthy relationships for the future." - Aberlour

Attendees at the engagement event with Cyrenians noted that opportunities to identify those with neurodivergence should happen as early as possible and that better use of third sector services by those in statutory services should occur to ensure whole family support.

For instance, attendees highlighted secure care could provide reports on how to support neurodiverse individuals, to help increase understanding around causes of behaviour, and that these reports could be provided earlier.

### **Ensuring young people have options after they leave care**

The need to make sure young people have options to return to care, find alternative accommodation or have access to support, should they need it, was emphasised by several respondents. This was felt necessary should relationships at home become strained or breakdown. Suggested supports included ensuring access to accommodation or care placements and contact with trusted adults, or maintaining connections from their time in care. Contingency planning, highlighting support options, was suggested by a small number of respondents.

### **Financial or practical support**

Providing families and young people with financial or practical support was suggested by several respondents. Financial support was the most frequently mentioned type of support in this theme, though further explanation was rarely provided. Other considerations included the need for young people to have their own space, for instance near family or for respite, addressing barriers around travel and enabling access to documents, such as bank account details, National Insurance numbers, passports or birth certificates. Stirling Council highlighted the importance of ensuring material needs are covered and that financial strains do not become a reason for a further breakdown of young people's living arrangements.

### **Other themes**

A wide range of comments were left by several respondents. These included providing optional, rather than mandatory, support; identifying and supporting specific additional needs; resource implications of enhanced support; and recognition that provision of support to young people leaving care can be challenging due to non-engagement or complex issues that need to be addressed.

Q5. Can you provide examples of good practice where services have worked together in a holistic way to support birth families and young people moving on from care when the young person returns to live with their birth family?

### **Providing intensive family support**

Over half of respondents answered Q5. Several respondents gave examples of intensive support for families and young people. These included family group decision making, functional family therapy, dedicated practitioners or coordinators, and wrap-around support. Descriptions of strategies and interventions included help creating routines, learning life skills, improving relationships and maximising income.

“We have a Request for Assistance process which allows support to be called up locally from our alternative to care provision to offer high levels of support to enable a community pathway to progress to reunify with birth family.” – Aberdeen City Council

“Giving parents the help of a trained Family Support Foster Carer who can ‘step up’ when the parents need it and ‘step down’ when they are in a better place to care for their children.” – The Fostering Network

Some also highlighted the importance of working with parents to ensure good housing solutions, links to community supports, and increased confidence in caring. One organisation highlighted the case of a father who was supported to receive an assessment, which resulted in a formal diagnosis and an increased understanding of his needs and behaviours.

### **Good inter-agency working arrangements**

Some left comments on what they felt good inter-agency planning and working looks like. Views included that starting planning early had resulted in culture shifts, enabled holistic, wide-ranging support to be provided and could support the return of young people to family homes. Named planning processes included ‘Looked After Child: my meetings’, Pathway and Welfare reviews, and rehabilitation plans. The British Psychological Society gave an example of a multi-disciplinary team which included psychology and family service support, child and youth care workers and a social worker. In this case, it was noted the family and young person fully engaged with the services supporting them.

### **Specific support or service examples**

Aspects of support which were considered successful in supporting families, or specific services, were mentioned by some respondents. Examples included:

- A sibling support worker provided as part of a family’s involvement with the Rosemount Project. This project is a crisis support service aimed at preventing children going into care in North Ayrshire.
- An intensive outreach service and links to supports such as mediation, education and housing services provided by East Lothian Council Children's Services.
- Cyrenians’ Keeping Families Together service that provides whole family support and mediation to young people in secure care and their families.
- Provision of mentoring support and guidance to families from carers as part of Step Up Step Down, a programme which supports families to stay together. Support from these carers was felt to be more acceptable to families than from those working for formal services.
- Life Long Links provide information about family members to young people, who may previously have had limited information about their wider family members.

### **Enhanced support for young people**

Examples of enhanced or intensive support available to young people were given by some respondents, including an educational support worker who was involved in meetings for young people transitioning from one area to another, links with local Champions Boards to provide a voice for young people and to empower them to work to change the care system, and the provision of scaffolding and maintaining support from a named contact.

## **Phased transitions**

Some felt a phased approach to returning to the family home was helpful. It was suggested that this approach could help identify and address any difficulties at an early stage, allow for a gradual increase in overnight stays and the development of independent living skills to reduce reliance on the family, and build and strengthen relationships.

## **Other themes**

A few respondents suggested good risk assessments were required, emphasised the need for empathic, non-punitive responses or gave examples of the system not working.

Q6. How do we ensure that young people with care experience, and those who provide them with care, can easily access information about entitlements and support?

## **Ways to provide information**

Over two thirds of respondents answered Q6. Several respondents provided suggestions on how information should be shared with young people and those who care for them. The main suggestion was through digital channels, notably websites, 'apps' and social media. Other suggestions included community events and workshops, written materials such as leaflets and booklets, and postal information. Some suggested a 'one-stop' approach, using collated information from all services. The distribution of information through existing platforms was highlighted, including use of the 'Mind Of My Own' (MOMO) app, Young Scot and a bespoke Facebook group.

Some respondents also suggested distributing information through universal services, most notably through education, such as on school noticeboards or through Personal and Social Education classes. Other suggestions were through local authorities or Health and Social Care Partnership websites and community services such as GP surgeries, libraries and community centres. MyBnk, a UK charity which provides financial education to young people, recommended that local authorities consider an easy-to-navigate, central online hub to assist young people with care experience, and their carers, by providing information about local services, entitlements and third sector supports.

## **Enhance the ability of workforce to deliver information**

Several respondents felt that professionals involved in supporting young people and their families, such as health and social workers, advocates, corporate parents, Transition Teams and education providers, should be able to provide information or signposting. This could involve upskilling staff to stay up to date with information on entitlements, processes and services. A key worker or coordinator could also be designated as a point of contact. A few also highlighted the role of advocacy to help young people realise and use their rights. Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership called for greater consistency in information provision which does not rely on the individual interests and skills of staff providing the information. For instance, the need for up to date, rights based information, access to independent advocacy, and manager scrutiny to ensure consistent practice were recommended.



Some also highlighted the need for robust planning systems and multi-agency teams as a way to provide information. Suggestions included ensuring regular care plan reviews and having a robust Throughcare and Aftercare Service with timely referrals to it. Dumfries and Galloway Council reaffirmed the importance of building partnerships between social services and other agencies and services, such as mental health providers, drug and alcohol services, and criminal justice services to ensure all are helping to create a 'safety net' for young people with care experience.

### **Ensure information needs are met**

Several respondents expressed a range of views and solutions around ensuring information is both accessible and useful. Suggestions included providing child-friendly and adapted materials, tailoring information as required, co-producing it with young people, and making it reliable and consistent. Some respondents highlighted difficulties in sourcing such information. Most frequently mentioned was that information packs on entitlements and supports could be distributed and that a rights-based approach to providing information should be taken.

Information young people needed, according to respondents, included how to access support and grants, including information on eligibility criteria or making referrals; practical information, such as how to open a bank account or access free bus travel; rights and entitlements; and processes and systems. The Care Inspectorate spoke about an initiative they have which includes working with young inspection volunteers during inspections for services for children at risk of harm. They note that the volunteers routinely hear that "outward-facing information is not always child-friendly, accessible or written by and for young people."

Clan Childlaw noted the importance of ensuring young people and their carers were aware of their rights and understood how to ensure their needs were correctly represented. They suggested young people speak to advocates or independent advisors to make sure local authorities offer the support and services they are obligated to provide.

### **Examples of practice**

Several respondents provided examples of good practice in delivering information on leaving care, including:

- Co-produced 'Your Right to Continuing Care' information materials led by young people in conjunction with the Care Inspectorate, alongside CELCIS and Clan Childlaw. This included a webinar and information packs on rights and entitlements.
- The Family Based Care Service in West Lothian, which provides monthly newsletters sent to all fostering households, providing up-to-date information and research on key areas relating to fostering.
- The Getting Ready Project operated by Children in Wales, which delivers resources developed in partnership with care experienced young people.
- Orkney Islands Council funded MyBnk to deliver financial education sessions.

## Continuing Care

Continuing Care enables children and young people who cease to be 'looked after' on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and who have been 'looked after' in foster, kinship, or residential care, to remain in their care setting with the same level of support until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Q7. Are there any changes you would like to see as part of the eligibility criteria for Continuing Care?

### Extend eligibility criteria

Two thirds of respondents answered Q7. Several respondents expressed the view that the Continuing Care eligibility criteria should extend to specific groups of young people with care experience who had stopped being 'looked after' before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. This included young people subject to a Section 11 Kinship Care Order or those in 'informal' kinship care. those 'looked after' in the family home, those impacted by a breakdown in their adoption and those who were in secure care immediately before ceasing to be 'looked after'.

"It's crucial that eligibility criteria consider the unique circumstances of each young person, rather than following rigid guidelines. Currently, there is concern that if a young person exits the care system before age 16, they miss out on Continuing Care entitlements. By introducing more flexibility in the eligibility process, decisions could be made based on the best interests of the young person, ensuring they receive the support they need, regardless of technical cut-off points." – Dumfries & Galloway Council

"Accessibility to Continuing Care within Informal Kinship care and adoption arrangements. They are often not eligible for a service from Throughcare and Aftercare team. These young people can have similar vulnerabilities to those who have been in residential or foster care and so need ongoing support from services." - East Lothian Council Children's Services

### No need for change

Some felt there was no need to change the eligibility criteria. Reasons included insufficient resources to extend eligibility, that The Promise was improving the quality of support and that the current eligibility criteria worked well when applied properly. Clan Childlaw was critical of extending eligibility if it changed the types of support offered. Their response emphasised that Continuing Care should be about 'staying put' and ensuring the needs of young people are best met after age 16.

"It is not helpful to 'extend the eligibility for continuing care' if what is meant is making more types of accommodation eligible to be continuing care placements – this would devalue the principle of staying put and relationship-based transition from care and would be likely to have the unintended consequences of both creating a two-tier continuing care system and making even more young people at risk of homelessness." – Clan Childlaw

## **Calls for clarity and considering other groups**

Some respondents called for Continuing Care to be provided to a wider range of groups or for clarity around eligibility for other groups. This included calls for all those with care experience to be eligible, regardless of whether they were 'looked after' on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. There were also a few calls to consider including neurodivergent young people, those with mental health difficulties or those who do not have the capacity to make their own decisions, It was also suggested that there was a need for clarity over whether young people who had arrived in Scotland as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were already eligible for Continuing Care.

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration noted that Section 26A(5)(c) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 sets out where a local authority does not have a duty to provide Continuing Care to an eligible young person. However, it expressed the view that this section of the 1995 Act should be removed support and that Continuing Care for a wider cohort of young people should be considered.

"It might be that we are applying a wider definition to continuing care – and that we are interpreting it as continuing support to provide care. But this feels right. It seems to be now almost self-evident that a child moving from secure care to no care order may need additional supports; that a child who no longer has the option of remaining with carers requires additional or alternative supports and that if continuing care (in its current form) would be detrimental then a new plan / approach to care needs to be developed – and the new plan would require support." - Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

A few respondents highlighted the need to consider young people returning from out-of-area placements. For instance, the Care Inspectorate reported they had found from their review of the joint inspection of services for children in need of care and protection 2018-2020 that variations existed in registrations of care placements to accommodate Continuing Care placements. Subsequent issues were highlighted by partnerships on the impact this had on, for example, the young people themselves and also on the resourcing implications for the local authorities involved.

## **Option to remain in care may be preferable**

While not directly related to the eligibility criteria, some respondents commented that, if it better meets the needs of a young person, they should be able to remain in care until they are 18 rather than leaving care at 16 and going to Continuing Care. These comments suggested that, for example, moving on to Continuing Care should happen post-16 at a point when the young person is ready to leave care or called for flexible provision of Continuing Care when it is needed based upon the developmental needs or readiness of a young person to move on. Specifically, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and Barnardo's Scotland noted that in the context of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, and the incorporation of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child), there may be a need to clarify whether care provision continues until the age of 18 and then Continuing Care beyond 18.

“The Staying Put Scotland Guidance emphasises the importance of young people being ‘encouraged, enabled and empowered’ to remain in positive care settings until they have developed the practical skills, emotional readiness and networks of supportive relationships that can underpin successful adult life. The needs of young people do not develop in a linear process and flexibility is required to ensure that the provision of Continuing Care can adapt according to the circumstances of individuals.” – Public Health Scotland

“It should only be on rare occasions that a 16/17 year leaves care to move to Continuing Care. It must be clear why this is a better option for that young person than staying in care until 18.” - Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers

### **Remove the upper age limit for Continuing Care**

In recognition that care leavers may need support for longer than their peers, a small number of respondents called for the upper age limit for providing Continuing Care to be removed.

### **Other themes**

Several respondents left general comments on suggested changes to Continuing Care arrangements. These included several who called for more funding for this aspect of support, some who called to raise awareness of Continuing Care, and a few who called for better support arrangements. These issues are addressed in the next question (Q8).

Q8. What additional support do you think is required for families, professionals and practitioners who are responsible for providing Continuing Care arrangements?

### **Greater awareness or access to information**

Three fifths of respondents answered Q8. A common theme was the suggestion that greater knowledge and understanding of Continuing Care was required. Specific awareness gaps included the consequences for young people of ending support early, Corporate Parent responsibilities, an understanding of processes, the nature of Continuing Care provision and learning from other approaches.

Public Health Scotland, for example, highlighted useful learning from approaches such as Family Nurse Partnerships or Community Link Workers in primary care on issues such as stigma, referral processes, eligibility, holistic approaches, trauma-informed practice and the ‘what matters to you’ approach. Other suggested ways to deliver this were similar to those noted in Q6, such as through a central resource, or through training and guidance.

### **More funding support**

Several respondents called for more funding, either to fund services or to increase amounts available for young people and their carers. In order of prevalence, suggestions included the need for more funding for foster carers, a need for increased resources more generally for Continuing Care and for residential placements, and to provide financial support or bursaries for young people.

A reduction in funding for foster carers after a young person reaches 18, or when 'looked after' status ends, was perceived as causing disruption to young people accessing Continuing Care. This could lead to carers re-evaluating their caring role or switching to an area or service that pays more.

Attendees at the engagement event with Social Work Scotland also noted carers felt they were struggling with the allowance when looking after a young adult. The Fostering Network reported findings from their 2024 survey that over half of foster carers said they were worse off as a result of offering Continuing Care. There was a call for a Scottish recommended or minimum allowance for delivering Continuing Care and one respondent suggested the same level of financial support should continue to be given to foster and kinship carers as they received when a child was 'looked after'.

Some respondents called for more funding for Continuing Care and associated services. Reasons included avoiding young people and their carers facing a 'financial cliff edge', ensuring sufficient breadth and availability of support such as residential placements and reimbursing costs for providing Continuing Care for unaccompanied asylum seekers.

A few respondents mentioned the need to extend financial support or bursaries for young people receiving Continuing Care. The Fostering Network recommended ending the practice of expecting young people to contribute to their own allowances and clarifying financial entitlements for young people in Continuing Care who may be living away from their foster family for most of the year, for example, to attend college or university.

### **Improved care planning arrangements**

Suggestions were left by several respondents on how to ensure that robust planning processes are in place. Suggested improvements included having more than a single annual review, so that those involved understand what is expected from placements, awareness of supports which may benefit young people and adopting a broader view of how to achieve outcomes, for instance, moving away from a 'systems and process' or overly 'professionalised' approach to increase choice, or adopting a 'more organic' approach which involves natural conversations about choices or helps create a community of support around the young person. The Care Inspectorate noted that young people in Continuing Care arrangements experienced poorer quality assessment, planning and review processes than other care experienced groups.

### **Clear and consistent Continuing Care arrangements**

Several respondents recommended principles for effective Continuing Care arrangements, such as the need for consistency, improvements in processes and joint working. Within this theme, respondents called for consistency in implementing processes and guidance across local authorities, ensuring a dedicated Continuing Care service, devising a less invasive and shorter process to become an approved foster carer, increasing capacity for Independent Review Officers and using effective recording.

One respondent felt digital tools should be rolled out to help record views, citing My Meeting and Viewpoint as suggested examples. CELCIS called for a presumption that foster carers should provide Continuing Care through to 21 years and for this to be embedded in their recruitment, assessment, registration, induction and ongoing support.

Some also suggested improved joint working arrangements, such as between children's and adult services, having designated teams in each area and clarity over roles and responsibilities. Greater clarity over expectations of young people, or involving them effectively in decision making, was also recommended by some.

"It is about balancing how you speak to them as children and then young adults – a combination of empowering them and nurturing or supporting them simultaneously. We need to make sure young people know their rights about continuing care." – East Lothian Council Children's Services

This was reflected across the engagement events, such as the Staf engagement called the ICC Forum. Attendees spoke about policies and practices differing between local authorities and between children's and adult services, which make navigating systems difficult for young people, carers and independent advisors or advocates. Moreover, attendees spoke about young people in different areas receiving different levels of care.

### **Improved delivery of support**

Some respondents described ways to enhance support through increased service capacity, access to therapeutic support, enhanced trauma practice standards, support groups or open forums, including those online. Some advocated consistent support or a named contact. A few emphasised the need for flexible support or meeting individual needs.

### **Carer concerns for welfare**

Attendees at the engagement event with Social Work Scotland also spoke about instances where carers felt reluctant to provide continuing support for young people as they get older. They noted that having a young person coming home from a pub or a night out may create problems in a household, specifically if there are also younger children staying.

Q9. How do we ensure that young people, and their views, are heard during discussions on Continuing Care which impact them?

### **Active and meaningful engagement**

Two thirds of respondents answered Q9. A common theme in response to this question was the need for proactive and meaningful discussions with young people. Key components of good engagement cited by respondents included ensuring young people's views are central to decisions taken, adopting trauma-informed and sensitive approaches, providing feedback such as 'you said, we did' and enabling staff or advocacy representation.

Suggested tools for engagement with young people included visual aids, voting or questionnaires, the MOMO app, social media and the My Meeting model. Some respondents highlighted the need for accessible structures and processes to make it easier for young people to contribute their views, such as using informal settings or using clear and simple language.

One individual raised the need for a welfare-led approach when considering the views of young people:

"Young people I have worked with have been determined to get their own flat at 16, then beforehand, through discussions, realised that they're maybe not ready or would feel very isolated to go straight to that from a supported residential care setting, and therefore we were able to map out the correct path for them. Listen to them but understand what they are asking for and why, and then question if it is the best and most suitable for them (I know what I wanted in life at 16 years of age was wildly different to what I knew I was capable of managing at 18 years of age)." – Individual

This was reflected in notes from engagement events. At the Hub for Success engagement event, one young person spoke about thinking she knew what she wanted in terms of living arrangements, but not understanding the implications of her choice and being unprepared for independent living, in hindsight.

### **Advocacy and peer support**

Using advocates to support young people in discussions was suggested by several respondents. They viewed this as a means to ensure rights are upheld, make sure young people's views are heard and help overcome communication barriers. Who Cares? Scotland noted they are funded to provide independent advocacy in all local authority areas across Scotland, though highlighted differences in contracts which resulted in varied levels of provision, with waiting lists existing in several areas.

This was also reflected in the engagement session with STAF on Supported Lodgings and Supported Carers, where respondents discussed the benefits of Champions Boards and the participation of Children's Rights Officers on different panels. They noted that while these small changes are helping, there is still more work to do in this area.

### **Provide choices and options**

Several respondents emphasised the need to offer young people a range of options for expressing their views or accessing support. Suggestions included providing information in a range of formats, allowing various forms of communication, allowing them to choose who consults with them and providing comprehensive information on available support.

### **Early and ongoing engagement**

Enabling early and ongoing discussions with young people was viewed by several respondents as a way to ensure meaningful engagement. Suggested ways this could be achieved included through introducing young people to a Throughcare and Aftercare worker at an early stage, gradually introducing the idea of moving on and building confidence in workers and young people to discuss the topic. Some felt having a social worker or trusted adult who had built relationships with the young people involved could facilitate meaningful discussions.

At the engagement event held by The Fostering Network Young Peoples Advisory Board, a young person spoke about themselves and others approaching the end of their foster care arrangements without knowing who their social worker was, having had no contact or information from them. They spoke about not being aware of a support network nor feeling well informed about the transition.

One third sector provider raised the need for young people's views to be heard not only in individual pathway planning but also in terms of service provision overall. It highlighted the transfer of one of its services to the local authority without consultation of the young people using the service who had built up close relationships with existing staff members, causing significant disruption to the service.

### **Documenting discussions**

Some respondents raised the need to ensure young people's views are clearly recorded by professionals, particularly during planning processes. Singular suggestions included that informal discussions should also be recorded, that views should be noted and presented even if a young person was not present, having someone available to explain past records to young people who request them and involving young people in writing their care plans.

### **Aftercare**

Advice, guidance and assistance beyond universal services for people leaving care from age 16 is called Aftercare. All young people, regardless of their placement type, who cease to be 'looked after' on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and who are not supported through Continuing Care, are eligible for Aftercare until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Then, subject to an assessment of need by their local authority, they may continue to receive Aftercare support until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, and potentially beyond. Local authorities develop and record pathway plans when needs are identified. These plans will show how the young person's needs will be met through Aftercare.

Q10. How can we make sure young people can access the range of support they need when they leave care through the provision of Aftercare?

### **Better access to support and resources**

Two thirds of respondents answered Q10. A call for increased access to information, support and resources was a common theme, with issues raised aligned to those described under Q8, such as the need for increased awareness of Aftercare, flexible needs-based support, named people for young people to contact, such as college liaison leads or a worker in social services, having specialist teams or dedicated resources such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) workers and providing education on 'what it means to become an adult'. Respondents highlighted a shortage of resources, which stretches the capacity of services and teams.

In addition, ensuring appropriate housing and tenancy management was raised by some, with group living accommodation showing success according to Dumfries & Galloway Council. The need for a trusted adult was further emphasised by several respondents.



Some also called for early engagement with young people and placed importance on ensuring young people's views are respected.

A number of examples, where specific supports worked well, were provided within responses. For instance, East Lothian Council suggested the creation of a service similar to Guardianship Scotland which could help young people explore their identity, address trauma and exploitation, develop coping strategies and deal with the challenges of becoming an adult. Another respondent highlighted the Housing First for Youth's pilot project in West Lothian set up specifically to support those with care experience and a youth housing forum operating in another local authority (not named) where social workers liaise with housing colleagues to discuss the needs of those with care experience. Suggestions were given for initiatives which could be rolled out further, such as Intensive Outreach Teams, projects such as those at Kibble that address housing and tenancy management, more structured step-down accommodation options between secure care, and independent living, peer mentoring services and group living options.

### **Improved planning, multi-agency working and systems**

Another common theme was the need for improved planning, robust systems and multi-agency working to ensure individualised pathways and adequate support are available to young people. Comments reflected the issues and considerations covered earlier in this report. A more joined-up approach between children's and adult services was also advocated by some, as was the need to listen to young people or ensure access to advocacy. Given young adults may have fewer connections with services than younger people, more assertive outreach approaches were sometimes suggested.

Q11. Are there any changes you would like to see as part of the eligibility criteria for Aftercare?

### **Extend eligibility criteria**

Two thirds of respondents answered Q11. Several respondents called for the eligibility criteria for Aftercare to be extended to other specific groups of young people, particularly those who had ceased being 'looked after' before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Suggested groups were similar to those in Q7 about Continuing Care, including children in certain types of kinship care and children who have been adopted.

"One potential change to the eligibility criteria for Aftercare would be expanding entitlement to include young people in kinship care, those who were adopted, or those whose care-experience status ended too early to be classified as care leavers. These groups often experience the same vulnerabilities as care leavers and may need similar support, but they fall through the gap under the current criteria. Providing greater entitlement to these young people could address the sense of unfairness they often feel when they return to services and are ineligible for the same support offered to care leavers. This could help ensure that all vulnerable young people receive the Aftercare services they need, regardless of their specific care status." – Dumfries & Galloway Council

### **More flexible or discretionary support**

Several respondents suggested there should be more flexibility in Aftercare provision, based on a case-by-case assessment of a young person's needs and discretion over the circumstances where Aftercare would be appropriate.

### **Remove the upper age limit for Aftercare**

Related to calls for greater flexibility, some respondents also called for the upper age limit for Aftercare to be removed. While a few respondents noted that it is already possible to provide discretionary Aftercare beyond 26, others called for a more formal extension beyond 26 to provide longer-term support. One individual noted that extending Aftercare beyond 26 was particularly necessary for disabled people with care experience whom they felt have trouble navigating the adult disability system without advocacy and support.

### **No change needed**

Some public bodies and social work organisations expressed the view that no change was needed. This was not in contrast to the above points, but rather because they suggested they already applied flexibility in their interpretation of the eligibility criteria, providing further assistance when it was needed until 26 and potentially beyond, based on individual need.

“No, support all young people already and any change would only act as a barrier as we would then be stigmatising some young people as opposed to others.” – Perth and Kinross Council

### **Calls for clarity and considering other groups**

As with Continuing Care, some respondents called for all people with care experience to be eligible for Aftercare and two respondents called for further consideration of those with mental health difficulties and neurodevelopmental needs.

“Aftercare should be available for all people with care experience and should be an option from people to return to, even if not taken up when initially leaving care. This continuity of care would ensure that people with care experience have sustained support and pathways to accessing services across the life-course.” – Public Health Scotland

### **Potential consequences of changing the eligibility criteria**

Some respondents highlighted the potential implications of changing the eligibility requirements, particularly on funding and resource allocation. Along with the consideration of resourcing, respondents cited effective implementation and the consistency of service provision across Scotland as factors to consider within any changes to eligibility requirements.

“Members also note the importance of ensuring that the current support to care leavers is consistent and right before looking at any extensions, the resource implications (financial and workforce) of extending the criteria, and the importance of discussion with adult services about how all those who may need additional support in adulthood are able to find that support through universal services.” - Social Work Scotland

A few organisations suggested that more funding was needed to assist those who receive discretionary Aftercare support. For example, Stirling Council noted that more resources would be needed to ensure all care experienced young people who have additional support needs receive the assistance they require.

Q12. What do you think the challenges would be in changing the eligibility criteria for Aftercare?

### **Funding**

Two thirds responded to Q12. A common theme highlighted by respondents on challenges with changing the eligibility criteria for Aftercare was around service funding and workforce capacity. Respondents noted that funding would need to increase to meet the likely additional demand.

“Both financial resources and our workforce are stretched to the limit already, and any extension to eligibility criteria could not be met without investment.” - Shetland Islands Council

A few others also noted that although eligibility criteria are necessary to manage the cost of providing support; criteria, limits, and thresholds can often be seen as barriers because they are perceived as too rigid, and can be off-putting to young people leaving care. Whilst not directly related to the challenges of changing the eligibility criteria, Who Cares? Scotland highlighted the importance of investing in services such as Aftercare, noting that the Independent Care Review’s “The Money Report” evidenced “the vast economic benefit of investing upstream in measures that prevented people from reaching crisis and requiring costly universal services such as homelessness accommodation, prison or mental health inpatient treatment at a later point”.

### **Workload and staffing**

Similarly, another common theme was highlighting workforce capacity concerns as a challenge when increasing service provision. Respondents were concerned by insufficient numbers of staff, as well as staff turnover, burn out and secondary trauma. Some noted that extending eligibility without additional staffing and funding allocations may compromise the quality of service provided to younger people in care and compete with other social care and social work workforce demands.

### **Clear guidance to ensure consistency**

The importance of having clear guidelines and collaboration across the Scottish Government, local authorities and supporting agencies was mentioned by some. Respondents were concerned about inconsistent approaches and confusion around responsibilities, particularly with Aftercare, between different children’s and adult services, as well as between different local authorities.

“Given there is limited guidance on it, it can be open to interpretation by different councils making it a postcode lottery about the services someone receives.” - East Lothian Council Children's Services

## Flexibility

Some respondents highlighted that an inflexible and overly rigid system could impact service provision, even if eligibility were to change. Depending on how future criteria are defined, some respondents noted that continuing to use eligibility criteria may limit the ability to provide a more person-centred approach for some young people with care experience.

“Our experience is that young people will float in and out of requiring support and need to know that the support is there no matter without criteria. We would need [to] ask a young person if they were compulsory supported or not and deem support at a different level because of that. We believe strongly that some young people will need more support than others because of their circumstances and that support should be based on need rather than as a result of criteria.” - Perth and Kinross Council

## Lifelong Support

Those with care experience may require access to advice and support at any age. The consultation acknowledges that the impact of care experience can be lifelong and asks how best to provide support for young people for as long as they require it.

Q13. What do you think would be the best way to provide long term support and services to adults with care experience?

## Specialist support

Three quarters of respondents answered Q13. A common theme was a recommendation for dedicated or specialist staff in each local authority area to be the main contact for adults with care experience who need more support. This suggestion was most common among individuals. Another suggestion was to create local authority hubs. Regardless of the mechanism of delivery, respondents thought there should be accessible, specialist services in each local authority to ensure people who need support know where to go. One individual suggested a regularly updated website with contacts and resources, and Dumfries and Galloway Council also recommended web-based resources with guidance and links to available support.

## Improve transition to adulthood

Several respondents provided different suggestions which would improve the transition to adulthood, providing young people with care experience a stable and solid footing. A few recommended an earlier start to transitions, such as providing support before moving into independent accommodation.

“Support should begin from 15/16 years of age so it’s a consistent approach and not just a new professional being added in once they reach adulthood. Consult with care experienced young people (14 years up) and ask what they think it should look like rather than just the adult view.” – Aberdeen City Council

Others noted the importance of understanding each individual's needs earlier in the transition process. A small number of local authorities stressed the value of maintaining relationships, as many of their support workers provide informal assistance once Aftercare has ended, although there were no clear statements as to whether those relationships needed to be formalised.

Policies or protocols which enable adult services to enquire and understand whether the person they are assisting has care experience was mentioned by several respondents. Collecting this information when adults register for support would help the agency involved to signpost recipients to services and supports best suited to meet their needs.

A small number of respondents also mentioned support for those leaving care to access education, apprenticeships or employment if needed, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

### **Trauma support**

Continued access to support for mental health was recommended by several respondents. They noted that many young people faced traumatic experiences in their childhood and would need continued assistance. Some did not specify whether tailored support was needed. However, others thought that counselling should be targeted to help young people overcome trauma or specific experiences related to their childhood in care.

“Counselling to address childhood trauma and not just see it as regular counselling.” – Individual

Others emphasised that the services provided to people with care experience should all be trauma-informed. Further recommendations were made to set up hubs, programmes and spaces that are trauma-informed, catering to the specific needs of people with care experience. An individual respondent recommended something akin to an adult branch of Who Cares? Scotland to “provide support, opportunities and training in a trauma-informed way”.

### **Awareness and challenging the stigma of care experience**

Several respondents felt that anyone who works in public services and interacts with people with care experience should challenge any cultural stigma around the care system by raising awareness of care experience. Who Cares? Scotland suggested this be extended to a public education campaign. Aberlour also recommended that young people and adults receive clearer guidance on their rights to access their care history and associated records to “help them understand their childhood and key decisions that have been made on their behalf”.

### **Multi-agency working**

As mentioned at Q1, some reiterated the importance of multi-agency collaboration during the transition to independent living. A few also suggested that people with care experience should have lifelong access to advocacy services when they need them.

Q14. What do you think the challenges would be in providing support and services to adults with care experience?

### **Resource constraints**

Just over two thirds of respondents answered Q14. The most frequently identified challenge was the need for greater funding. Respondents noted that local authority budgets are limited and often ringfenced for specific services. In order to extend support, funding for support and services for adults with care experience would need to be provided.

Some others noted that without proper resourcing and capacity within services, adults with care experience may not receive the support they need. Service cut-offs or incorrect types of support could be detrimental.

“Our staff teams shared concerns about the time available to support people versus the complexity of the cases. The third sector often supports people with complex trauma and mental health needs who find it almost impossible to access treatment and counselling. Or if people get a handful of counselling sessions it’s just enough to bring everything up to the surface but not to help them manage that long-term, as one staff member put it: ‘Enough time to break all the eggs without getting anywhere close to making the omelette’.” - Cyrenians

A few respondents noted that capacity within local authority departments was limited. They mentioned that contacting adults who have been out of care for several years could be difficult and require even more staff to prevent a negative impact on working conditions and staff experiencing burnout. CELCIS suggested that improved financial resourcing and expanding workforce capacity would require a commitment at the local and national levels.

### **Staff training**

The need for staff to receive trauma training and upskilling to ensure they can meet their clients’ needs was mentioned by several respondents. Respondent emphasised the importance of trauma-informed training to assist professionals working with adults with care experience. COSLA reiterated that in order to fully support young people with care experience, “a fully resourced, trained and supported workforce is required.”

### **Stigma**

Some respondents suggested that stigma around care experience could affect the take up of services.

“Embarrassment and fear of being judged by society. Society, on the whole, is quite happy to bury its head in the sand and ignore care experienced people or judge them for their actions rather than their past. Persuading society that this is something worth investing in has been, and will continue to be a challenge.” – Individual

## **Hesitancy to re-engage**

A hesitancy to re-engage with social work was a challenge noted by some organisations and a few individuals. They thought that this may make connecting with adults more challenging, especially re-engaging with people who prefer not to be contacted either due to past negative experiences of the care system or who do not wish to be defined by their care experience. Local authorities particularly noted that peoples' experiences of care are not singular, and consideration needs to be given to how the person feels they were treated. East Lothian Council Children's Services highlighted that people may not want support, which raises a further challenge to engagement.

"In delivering aftercare support we intend to offer a 'no wrong door approach', but when adults don't feel comfortable opening any door, this is obviously made more difficult." – Stirling Council

## **Suggestions and recommendations**

Some respondents provided recommendations to assist in the design of services which could provide support to adults with care experience. A few recommended speaking with people with lived experience, consulting on what services they need and how best to work with them. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration endorsed this approach.

CELCIS recommended taking a "no wrong door" approach. This would include multidisciplinary teams; an approach also endorsed by another organisation. Aberdeen City Council recommended a lifelong link worker service and adjusting language of the eligibility criteria to remove mentions to age, such as 'at 16' and 'at 18' and make it more compatible with relational practice. Parenting across Scotland called for funding for organisations that already provide support to adults with care experience who are experiencing homelessness, substance use, mental health problems and offending, such as Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs and Families Outside.

## 4. Support for specific groups of people leaving care

This chapter presents an analysis of responses to questions on support to help enable transitions which lead to the best possible outcomes for specific groups of young people. The questions consider the following groups:

- Q15 and Q16 ask about support for young people leaving secure care.
- Q17 and Q18 cover support for young people leaving Scotland's Young Offender Institutions or prisons.
- Suggestions for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who have left care are examined in Q19 and Q20.
- Support for disabled young people is studied in Q21 and Q22.
- Finally, Q23-Q25 ask about support for young people who have left care as parents.

### Support for young people leaving secure care

The following questions ask about the support for young people leaving secure care. The consultation notes that transitioning from a secure environment should be facilitated with understanding, care and planning, and notes that The Promise recommends those leaving secure care must retain social work support.

Q15. What improvements do you think could be made to the support given to those leaving secure care?

#### More information

Three fifths of respondents left a comment at Q15. A common theme was that more information would improve the support given to those leaving secure care. This included signposting to services such as mental health assistance, trauma and grief counselling, mentoring groups, homelessness assistance, supporting family relationships and substance abuse support; and access to practical information about managing daily life, such as budgeting, how to use public transportation, accessing education, and general local information.

“In addition to these material and practical needs, like all children, care experienced children need care, love and trusting relationships in their lives. They need educational opportunities and connections within their communities that allow them to reach their full potential. Providing these supports for their emotional wellbeing is just as important as supporting material and practical needs.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection



## **Gradual transition**

Another common theme was the suggestion that transitions from secure care should happen at a pace suited to each young person, emphasising the importance of a stepped or gradual transition. Respondents suggested that a gradual transition would provide time and space for a young person to feel more comfortable living independently and allow them to acclimatise to new communities and surroundings.

“A step-by-step process where support is gradually reduced, an initial move into supported accommodation with a warden and where support is onsite and can gradually be reduced as independence is gained, before moving out into independent accommodation.” – Individual

Respondents also noted the need for a staged approach to care planning. A common theme was the importance of all services being notified of any changes in an individual’s needs. They argued this time was required to assess the next best steps and ensure support is in place to enable the young person to maintain connections or develop new relationships. East Lothian Council Children’s Services also suggested that planning and moving at a suitable pace would give young people time to become more acquainted with their new independence to ensure they are successful in their next move.

## **Consistency over time**

The importance of maintaining relationships with key workers, therapists or trusted adults was mentioned by several respondents. They noted that consistent relationships would help a young person transition out of secure care. A few local authorities gave the example of retaining access to mental health support through CAMHS rather than moving immediately to any waitlist for adult services. This was also reflected as a concern in engagement events.

## **Improve standards and regulations**

Some respondents mentioned that secure care standards and pathways needed to be followed to improve the support currently provided. This included a recommendation by the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration to expand the definition of secure accommodation, recognising that mental health wards for children and young people can act in the same way as a secure accommodation. They stated that support is not currently provided to children on discharge from a hospital in the same way that it would be provided to children leaving secure accommodation.

## **Recurring themes**

Respondents reiterated the need for multi-agency working and person-centred, flexible care, which are both discussed in more detail at Q1 in Chapter 1 and throughout the report.

Q16. How do we ensure all young people in Scotland get equal access to the support services they need during the transition from and after leaving secure care?

## **Nationally-led principals, protocols and legislation**

Just under three fifths of respondents provided a response to Q16. A common theme was a recommendation to establish national standards and protocols to ensure all young people in Scotland get equal access to the support and services they need during their transition from secure care.

While some respondents spoke generally about the benefit of national protocols, some suggested specific models to follow. Some respondents, including CELCIS, recommended legislative change to allow young people remaining in secure care to access Continuing Care.

Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership suggested a set of standards for young people in secure care and, more broadly, for those in Young Offender Institutions, regardless of whether they are in the care system, to provide them with intensive support and services. Aberdeen City Council recommended implementing the community-based hub models described in Reimagining Secure Care, a project by the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice. Others suggested providing safe accommodation after leaving secure care, although they did not provide further details.

## **Consistency**

Reasserting the importance of nationally-led programmes, several respondents emphasised the importance of consistency of service and support across Scotland. A few respondents specifically highlighted the Highlands and Islands as having limited services or requiring recipients to travel for specific support. Dumfries and Galloway Council also recommended ensuring transitional units and services are equally available throughout Scotland, as should intensive community support teams, to ensure a smoother transition from secure care into local communities.

## **Improve care planning and assessments**

Several other respondents suggested that creating clear care or pathway plans would help to ensure needs are met. Respondents noted the importance of including staff within the secure care setting, and those who are community-based, in care planning. A few also suggested that the young person be included.

“By automatically being entitled to aftercare support this should ensure young people are then given an allocated worker, a pathways plan and reviews to ensure their needs are being met. This would have to be in conjunction with removing the discretionary element of entitlement for after care support otherwise the support will only last until they are 19 and then have to be assessed for eligible needs from there. This could be the point that many young people will fall off the cliff edge.” - Individual

## **Multi-agency approach**

The importance of multi-agency collaboration was noted by several respondents. Along with the benefits of the multi-agency approach discussed in more depth at Q1, these respondents felt it was particularly important to ensure that secure care workers connect with community workers, even when it required coordination across local authorities.

## Increased resources

Some suggested further investment, particularly in transitional, intermediate, or community supportive care, to ensure that those leaving secure care receive the support which meets their needs.

## Early intervention

Early intervention, alongside access to support during transitions, was mentioned by a small number of respondents. One suggested this would help ensure the transition process was not too overwhelming, while Cyrenians mentioned that they “believe there are a lot of missed opportunities for preventative work with children and families before they enter secure care.”

“The team around the child requires to support the young person from the earliest opportunity and then throughout their journey in secure care. This should then follow on as the young person transitions and leaves.” - South Lanarkshire Council

## Support when leaving Young Offender Institutions and prisons

The consultation paper notes that young people can face obstacles when they leave prison, which can impact their ability to adjust to the next stage of their lives. The Scottish Government has committed to no longer placing people under the age of 18 in Young Offender Institutions and all young people under 18 were removed from institutions by 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024. However, it is important that all young adults with care experience who are in prison, or other secure accommodation, have the right support and relationships in place when they leave.

Q17. What improvements could be made to the support given to people with care experience at the transition point from leaving young offenders institutions or prison?

## Daily living support

Two thirds of respondents answered Q17. A common theme across responses was suggestions for more support to meet the broad range of needs among young people transitioning from Young Offender Institutions or prisons. This included more assistance for accommodation; support to access education, training, voluntary roles or employment and support within communities. Other types of support mentioned included mental health provision, financial or budgeting education, and assistance in maintaining relationships and avoiding social isolation. Public Health Scotland highlighted that this support should come from local and national services and be maximised for young people with care experience leaving Young Offender Institutions or prisons.

Another common theme was the emphasis of the importance of daily living support laid out in clear transition plans. In these comments, respondents suggested that actions be taken on behalf of the young person, such as planning for accommodation and benefits, but also alongside them and within any pre-existing Child’s Plan to ensure continuity of care.

Some respondents noted that they felt effective support can reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

“We look to ensure young people are supported in the initial stages, supported to access longer term finance and/or training and employability, in order to help young people feel purposeful and reduce the risk of re-offending.” – Stirling Council

Preparing young people to leave secure facilities and providing them with training in daily living skills was also mentioned as important at the engagement event with Inside Out.

### **Promote and maintain key relationships**

Several respondents mentioned the importance of key relationships in overcoming barriers to reintegration. Respondents noted that social workers, support workers, carers and families should try and maintain relationships during custody, as it may help when a young person returns back to the community. Others recommended mentoring services as a way to introduce young people to those who have had similar experiences.

### **Working with the young person to plan**

Including young people in the development of their transition plans, to ensure that they have some knowledge and skills when they leave Young Offender Institutions or prisons, was mentioned by some respondents. This included making young people aware of welfare entitlements and support from agencies such as Skills Development Scotland. Others mentioned support to register with GPs, mental health services, dentists and pharmacies. Respondents noted that this would not only provide young people with knowledge of systems outside of secure institutions but also begin to get them established within a community.

“It may be that young people in custodial settings have more difficulty in developing any future vision of self. This should be the starting point. Developing this vision may take some time.” - Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

Some respondents also recommended planning take place as early as possible. West Lothian Council noted that “At the point of remand, young people are highlighted to Youth Justice where there is liaison with Institutions regarding care, risk, need and background assessments. This allows for appropriate information sharing, planning and supports to be in place post-release.”

Attendees at the engagement event with Inside Out gave examples of being told they were living in unsuitable accommodation, such as a hotel without access to laundry or kitchen facilities, or that they did not have a plan upon leaving secure facilities. Attendees also noted that they may be required to stay in unsuitable housing as a part of their license conditions, which may create a risk that they breach their conditions in order to find suitable housing, such as with family, and subsequently be returned to secure facilities.

## **Work with secure care accommodation**

Several respondents emphasised that young people with care experience who enter Young Offender Institutions do not stop being care experienced. They suggested that social workers and those responsible for the young person's care should work with staff in insecure accommodation to ensure that their care experience is registered and the right supports are provided. Who Cares? Scotland mentioned they have "supported some cases where the Continuing Care or Aftercare team have continued to hold pathways meetings for the young person, stay connected with them throughout short sentences, and ensure they have a high level of support on leaving YOIs or prison". They highlight they have heard anecdotally that, in some cases, this helped to stop reoffending.

## **Legislative changes**

Providing compulsory Aftercare to young people leaving Young Offender Institutions or prisons was mentioned by some respondents. Who Cares? Scotland described different regional approaches to how this is addressed, and recommended a national strategy, an idea supported by others.

Q18. How do we ensure all young people get access to the same support services when they are leaving young offenders institutions or prison, regardless of where they are located in Scotland?

## **National guidelines and standards**

Two thirds of respondents provided a response at Q18. A common theme was a recommendation for the establishment of national guidelines and standards for the aftercare of young people leaving Young Offender Institutions or prisons. Respondents reiterated responses provided in Q17, noting that this group deserve access to the care available for all care experienced young people.

"While the lives of care experienced young people may be disrupted by custody, the principles of continuing care continue to apply and should inform and underpin all forms of post-release support. Although written for a regulated care setting, the Care Inspectorate Guidance for services on the provision of continuing care, throughcare, and aftercare." - Care Inspectorate

## **Improved collaboration**

Several respondents called for improved collaboration between the agencies involved in a young person's care, both within the justice system and the care system, and across the public and third sectors. Inclusion of the care teams from the local authorities that become home to the young person was also mentioned by a few.

“This needs to be developed alongside service provisions within local authority social work departments. It could be that there is need for an additional transitional role between children’s services / criminal justice / mental health / community social work – which takes elements across all disciplines for young people (where relevant) and can work accordingly. Or each current social work discipline is enhanced by specific training in relation to transition and overlap between the different social work specialisations.” - Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

A few others also suggested the inclusion of support linked to community resources during time in custody, as described in responses to Q17.

### **Resourcing**

A need for more funding to adequately resource support was mentioned by some respondents, who noted that implementing improvements will only be possible with more resources.

### **Rural area concerns**

Some respondents reiterated their support for national protocols and resourcing to address geographical issues in service delivery, particularly in rural parts of Scotland. A few shared general comments about the importance of equal provision, however, their comments did not provide specific details about what should be addressed.

### **Care plans and assessments**

A few respondents reiterated comments made at Q17 about the importance of working with young people in a person-centred way to plan their next steps, particularly around the practical aspects of community integration.

## **Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People leaving care**

This section asks about the services and support for unaccompanied children and young people who have sought asylum in Scotland and who are ‘looked after’ under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The consultation paper notes that children and young people who arrive as unaccompanied asylum seekers have fewer connections to social services, and may have additional mental and physical health needs due to their experiences before arriving in Scotland.

Q19. Can you share details of any services that are already working well to support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people transitioning out of care?

### **The wider public sector**

Just under half of all respondents provided a response to Q19. Several respondents gave examples of existing support that they believe work well. These included local authority Transition teams, Throughcare and Aftercare Teams, social workers and youth workers, and national services including the Scottish Guardianship Service. A few mentioned CAMHS services and police training in cultural awareness. Some local authorities

described the value of initiatives such as free bus passes. Other examples of good practice mentioned by respondents included:

- West Lothian Council, where they incorporated support for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people into a workstream which reports to the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group. They also hold networking events for staff to hear national updates, such as demographic data and practice changes, from organisations like the Scottish Refugee Council.
- East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities have extended services to provide English lessons for speakers of other languages.
- Aberdeen City Council have commissioned Action for Children locally to provide aftercare support services.
- East Lothian Council provides welcome packs with information about public services, travel and education. They also provide headphones and relaxation packs, and there are community quilters who provide patchwork quilts. Information is translated into a child or young person's first language.
- Dumfries and Galloway mentioned using peer support networks to help newly arrived young people integrate into the community and assist with any challenges.

A few respondents described successful partnerships with third sector organisations and community groups. For example, Highland Council works alongside Barnardo's and Aberlour to support young people with their transition into adulthood, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership works alongside Student Accommodation and a host family scheme to move young people out of Supported Accommodation if appropriate, once they have started education, and East Lothian Council Children's Services mentioned good communication with Aberlour Guardianship services to help progress asylum applications and ensure that young people's views are considered.

"In some local authorities, e.g. Highland, a coalition of third sector partners (Comraich Service) offer support at every stage. This model is one way to ensure continuity of care and connection for young people. The people who support them work closely together and can ensure that additional needs and abilities are recognised and brought into a holistic care plan that makes the transition smoother to navigate." – Who Cares? Scotland

Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership also mentioned that Council Tax exemption until young people turn 26 is available, which helps young people transition out of care.

### **Third sector services**

Support delivered by third sector organisations was mentioned by several respondents. Some mentioned an organisation without explaining what services they offer; others provided more detail. Examples included:

- My Place: support where unaccompanied asylum seeking young people can share a flat with a peer mentor who is Scottish.
- The Rock Trust: support to settle unaccompanied asylum seeking young people into their new homes upon transitioning out of care.

- Action for Children’s summer programme to allow young people to learn new skills.
- Cyrenians’ team of skilled key workers who provide support to asylum seeking young people.
- Yahya’s Hub
- Children and families across borders' (CFAB)
- Barnardo’s
- Project Esperanza
- Aberdeen Foyer
- Blue Triangle

Others commented that unaccompanied asylum seeking young people receive access to community support, including faith-based resources.

“The Drawing Together Project research showed that local peer and faith-based community of origin groups are essential to the wellbeing of young refugees. The role of these groups should be promoted in policy, and their long-term funding sustained by Scottish Government, as recommended by research on the implementation of the New Scots Refugee Integration strategy.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

Operating outside of Scotland, the work of the Allies Project was noted for its work to assist asylum seeking young people with their mental wellbeing and help to combat social isolation and support resilience.

Q20. What supports and/or improvements do you think could be implemented to ensure we meet the particular needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people transitioning out of care in Scotland?

### **Community support**

Just over half of the consultation respondents answered Q20. A common theme was that community support should be improved or implemented to meet the needs of young people. This included general comments around support to address social isolation and specific suggestions, such as cooking and cultural classes to preserve connections with young people’s countries of origin. Access to peer support and faith-based communities was mentioned by CELCIS as a consideration.

A few respondents recommended community support to help young people with important practical matters such as GP registration, benefits or job applications and paying bills.

Access to sports activities and community activities so they feel included, link in with local mosques, developing support networks for them as they often have no-one to turn to.”  
East Lothian Council Children's Services

Several others noted the need to have information translated to ensure it is accessible for all.



## **Access to education**

Access to education and language training courses was mentioned by several respondents. Some mentioned provision of access to English language classes and others suggested partnerships with colleges, or assistance and pathways to university entrance. A few suggested that access to English courses and further or higher education would allow these young people access to secure jobs and avoid exploitation.

## **Emotional and mental wellbeing support**

Support to address trauma, such as that experienced due to separation from family, experiences of conflict situations or displacement from home; or due to other mental health and emotional wellbeing needs, was recommended by several respondents. Aberdeen City Council noted that provision needed to be improved in parts of Scotland.

“There is no specialist NHS Mental Health in the North East to support UASYP’s who have experience of complex trauma.” Aberdeen City Council

## **Trauma-informed workforce**

As highlighted throughout this analysis, trauma-informed training for staff was mentioned by several respondents. In addition to the comments already made, respondents thought it was important for staff to understand the cultural, emotional and practical challenges faced by this group of young people. A few others also suggested that staff should receive some cultural awareness training.

## **Improve housing issues**

A shortage of appropriate housing was mentioned by some. Respondents suggested increasing access to suitable housing in places where young people transitioning out of care want to live, particularly in urban areas near universities and work opportunities. This was also reflected in engagement events, such as the Staf Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training Meeting, where the experiences of young people from Afghanistan wanting to move to Glasgow to be close to mosques, cafes and established communities was mentioned. Attendees at the engagement event for practitioners facilitated by CELCIS described how young people felt welcomed into urban communities and the positive impact that finding a supportive environment has on these young people.

## **Care planning**

As with other groups of young people with care experience, improvements to care planning was mentioned by some. Respondents noted that establishing pathways and assessments should involve collaboration from different stakeholders, including Home Office Asylum Support, local third sector organisations, immigration advisors and local authorities, as immigration legislation needs to be considered when planning for the future.

“A young person who has exhausted all appeal rights could be at risk of destitution and homelessness and therefore planning must include establishing a pathway that supports them to avoid this. This could include signposting them to appropriate immigration advice, 3rd sector support, support into employment if they have permission to work or exploring voluntary return to their country of origin.” – Public Health Scotland

A few also recommended including advocacy organisations with language skills and specialist training to assist with transition planning.

### **Funding and resourcing**

Some organisational respondents noted that funding for programmes, accommodation and support work for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children leaving care was too low. They advocated for increased government funding to support this area of work.

### **Support leave to remain status**

Access to assistance to progress a young person's leave to remain application was mentioned by some. Respondents noted that without leave to remain, young people are unable to access benefits and stressed that the slow process can leave people transitioning from care in a state of uncertainty. These respondents felt that resources should be provided to assist with the legal aspects of the application.

“Take a proactive and informed role in supporting looked after children and care leavers through any immigration applications and appeals. Enable those who are eligible to apply for permanent status and British citizenship.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

### **Support for disabled young people leaving care**

Some young people transitioning from care will also be disabled. To ensure they have what they need for a positive and supported experience, their needs and requirements when transitioning to adult services need to be considered. This section considers specific services and support, such as issues related to guardianship, accommodation, and social and healthcare needs.

Q21. Can you tell us about any specific services or supports that already work well for disabled young people or people with complex health needs leaving care?

### **Multi-agency collaboration**

Two fifths of respondents answered Q21. Whilst not a specific example of services and support, several respondents emphasised the importance of multi-agency working, particularly between children's disability services and adult social work teams. While some spoke highly of the collaboration between these services, others called for better partnership working to ensure the needs of disabled young people leaving care are met.

“We have worked to develop transitions guidance through close working relationships with adult care services and via regular care planning we utilise these relationships to identify support before they are ready to move on. Regular meetings are held to discuss children's care plans and to identify any challenges in moving on into adult services. There needs to be open and honest transparency in the difference in services provided by children's vs adult services in order to manage the expectations of parents and/or carers.” – Stirling Council

## **Public sector support**

Some respondents shared examples of public sector support and services including:

- North Ayrshire's Transition Planning Group (TPG), a multi-agency forum that supports the transition journey for disabled young people from 14 to 18 years of age.
- Multiple councils described the work of their children's disability service teams, a social work service for children affected by disability and their families or carers.
- East Lothian offers a Community Learning Disability Nursing Team.
- Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living
- Project SEARCH, a partnership programme working in different councils with private and third sector partners to provide employment and learning opportunities for disabled young people.

## **Third sector services**

Third sector organisations which provide specialist support for young people leaving care who are disabled were also mentioned. Some respondents described the work of these services; others just listed names. These included:

- The Association for Real Change (ARC)
- Aberlour
- Scottish Autism Society
- Enable
- Sight Scotland
- Visualise
- Bridges Project
- Action for Children
- Shared Lives supports young people with disabilities in transitioning from foster care to Shared Lives, along with their carer, by providing accommodation, further support, and a network of other people with lived experience.
- In East Lothian, examples included Can Do, Beyond boundaries 16+, base camp in Prestonpans, Pennypit Special Needs Youth Group, STAND, Star Youth Club, Venturing Out and Zap group
- Glasgow Disability Alliance is working with Inclusion Scotland to learn about the specialist support provided by agencies for disabled young people leaving care.
- Barnardo's Scotland runs a residential unit with placement of up to three years for children and young people aged between 16 to 21 with learning disabilities and autism called Caern Pentland Way.

## **Knowledge of services and support**

Some individual respondents were unaware of the availability of any specific support or services for disabled young people transitioning from care. They highlighted the

importance of developing standardised, comprehensive services to ensure disabled young people and those with complex health needs have their needs met during this time.

### **Transitions Frameworks**

Two local authorities mentioned their use of [The Principles of Good Transitions](#), a framework developed by The Association for Real Change (ARC), to guide the transition planning for disabled young people or young people with complex needs.

Q22. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure disabled young people leaving care have the support they need when they make the transition into adulthood?

### **Resourcing**

Three fifths of respondents provided an answer to Q22. Several respondents highlighted the need for greater resourcing to improve support and services for disabled young people leaving care. Respondents noted that limited resources can affect the type of advice and support that agencies and key workers offer and, in some cases, young people are referred to services and support that they cannot access.

“High demand for services is a significant barrier to young people receiving the right help at the right time. A lack of a range of services meant that, despite staff promoting choice via self-directed support, young people were limited in which services could support them. Specialised supports required were not always available in the young person’s local area. This often led to poor connections between young people and their family supports.” - Care Inspectorate

Resourcing for local services in rural areas was mentioned by some respondents, who explained that this meant young disabled people leaving care needed to move far from their existing networks and family to access support.

### **Collaboration during the transition**

Several respondents described the importance of collaborative working between agencies, particularly in child and adult social care. Ensuring that teams are connected during transitions, with the young person directed to the most appropriate adult care service was mentioned. For example, West Lothian Council highlighted that if a disabled young person leaving care moves to a new area, they may lose access to their whole professional team. They suggested that the new team become involved earlier to support the transition. Other organisations spoke specifically of Adult Disability teams fostering stronger collaboration with local authorities. A single respondent also emphasised the importance of parents and carers working with services during the transition and attending meetings.

“Use the learning from the Principles into Practice pilot sites and consider how this can be rolled out. This needs to be a joint health, children's and adult piece of work. Consider the work already underway through the Transitions Strategy - and ensure joined-up policy and practice.” – Social Work Scotland

## **Transition plan**

The requirement for a clear and integrated transition plan was mentioned by several respondents as a way to ensure young people's needs are met during the transition process. Within these comments, some emphasised the importance of person-centred care and support and how the individual needs of the young person need to be considered thoroughly when designing any transition plan. Respondents noted that planning for young disabled people leaving care might be more complicated and time-intensive. Suggestions on how to make the process more streamlined included progressing guardianships and having a single key worker or transition coordinator.

## **Better signposting**

Some respondents emphasised the importance of providing accessible and clear information for young people, family members and carers as they navigate transitions within and from services. Some called for independent advocacy to be provided, arguing this would reduce any confusion caused by contrasting information provided by different groups.

## **Accommodation**

Ensuring that accommodation meets young people's needs and that accommodation is located in the same Health Board area as the home they are leaving was mentioned by some. Respondents suggested improving access to housing and resources for young people leaving care who may need longer-term support.

## **More inclusive services**

A small number of respondents mentioned the importance of improving access to all types of resources available to young people leaving care. One individual suggested ensuring resources considered the needs of those with invisible disabilities. Another noted that some recreation spaces for those with care experience have physical and social barriers for some disabled young people.

## **Support for people leaving care who are parents**

This section looks at the experiences of people with care experience who are parents or about to become parents. Parents with care experience may face stigma at the early stages of their parenting journey and perceived structural discrimination can compound the challenges that some parents may face as a consequence of their experience of care.

Q23. What improvements can you suggest in the support provided to young people with care experience as they prepare to give birth or become parents?

## **Individualised support and assistance with stigma and discrimination**

Half of the consultation respondents answered Q23. Several respondents reiterated comments about the need for flexible and person-centred care that meets the unique needs of each young person. Respondents often mentioned that young people with care experience preparing to become parents might face institutional and social stigma and discrimination, and individualised support to assist with this was needed. Respondents suggested that 'booking-in' questions at a Midwife or Family Nurse appointment be more

considerate of the experiences of those with care experience, and that care provided considers the trauma individuals may face going through the pregnancy, birthing and early parenting stages.

Aberdeen City Council noted that often young people with care experience becoming parents feared their child could be taken from them. More time for midwives, health visitors and family nurses to understand the experiences of care experienced parents and to explain procedures could help alleviate this fear. Who Cares? Scotland believed that the 'Best Start: five-year plan for maternity and neonatal care' must be amended to recognise parents with care experience, to promote a greater understanding of care experience and how additional support may be offered.

“Develop a more compassionate approach to supporting care-experienced young parents, considering their unique vulnerabilities and needs.” - Dumfries & Galloway Council

Shared Lives also noted that their services were only occasionally used in perinatal care throughout Scotland, but had the potential to grow.

### **Specialised or extended perinatal support**

Some respondents called for improvements to perinatal support for young people with care experience as they prepare to give birth or become parents. Suggested improvements included specialised support for those with care experience, more antenatal and perinatal classes, greater perinatal mental health support and engaging a team of midwives or health visitors with lived experience. Others suggested peer-led or mentoring schemes as a way to provide targeted and trusted support.

Some respondents argued that services need more resources to enable them to provide more time to help young people leaving care who are parents. Attendees at the engagement event for practitioners held by CELCIS noted that while there was some support for mothers, there were few programmes for young fathers with care experience.

### **Continuity of care**

Several respondents stressed the need for consistent support for young people with care experience who are preparing to give birth or become a parent. Some suggested that there should be a key worker or known person who provides continuity of care throughout the process, emphasising the need for sensitive and non-judgemental support for parents with experience of care.

### **Trauma-informed training**

The importance of providing staff training on care experience and working in a trauma-informed way was mentioned by some respondents. This is covered in more depth in the analysis of responses to Q24.

### **Financial assistance and grants**

Some respondents emphasised the financial needs of young people with care experience who become parents. They called for assistance to replicate the support that new parents may receive from family, such as access to childcare, financial support for respite or a

cleaner, Best Start Grants and Best Start Food Grants, help with transportation, and funds for baby supplies and clothing.

### **Less mentioned themes**

A small number of respondents mentioned the following themes, listed here from most to least mentioned:

- Skills training; spanning general parenting skills, financial literacy and budgeting, sexual health, and relationships.
- Accommodation appropriate for the parent and family, including greater choice and a higher standard of housing offered.
- Further research about parents' experiences, particularly understanding how often children are removed from parents with care experience.

“Further research must take place to understand the frequency of children being removed from Care Experienced parents in Scotland, as has been undertaken by researchers in Wales. This should build on the recent ‘Born into care in Scotland’ study commissioned by the Scottish Government, to understand the scale of the issue and if systemic discrimination is taking place.” – Who Cares? Scotland

### **Good practice**

Parenting across Scotland provided an example of a service that works well to provide relationship-based support to parents with care experience.

“One good example of a relationship-based support network is ‘The Village’ which was created following the learning from the Parent and Child group at The Why Not? Trust. ‘The Village’ is an online community for new parents and parents to be with experience of care and acts as a place to get information, access resources and reach out to others. The community was built in response to parents of care experience stating they often felt stigma or judgement when reaching out for help.” – Parenting across Scotland

Q24. How can the workforce be better supported to help care experienced people as they become parents?

### **Trauma-informed training**

Less than half of respondents answered Q24. A common theme was the importance of training in trauma-informed approaches, to support the workforce to provide the assistance needed by people with care experience as they become parents. These respondents suggested trauma-informed training resources within the public sector would help practitioners understand issues with trust, and the fear and stress involved with becoming a parent. Training for antenatal care staff would enhance their capacity to provide compassionate and reflective care to support new parents with attachment and nurturing approaches if needed. It would also help ensure antenatal care staff use non-stigmatising language and be non-judgemental.

“Teach them that care doesn't mean criminal. Just because a young person was in care that doesn't mean they are a criminal.” - Individual

### **Specialist support**

Some respondents reiterated the importance of providing specialist care, either from specialist providers such as those with lived experience, or through spending more time and resources on care experienced individuals becoming parents.

Others noted the importance of considering the baby's wellbeing and balancing any risks for the child with support for the parents. Suggestions to assist staff included separating the care for child and parents between different staff members.

“It is difficult to balance the risks for children with the support for the parents. If the risks are too high, then involvement in child protection procedures can become difficult especially if the care experienced young parents have had a negative experience of care themselves. The balance of needs can be helped by having clear expectations. Support staff for the parents separate to the child, having an understanding of their communication needs to ensure that they understand what is being said and ensuring that any barriers are removed from seeking support.” - Perth and Kinross Council

### **Collaboration**

As highlighted in other questions, a small number of respondents spoke about the importance of moving away from siloed working to benefit care experienced young people and any staff who support them. Respondents also suggested they learn from one another and that agencies pass on relevant information to any new carers support teams.

“Use and role of genograms and understanding of family scripting and cyclical vulnerabilities.” - Aberdeen City Council

Q25. How can children's and adults' services better work together to provide whole family support for parents who are care experienced?

### **Clear communication**

Just under half of the consultation respondents answered Q25. Some respondents highlighted that clear and consistent communication is needed to ensure that children's and adult services work better together on behalf of parents with care experience. Respondents emphasised the importance of systems working together, including creating a clear plan and meeting regularly as a team to ensure all staff members know their role in supporting a young person with care experience, and their child.



“Establish regular communication channels between children’s and adults’ services to share information and updates on the families they support. Maintain appropriate information-sharing processes and protocols that facilitate collaboration while protecting confidentiality. Implement feedback mechanisms that allow families to share their experiences and suggest improvements in service coordination.” - Dumfries & Galloway Council

The need for clear guidance around working together so that roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, and services understanding how they can complement one another was stressed.

### **Flexible, family-led planning**

Some respondents recommended that young people be included in all care planning to ensure children’s and adults’ services have the same information and plan when considering the needs of each family. Other respondents referred to the importance of a ‘whole family approach’ and providing ‘whole family wellbeing support’. A few mentioned the benefit of integrated service models to create a joined-up approach to supporting families as a whole.

“In the absence of a community-based social work model, which would be ideal, children’s and adult’s services need to have flexible criteria, ensuring that the service most appropriate to the young person’s needs offers the right support at the right time, e.g., where there is an existing relationship in children’s services, this should be used to bridge the young person into adult services with joint visits and meetings where appropriate for as long as is needed.” - Scottish Association of Social Work

CELCIS suggested that there be a “Corporate Grandparenting” role much like the Scottish system of Corporate Parenting.

“This would support organisations across children and adult services to work together to address the needs of both care experienced parent and baby with adequate housing, financial support, social isolation, access to childcare and mental health support.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

### **Integrated systems and processes**

The importance of compatible data systems was mentioned by a few respondents. They noted that adult and children’s services often have different processes, recording systems and eligibility criteria, which are difficult to merge. One respondent urged standardisation between systems to ensure young people and families with care experience receive the support they need.

## **Other themes**

Two or fewer respondents mentioned the following themes:

- Shetland Islands Council and South Lanarkshire Council called for support services to help ensure positive outcomes for the family in the longer term. This included assistance with parenting in the early years and financial assistance.
- Parenting across Scotland advocated for the use of a hub model, centring the support needed by parents into one location and providing a known place for parents to receive support and advice. This point was also reflected in notes from engagement events.
- The British Psychological Society noted the importance of promoting the establishment of relationships between young parents with care experience and their children and understanding how potential restrictions around access between the parent and child can impact on parents' mental health.
- One individual recommended providing support groups in community spaces.

## 5. Forms of support for moving into adulthood

This chapter looks at support for young people transitioning into adulthood. It includes analyses of responses on peer support, out-of-hours advice and assistance, health and wellbeing, and housing. It also presents an analysis of responses to questions on pathways into further and higher education, and employment.

### Peer support and maintaining lifelong links

The importance of safe, loving and respectful relationships, fuelled by maintained connections with carers when appropriate, was highlighted by the Independent Care Review. The review emphasised that these continued connections are about nurturing relationships rather than professionalising the process. Peer support can work alongside other relationships, such as carer relationships or the care provided by corporate parents, and can offer a sense of belonging and community to a young person or caregiver.

Q26. In what ways would you like to see peer support used by people leaving care and/or caregivers during a young person's transition from care into adulthood?

### Community resources and networks

Almost two thirds of respondents answered Q26. The theme most mentioned by respondents was recognition of the potential for peer support to help people leaving care or caregivers to establish networks. Respondents noted that peer networks could help people gain life skills, learn about finances, find accommodation and access education or work opportunities. A few respondents called for the creation of specific community spaces to enable peer support and connection.

“Peer support presents an opportunity to expand the reach of financial education and life skills training in Scotland...Including care-experienced young people in this model has the potential to be especially powerful. These individuals, having navigated the challenges of transitioning out of care themselves, are uniquely positioned to offer practical advice and emotional support to their peers.” - MyBnk

Some respondents wanted peer networks and relationships formalised and supported by the Scottish Government or other public bodies. In these comments, frameworks and forums based on successful models of peer support were suggested. Others described mentoring programmes or drop-in sessions staffed by people with lived experience.

“Increased access to community hubs/ clubs may be positive in providing young people with places to use their time in a prosocial manner. This could involve workshops for understanding their behaviours, or opportunities to access activities in the wider community. For example, Youth Interventions, a local group, provide educational workshops on substance and alcohol use, and emotional and mental wellbeing, whilst providing day trips for the young people to places they do not have the opportunity to attend.” - British Psychological Society

## Shared experiences

Several respondents highlighted the importance of peer support in sharing positive lived experiences and knowledge. These could be experiences that provide young people with knowledge about practical matters and also places for optimism that reduce any stigma, shame or fear.

“Any kind of support and knowledge sharing would be helpful to help positive stories, share information on access to help. Removing any stigma from the care status or the care journey is helpful and allowing young people access to role models who can share their journey, challenges and successes would be beneficial for all.” – Individual

## Importance of peer support

Some did not specify how they thought peer support should be used but shared general comments which emphasised their belief in the value of peer support to both young people and carers.

## Young person’s choice

Allowing young people to dictate how they want to use peer support was mentioned by some. Respondents noted that some young people may not want to speak about care experience. They also stressed that others may not want to participate in peer support and that any offers of assistance should include a young person’s consent and willingness.

## Negative experiences with peer support

Two respondents highlighted the possibility of negative aspects of peer support, while acknowledging the benefits. The British Psychological Society said peer support may provide some young people with “a support network with others who have similar experiences, however, [it] may [also] promote previous negative behaviours.”

Q27. Do you know of any examples where peer support networks have had a positive impact on the experience of leaving care, either for care leavers or those who supported them?

## Examples of best practice

Almost half of respondents answered Q27, with respondents sharing examples of peer support that has had a positive impact on the experience of leaving care for young people or those who supported them. These included programmes run by local authorities, such as:

- West Lothian’s ‘Level Up’ attainment project
- Grandmentors (Perth and Kinross Council)
- East Ayrshire offers Connecting to Change, Connecting Voices, Art Club, and Care Experienced Cabinet

Examples of peer support programmes delivered by the third sector included:

- STAR
- Includem
- Grow Your Own Routes (SFAD)
- Lifelong Links
- Groups run by Who Cares? Scotland
- Children 1<sup>st</sup>'s kinship care groups
- Shared Lives schemes
- The Rock Trust
- The Mockingbird programme led by The Fostering Network

One respondent described a programme at university which connected them with other young people with care experience called the University of Strathclyde Care Experienced and Estranged Student Society. Another mentioned the benefit of residential homes across different local authorities, such as Home Park View in Dumfries and Galloway.

“Maybe 15 years ago or so, I had the opportunity to visit a number of throughcare placements within Perth... I think there is a real benefit from the Perthshire model with a city centre hub where support, internet, tea coffee, social work etc is all located in one building however this needs to be considered geographically as a similar model in the Borders appears to be less successful due to all the local villages having social barriers to accessing support in the one main town” - Individual

A few respondents, when highlighting examples of good practice, noted the importance of funding these programmes well.

### **Positive outcomes of peer support**

Some respondents reiterated their support for establishing peer mentoring and assistance to young people or those who help them. A few of these did not provide further detail about how they or the people they have spoken with have been affected. Others described positive outcomes of peer support, including providing sustained relationships, allowing those with lived experience to volunteer to help others, reducing feelings of isolation through socialisation, and providing a sense of assurance and shared knowledge.

“Peer support creates a mutual exchange of skills, knowledge, care and support between two or more people with similar situations. The exchange is based on an understanding of hope, trust and learning in a shared space. Research has shown that there is a correlation between relationships and resilience during the period of emerging adulthood and leaving care. During this period and into adulthood, lives are interdependent, we rely on others for support in all aspects of our lives.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

Q28. How can we better enable young people and the supportive adults in their lives to maintain healthy relationships once the young person has moved on from care?

### **Encourage maintained relationships**

Just under two thirds of respondents answered Q28. Several respondents highlighted that there should be improved support for maintaining communication between young people and supportive adults in their lives to promote healthy relationships. Some respondents did not provide detail on how to do that, though others emphasised that continued contact should be normalised and allowed in a safe, transparent and bounded manner. Some respondents thought that continued contact should be built into any care or transition plan.

One respondent noted the need for dependability and the importance of following through on promised relationships.

“I was put back into a children’s house after leaving secure care while waiting on my own house. And my new own house was in close proximity to the children’s house I grew up in so I could still visit was amazing. I still live there, and still visit 10 years later” - Consultant with lived experience, CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

Several respondents suggested implementing policies which empower and enable supportive adults, carers or staff members to maintain relationships with young people who have left care. One individual highlighted that when they were in care, policies around maintaining contact were discouraged. However, they suggested that a greater understanding of the importance of these relationships is needed, with guidance and clear pathways where staff are able to record contact and understand limits, and young people know whom to go to, to seek support. Who Cares? Scotland noted that The Promise explained care systems had previously focused on the management and reduction of risks to the detriment of enabling long-lasting, meaningful relationships. They note that The Promise suggested reframing how care systems think about risk, instituting policies that both safeguard and allow relationships to grow.

Respondents recommended that these policies could include narrative reframing, a technique that helps people change the way they speak about care experience to shift public attitudes, and training for carers, supportive adults and staff members on how to maintain relationships with the young people they care for. For young people leaving care, they called for guidance to support their understanding of how to maintain a healthy relationship.

### **Communication platforms and mediums**

Formal and informal means of maintaining relationships were mentioned by some respondents. Suggestions included reunions, communication platforms and social media sites. One respondent stressed the importance of ensuring young people have access to communication tools, such as Wi-Fi and telephones, to facilitate ongoing contact with carers.

## Young person-led

Respondents emphasised the need to include young people in planning to ensure relationships are maintained in a way that suits each person best. Shetland Islands Council noted that due to varying needs and approaches, they depend on Person Centred Planning Tools to determine how best to support relationships for young people.

“Children and young people should be consulted about the relationships that are important to them and how they would like to maintain these; keeping in touch should be considered part of the foster carer’s role; and foster carers should be supported in this role.” - The Fostering Network

## Barriers to maintaining support

A few respondents highlighted barriers some young people may face in maintaining support. Two highlighted poverty or the possibility of financial barriers to maintaining contact. This included access to funds to support any transport costs. An individual noted that some relationships may be difficult to maintain, including where a carer may have other children in their care which may make it challenging to continue to support a young person.

## Out-of-hours services providing support and advice

Those transitioning from care may find that they need advice or support to manage questions arising from everyday life and independence. As most services are not available all the time, young people and the adults who support them may not have access to support when they need it.

Q29. What types of support and advice do you think should be available to care leavers as part of an out-of-hours service?

“The reality of the kind of support and advice required is very broad and incredibly varied. Care leavers might need practical support such as what to do if they have lost their house keys, something isn’t working in their home, or they have financial concerns, to emotional support and advice such as coping with the loss of a friend or family member.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

## Life skills

Over four fifths of respondents answered Q29. A common theme in these comments centred on suggestions for out-of-hours support and advice to support young people with daily concerns or life skills. Descriptions ranged from needing help with emergency home repairs to car issues. This also included assistance with financial concerns, such as banking problems, and signposting to other services which may be able to provide further help.

## **Emotional and mental wellbeing support**

Access to mental health support, specifically to combat loneliness, was mentioned by several respondents. Aberdeen City Council thought that 'out-of-hours' support sounded too much like crisis support and that young people in need of emotional or mental health support may not know it can be used for those purposes. Who Cares? Scotland notes that their work has shown "that most help required out of hours relates to mental health needs and emotional distress."

"A lot of the time professionals working with care experienced young people have access to 24 hour counselling phone lines where they can call up and have a debrief or book in more in depth counselling sessions. We recognise (and more often than not pay to support) the secondary trauma that professionals sometimes have to deal with and work through. There is not the same understanding and financial support for the care experienced child who has suffered the initial trauma. But I think there needs to be something similar, if not something more, for those who have lived the trauma. It needs to be the norm, available to everyone and encouraged by everyone with absolutely no barriers to access." - Individual

## **Crisis support**

Some respondents mentioned the need for out-of-hours services to deal with crisis issues, such as access to emergency accommodation or food and issues related to children. East Lothian Council Children's Services mentioned Edinburgh Council's Access Point, which offers a '24 hours' crisis service, providing a relatively local option for immediate assistance. They also recommended a mobile response resource as another option. Others noted that out-of-hours crisis support should be provided face-to-face where possible and appropriate.

## **Resourcing**

The need to fund and resource of out-of-hours support was mentioned by some respondents, who stressed the cost of ensuring the correct staff are in place with appropriate training. Some specifically mentioned the importance of trauma-responsive training.

## **Relationships**

Two respondents noted that maintaining relationships with supportive adults or staff would reduce the need for out-of-hours support as young people who have left care would have trusted people they could turn to for help in the areas mentioned above.

"The key component behind the answers and solutions this consultation exercise seeks to explore is long-term meaningful relationships, supported by good quality early planning. Get this right and the need for formal 'out-of-hours services' for care leavers should be significantly reduced." - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection



## Health and wellbeing

The transition from care to adult life can impact young people's health and wellbeing as their needs change. People with care experience may require support from a range of services to maintain physical health and mental wellbeing and it is important that young people leaving care have access to appropriate health services.

Q30. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure care leavers have access to services which support their physical health, and mental health and wellbeing?

### Priority access to health support

Two thirds of respondents answered Q30. Several respondents highlighted the need for priority access to health support. Respondents repeatedly stressed a need for access to mental health support, as the transition from child to adult mental health support can lead to a lapse in support or long waiting times. Some also identified the need for access to sexual health services and more general health services. Perth and Kinross Council highlighted that it may be difficult for a young person who has left secondary education to access CAMHS and they may then have to wait for adult community mental health services. They suggest "more joined-up working that moved beyond eligibility criteria and focuses on the needs of the young person."

### Better resourcing

Several respondents noted that more health practitioners were needed to meet increased demand, particularly for mental health support. They explained that CAMHS waitlists can be very long or difficult for those in care to access. Others suggested that localised services available in the central belt should be extended to the rest of Scotland.

"Access to Mental Health and Trauma services (such as the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) to be accessible beyond the central belt and across Scotland" – Aberdeen City Council

### Person-centred care

The importance of person-centred care has been reflected throughout this report. However, several respondents mentioned the necessity of considering a young person's stage of development and specific needs for health and wellbeing services during their transition to adulthood. Respondents highlighted that some young people may not want to access certain support, and that others may need to access support at different stages of their transition to adulthood depending on their specific circumstances and healing processes.

Many services can be offered to children when they are younger, but this may not be the right time for them and they need time to recover from trauma. There needs to be more options for them to access as an adult when they are more ready to engage with mental health services.” - East Lothian Council Children's Services

“In terms of healthcare service provision, health literacy should be considered in delivery and information, advice and guidance should be available in accessible formats and alternative languages.” - Public Health Scotland

Several respondents reiterated the importance of a trauma-informed approach and the particular need for this training for mental health practitioners. Respondents stressed that a trauma-informed lens would improve understanding of young people’s engagement with health concerns, appointments and time management.

“Our inspection evidence suggests that some health services discharge care leavers if they do not attend appointments. It is important that staff in services employ a trauma-informed approach in supporting care experienced young people to access the health services they require.” - Care Inspectorate

### **Signposting and administrative support**

Assistance in registering with doctors, dentists and mental health services, if needed, was mentioned by some respondents. This support also included providing information on the types of health and wellbeing services available. Transferring prescription medication to pharmacies was also mentioned as a specific area of concern, as some medications need to be taken consistently to ensure wellbeing. It was also mentioned that assistance needs to be available in multiple languages to ensure accessibility.

### **Exercise and physical activity**

Providing access to physical activity, whether that is through free membership for local authority leisure centres or access to green spaces, was mentioned by some respondents. Others highlighted the importance of education on the impact physical activity has on wellbeing and one respondent emphasised the importance of access to healthy food to promote healthy lifestyles.

Q31. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure a smooth transition is made between children and adult physical health services, mental health services and wellbeing services?

### **Multi-agency working**

Almost two thirds of respondents answered Q31. Of those, several respondents made suggestions for improved multi-agency working to create smooth transitions between children’s and adult physical health, mental health and wellbeing services. Respondents recommended better communication between children’s and adult care providers, and ensuring health is at the forefront of joint care-planning reviews and meetings.

“Shared information, rather than a young person have to start from scratch with adult services needs assessments.” - Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers

### **Clear transition pathways**

Calls for clear transition pathways and care plans were made by several respondents at this question and by some in response to Q30. They expressed concern over changes to care when young people transition to adult services. Respondents reiterated support for clear transition pathways and care plans to provide clear guidance on the next steps in the transition for young people leaving care, and the adults assisting them.

### **Planned gradual transition**

Some respondents expressed support for a more gradual transition to adulthood. A few described the transition as a ‘cliff edge,’ and others noted that the continuity of service and staff was most important in this period of change. Public Health Scotland suggested learning from the [Transitions to Adulthood Strategy](#) and also referenced [The Principles of Good Transitions](#) as a guide to assisting young people during this time in life.

### **Person-centred approach**

An emphasis on flexibility and meeting the specific needs of each individual was mentioned by some respondents across responses to Q30 and Q31. These comments stressed the importance of including young people in their transition planning and feeling that their voices are heard. Respondents emphasised the importance of including discussions on health at planning meetings to ensure that young people have a say about their health and wellbeing care as they make the transition to adulthood.

### **Priority access to mental health support**

Some respondents reiterated the need for priority access to mental health support as discussed in comments made on Q30. Two respondents noted that access to CAMHS and mental health support should be a mandatory aspect of Aftercare.

### **Access to information about health care and rights**

Respondents reiterated comments made in response to Q30 on the need to assist those transitioning from care with registering for health services. Additional comments at Q31 included that young people also need to be aware of their rights and what they should expect from health and mental health services. This can include advice about how to know when they might need medical assistance and what to do if they are unwell.

### **Example of good practice**

One public body described an area of good practice within their organisation. They include all young people aged 15 years or over in discussions around their care and their future plans related to Adult Services. While Adult Services are not currently mandatory at these meetings, notes are circulated to the relevant services. They hope to improve their service by consistently including Adult Services in the future.

## Housing

The consultation paper highlights research that those leaving care are more likely than others of the same age to become homeless or experience housing insecurity. This section explores the support provided for young people leaving care to ensure they have housing that meets their needs.

Q32. Please tell us about any good practice you are aware of that supports young people leaving care to find a home that meets their needs.

### Examples of good practice

Three fifths of respondents answered Q32, and respondents shared several examples of good practice in supporting young people leaving care to find a home that meets their needs. There were examples of support from local authorities, including some support spanning multiple local authorities, such as Housing Protocols ensuring that young people leaving care are included for priority housing, dedicated Housing Officers, strong partnership working between social work and housing teams, independent living programmes and supported accommodation models designed to provide a gradual move to greater autonomy. Examples included:

- Edinburgh's dedicated housing officer to work with care experienced young people.
- Fife, Midlothian and East Dunbartonshire Councils have a National House Project model, which brings young people leaving care together to provide peer support with practical and emotional skills needed for independent living.
- Highland Council gives priority points to those leaving care.
- Glasgow City Council provides 16+ accommodation and support services.
- South Ayrshire Council developed letting standards for young people leaving care.
- Home Park View in Dumfries and Galloway provides young people with a supportive environment as they transition out of care and into independent living. It "facilitates collaboration between housing providers, young people and transitions workers."
- Perth and Kinross Council's Wellbank provision has staff trained in trauma approaches and develops practical skills as well as offering emotional support.
- Aberdeen has residential aftercare officers in each Children's Home to support children who have moved on from the homes, providing housing assistance, mental health assistance and assistance with childcare. (Staf Engagement Session 17 September 2024)
- East Lothian Council, funded by the Life Changes Trust, created My Place, a shared living model for young people with care experience, and a dedicated role to sit alongside the Housing Strategy and Development Team.

Examples of good practice from the third sector were also mentioned by some respondents. Services offered by housing support provider Rock Trust were mentioned by a few respondents. These include their Housing First for Youth services in Glasgow, set up to help young people leaving care who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, where they help young people understand their choices and make decisions about their next steps, and Future Builders in Perth which exists to help young people with the transition, providing both advice, life skills training and emotional support.

Barnardo's Gap Homes programme, designed to bridge the gap between leaving care and independent living was also mentioned by one respondent. Barnardo's Scotland noted that it provides "easy to heat, well-furnished homes designed for and with children and young people who may have complex needs". Finally, Inspiring Scotland mentioned that Shelter is good at assisting people during the transition, however, they did not provide any further details. Support workers and housing forums were mentioned by a few as being helpful for young people who are leaving care, as was a Further and Higher Education student housing guarantee.

### **Concerns and barriers**

A common theme mentioned was that the current housing crisis was a barrier; this is discussed in greater detail in Q33 below. A few respondents expressed the view that no good practice existed.

"Young People with lived experience who were interviewed were generally fairly critical of practice, they fed back that where good practice does exist, it comes more from individuals who are willing to put the extra time and effort into helping them, rather than from systems." - Rock Trust on behalf of A Way Home Scotland & Aff the Streets

Some respondents called for changes to legislation, as the current criteria for housing adults who are homeless or wanting to move does not necessarily fit the experiences of young people with care experience. One respondent noted declaring themselves homeless could be a stigmatising and scary experience for a young person.

"I would love legislation that stopped children having to "declare themselves homeless" in order to access appropriate housing. I would love a care experienced charter signed by all councils that says that "no care experienced child will find themselves homeless under the age of 21 (25 would be nicer)." – Individual

Q33. What do you think are the main barriers in securing appropriate housing for a young person with care experience?

### **Housing shortages**

Of the two thirds of respondents who answered this question, more than half highlighted the housing shortage in Scotland as the main barrier to securing appropriate accommodation for young people with care experience. Respondents described a lack of social housing and high costs of private rentals in some areas. Similarly, there were comments that some of the available housing is not suitable for young people, for example, housing in poor condition.

Attendees at engagement events for practitioners held by CELCIS reiterated that housing and lifelong links offers differ greatly by local authority.

“Many of those answering the survey had been placed in accommodation that was unsafe, inadequate for their situation or in a poor condition. Issues cited include: being placed in an area with anti-social behaviour from neighbours; not having enough space for the number of people; disrepair; unsanitary conditions e.g., mould; and not having essential facilities.” - Who Cares? Scotland

Location was also mentioned as a factor by some in determining whether housing is appropriate for a young person. Respondents noted that housing that is too far from support networks could lead to social isolation.

### **Access to support**

A lack of access to housing support was mentioned by several respondents. A few noted that some young people leaving care did not understand their housing rights and choices, and found the process of applying for private or social housing confusing. Others suggested that dedicated housing officers for people with care experience should exist in all local authorities.

Staf called for greater consideration of the barriers to home ownership for people with care experience, as they are less likely to benefit from inherited property or money and they are usually unable to live with family to save for a deposit. Staf recommended exploring different pathways to ownership for young people with care experience, such as shared ownership, rent to buy or lease-options.

### **Financial issues**

Several respondents noted that high costs, either associated with living in expensive supported housing or paying for private lets, made saving money to afford the move out of care or social housing difficult for young people leaving care. CELCIS highlighted that relying on expensive private accommodation can also negatively impact a young person's ability to spend money on other important necessities, such as travel for work or study.

## **Discrimination**

Some respondents said discrimination, such as negative stereotypes of people with care experience, could prevent people with care experience from accessing private accommodation. Recommendations to include care experience as a protected characteristic were mentioned to combat the impact of any negative preconceptions. The Fostering Network recommended the Scottish Government recommit to introducing a Human Rights Bill this parliamentary year.

## **Social and emotional readiness**

A lack of social and emotional readiness for independent living was mentioned by some as another barrier to maintaining a tenancy for some young people with care experience. This included concerns for risks of social and emotional isolation, a lack of maturity to keep a home and finding it difficult to set good boundaries. Respondents highlighted concerns that a lack of readiness could lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness and a lack of experience could mean young people are targeted by criminals. Cyrenians explained that isolation and inexperience could put them at risk of 'cuckooing'.

“For many young people who have grown up in shared housing and residential units as part of their care experience it can be difficult to know when to invite someone in, especially if they are feeling lonely and isolated. This should be built into any form of transition planning and young people should have a trusted adult to talk to if they are experiencing any problems with strangers trying to access their new home.” - Cyrenians

Q34. How can we ensure there is sufficient support, planning and preparation provided to care leavers moving into their own accommodation for the first time?

## **Life skills training**

Three fifths of respondents answered Q34. A common theme was that life skills training would help prepare young people leaving care and moving into their own accommodation for the first time. Respondents suggested that this includes budgeting and financial training, and registering for utilities. A few suggested providing this information in a booklet or pamphlet to allow the young person to have it as a resource when they move. Others suggested that care workers could teach or model life skills regularly during home visits.

“Alongside the application the young person should have a skills plan that identifies what needs to be done before moving on so that when it’s the right time for the young person to move into their own accommodation they feel ready to do so. Skills could include budgeting, cooking, managing a home etc and could be provided by different services.” - South Lanarkshire Council

## **Clear care plan**

Some respondents highlighted the importance of a clear care plan to support young people in their transition. While details of how the care plan can be used have been described in earlier questions, responses to this question highlighted the importance of plans detailing the types of housing that would work well for each young person, their own housing preferences and any specific support they may need going forward. As emphasised in other questions, the importance of coordinated, multi-agency working to create a smooth transition and a more joined-up approach was reiterated.

“Asking the person what would be manageable for them. The person who placed me in a home put me in a 2 bed because she felt really sad that I was a young girl and she didn't want me in a flat by myself. But actually heating the house, living in an empty home, not having neighbours was really isolating and challenging to manage going from a small hostel to a big home. So practicalities on what a person can manage should be considered when placing someone somewhere.” – Young person, responding through Hub for Success

## **Available support workers**

Some suggested that more support workers and more consistent care are needed to help young people transition into independent living arrangements. A few respondents recommended offering wrap-around care, and others noted the importance of consistency of support, with a single trusted adult or key worker providing assistance. Examples included assistance managing and spending money during the organisation of a young person's new home. A few noted that local authorities would need greater resources to enable these services to succeed.

## **Consistent policies**

A desire for consistent policies and protocols across Scotland was mentioned by a small number of respondents and reiterated at engagement events. They suggested implementing policies and protocols which ensure those leaving care have appropriate accommodation. The need for nationwide consistency was highlighted because young people may move between local authorities during their transition to more independent living and should be able to rely on a consistent level of assistance wherever they live. At multiple Staf engagement events, attendees spoke about the positive outcomes when local authorities work together. However, they expressed a view that this often happens by chance rather than through planned preparation. One example given was of a staff member in one local authority switching to the same role in another, which enabled open lines of communication and collaboration.



## Less commonly mentioned themes

A few themes which were each mentioned by one or two respondents included:

- Calls for more grants and financial support to ensure those leaving care have access to safe, secure and appropriate accommodation and enough money to buy the essentials needed to make a home. This was also raised at engagement events, such as the Care Leavers Transitions (Customer Hub) engagement event.
- Maintained relationships were mentioned to decrease social isolation and provide continued support during the transition. This is discussed more at Q28.
- Time in training flats was provided as an example of how young people can gain experience living independently while in a supported environment.

Q35. What forms of support do you think would help someone leaving care and entering their first tenancy to stay in that property for as long as they want to?

## Main areas of support

Just under three fifths of respondents answered Q35. Respondents highlighted three areas of support they thought would be most useful to help a young person with care experience entering their first tenancy to stay in the property for as long as they want. These themes were mentioned with equal prevalence.

- **Financial support:** Several respondents mentioned providing more financial support for those entering their first tenancy. Some suggested this be given in the form of grants at the start of the tenancy, food subsidies or tokens, or help with paying bills, whilst others suggested budgeting assistance and greater financial education to ensure young people have the financial skills to maintain their tenancy. For example, MyBnk mentioned their programme, The Money House, which offers an immersive setting to provide hands-on financial training for young people.
- **Support with life skills:** Several others mentioned assistance with setting up utilities; learning how to keep a house safe, clean, and organised; cooking and decorating. They also commented on the importance of teaching young people about their rights as tenants.
- **Social and emotional support:** Whether from key workers, mentors or peers, several respondents noted the importance of continued social and emotional support. They mentioned the risk of isolation for those becoming newly independent and that some may need help integrating into their new community.

“It would be useful if the Throughcare worker could contact the young person at intervals after moving in. 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year after moving in. These communications are to offer further support if needed, check if registered with a GP, Dentist, etc, and check practicalities such as whether they are managing day-to-day budgeting, cooking, cleaning, etc. This unless the young person no longer wants contact with social services.” – Individual

## **Better resourcing for support workers**

As noted previously, the importance of providing resources to local authorities to enable the type of support recommended was reiterated by several respondents. This included resourcing dedicated staff members on Housing Support teams and staff for council-led tenancy advice, mediation and home maintenance services.

At one Staf engagement event, attendees described the need to ensure staff members are properly supported themselves. They spoke about a situation where they helped find accommodation for a young person with care experience who had been classified as at risk of self-harm. Attendees described the pressure they felt, and the concern they had, when they encountered difficulty navigating systems on behalf of the young person they were assisting. Funding to ensure staff receive wellbeing support or there are enough staff in place to combat burnout was recommended.

## **Other considerations**

Some respondents noted that housing should be appropriate, safe and somewhere a young person can stay for a long period rather than temporary accommodation. Ensuring the young person's preferences about location and type of accommodation are considered was also mentioned by some.

Q36. How can we ensure the views and needs of people leaving care are taken into account when decisions are made about where they should live when they leave care?

## **Consult with young people**

Of the two thirds of respondents who provided a response to this question, a common theme was that young people should be consulted on their views and needs. While some suggested speaking to young people or approaching the decisions in a flexible, person-centred way, others more specifically mentioned focus groups, team meetings, and creating clear protocols and policies to ensure that young people are a part of the decision making process. Some also suggested that consultation should happen early in the process and regularly thereafter, allowing young people's opinions to be assessed on an ongoing basis with enough time to meet their needs.

## **Advocacy**

Several respondents recommended providing advocacy services to young people to make sure their opinions are heard and that they are aware they can challenge the system if they feel they are not being listened to. It was suggested by some that advocacy should be independent and consistent across Scotland.

## **Pathways planning**

Some noted the inclusion of housing considerations in the care plan. As mentioned in previous questions, it was emphasised that input from young people leaving care should be considered during the care planning stage. Housing concerns, needs and wishes can be discussed at this stage, enabling a clear outline of a young person's views of the transition for staff and carers. Social Work Scotland did note that the framework for inclusion of individual views on housing exists already in the process for pathway planning.

## **Provide choices**

Some respondents mentioned the importance of choice. In this case, having a choice meant access to information and details about options for where young people could live, as well as advice about the impact of different choices. Some reiterated the importance of clear communication with young people about their options. This included being clear about what is realistically possible when considering housing requirements or location, for example. This point was also noted at some engagement events.

## **Further and higher education**

The consultation paper explains that funding is available to assist young people and adults with care experience to study at colleges and universities. The College Bursary currently offers up to £9,000 per year for care-experience people studying below HNC level. The Care Experienced Student Bursary, also currently £9,000 annually, is available to students in higher education with no age restriction. Summer Accommodation Grants are also available for up to £1,330. Care experienced students in higher education are also eligible for a Special Support Loan in the amount of £2,400. Colleges and universities can also provide discretionary funding to students experiencing financial difficulty whilst studying.

In Scotland, every university guarantees a place for applicants with care experience who meets the minimum entry requirements on their chosen course.

Q37. In what areas would you like to see improvements to the service, support and funding for students who are care experienced?

## **Awareness**

Three fifths of respondents answered Q37. A common theme noted that awareness of funding seemed low. Several respondents recommended raising awareness of the funding options available. A few individual respondents specifically noted that it was their unique circumstance, for example, working in education, which made them aware of the resources. They believed that many young people may not be aware of the bursaries and funding available. This sentiment was also expressed by some organisations.

Other suggestions included that young people need to receive transparent advice on how the funding options work and for how long the funding will be available. Public Health Scotland suggested that financial support for young people with care experience be provided for the duration of the courses to avoid uncertainty, rather than on an annual basis.

A few respondents also mentioned that information about funding options could be confusing due to discretionary funding or changing eligibility criteria across local authorities, colleges and universities. Stirling Council asked for greater clarity and uniformity around eligibility for certain types of support, although they did note that in “aligning eligibility, it cannot, however, be a race to the bottom.”

## **Access to grants**

Difficulty accessing grants was mentioned by some respondents. This included confusing eligibility criteria, experiencing challenges proving care experience and difficulty with the application. These challenges were also noted by attendees at multiple engagement events. For example, a young person responding to the consultation noted that the application for special support calls for two named referees to be provided, which could be difficult for people with care experience who may not have two trusted individuals to ask. Who Cares? Scotland highlighted instances where people with care experience faced a number of issues accessing student funding as both the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) asked for evidence by a confirmation letter from the person's local authority or local Social Work department, which it was reported can sometimes be difficult to obtain.

Another young person responding to the consultation recommended making all grants and funding provided by higher education institutions equal in amount.

## **Full-year housing**

Some respondents noted the importance of year-round housing. Respondents mentioned the value of having a stable base and the difficulty some young people face trying to find summer accommodation due to a lack of guarantors. A few acknowledged the summer bursary as an improvement.

## **No improvements needed**

Positive feedback on services, funding and support was given by some. Respondents who used the funding noted they benefited from it, and those who assisted young people through the process felt it was having a positive impact by helping people with care experience progress into higher education.

## **Financial and budgeting advice**

As described in Q35, providing financial and budgeting advice was recommended by some respondents. As above, this reflected a belief that this type of support and these types of skills were necessary when transitioning to independent living.

## **Less mentioned themes**

A small number of respondents provided some other considerations. These included from most to least mentioned:

- Peer support was recommended to strengthen support networks, provide tutoring, and provide support in further or higher education settings.
- Disability services and mental health support were mentioned as a type of support where young people with care experience in further and higher education should have priority access. Mental health support was highlighted as difficult to access as there were long waiting times. Priority access to mental health services was recommended.
- One called for improved access to technology and digital literacy skills.
- Another called for access to more funds for people with care experience who are studying and have parenting responsibilities.

Q38. How can we better support care experienced students to complete their studies?

### **Support that enables learning**

Of the three fifths of respondents who answered Q38, some highlighted the need for better support to enable learning, with respondents emphasising the importance of personalised support, including flexible learning pathways. Respondents suggested that being able to attend part-time, allowing time off when needed and providing flexibility in course delivery would improve the retention of students with care experience.

“Ensure there are clear pathways for young people with care experience to catch up with school they may have missed, and continue on with education should they wish to [and] ensure there is support for young people missing classes, and ways to adjust to this.” - Rock Trust on behalf of A Way Home Scotland & Aff the Streets

The importance of encouragement was mentioned by a few, and individuals in particular noted that positive guidance from course leaders or tutors assisted them in their studies. A few mentioned that providing assistance with issues such as housing or financial concerns would help them concentrate on their studies. Other recommendations for support within colleges and universities included comprehensive orientation programmes, confidence building, and better collaboration between social work and colleges or universities. Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership also noted that higher tariff academic routes, such as medicine and law, should provide extra support for students with care experience as they face more demanding courses and workloads. One young person responding to the consultation suggested organising independent hubs for students with care experience at each institution that were able to offer support.

### **Raise awareness about care experience**

Some respondents mentioned that course leaders, teachers, lecturers, staff and students at colleges and universities should be aware of the experiences of young people with care experience. A few specifically mentioned this should be a trauma-informed approach, including engagement with the national trauma training programme for anyone in universities with support remits. This was mentioned by a few respondents as necessary to ensure those in post-school education have a clear understanding of the needs of those with care experience.

“As noted in relation to other areas of service provision (e.g. housing, healthcare and financial inclusion services), education providers and employers should have greater awareness of trauma and mental health needs for care leavers and other care-experienced young people.” - Public Health Scotland

### **Strong relationships**

Ensuring young people with care experience have a key worker or a trusted adult to guide them and listen to them was mentioned by some respondents. While a few focused this support on the transition from care to further or higher education, others thought it should be a relationship that is maintained in the longer term.

Similarly, peer support or mentoring programmes, such as Wee Campus and Hub for Success, were suggested as other ways for young people with care experience to find support when starting at college or university. Respondents suggested these programmes could allow young people to connect with others with similar experiences and provide knowledge to navigate new environments. West Lothian Council noted that their experience of wrap-around and mentor support allowed learners with care experience to seek support from others who could help them continue when their course of study was challenging, and they were tempted to withdraw.

### **Housing assistance**

As mentioned at Q37, assistance securing housing, especially in the summer months, was recommended by some respondents. Stress brought on by insecure housing or housing concerns was mentioned as a distraction from learning and so it was felt that help to ensure students with care experience have secure, year-round, appropriate housing could relieve this anxiety.

### **Other funded programmes**

Some respondents recommended providing further funding to ensure young people with care experience are better supported in their transition. This included funding for free bus travel, living expenses, access to the internet, technology and course material costs, and clothing replacement costs.

“An approach that is designed to meet the needs of care experienced learners will benefit all learners. No student should ‘lose out’ financially due to having experience of care. This will require more intentional working between Social Security Scotland, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Scottish Funding Council, and the Student Awards Agency Scotland. Financial entitlements should be connected to the recognition of needs. Ongoing, trusted relationships with practitioners and college and university staff so that people with experience of care are aware of all the entitlements and support available to them, and they have the support they need to access it.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

### **Less mentioned themes**

A small number of respondents each mentioned the following themes that have been discussed in greater detail in the previous sections, such as better access to mental health support, better support for disabled students to ensure they are not discriminated against and access to financial education. Greater assistance in transitioning to employment was also mentioned, as detailed in the next section.

### **Examples of best practice**

A small number of respondents provided examples of good practice. CELCIS highlighted the work of Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in providing support alongside stakeholders. They also mentioned Hub for Success as a good model to be replicated across Scotland.

Who Cares? Scotland provided their shortlist of colleges and universities from their 2024 Corporate Parenting Awards for the category of Outstanding Educational Practice in Further and Higher Education. They include:

- Inverness College for their support for learners with care experience no matter the stage of their education pathway, and their emergency accommodation for learners with care experience.
- West Lothian College offers a wraparound service called 'The TRUST (Trauma Responsive Unique Support Tailor-made)' to support those with care experience.
- The University of St Andrews was noted as offering multiple types of support for those with care experience, including the Care Experience Access Award to assist with living costs.
- The University of Strathclyde guarantees year-round housing in university halls and priority access to a Discretionary Fund and £195 toward graduation costs. They also provide a network, Strathclyde Cares, for social and professional support.

## Employment

This section looks at responses to questions about the type of support young people leaving care should receive in relation to employment, self-employment, apprenticeships, training or other workplace education.

Q39. What would help young people with care experience find secure and fulfilling work, develop their skills or build their confidence?

### Work experience

Just under two thirds of respondents answered Q39. A common theme was that work experience was an effective way to help young people find work and build their confidence. Respondents suggested the work be highly supported and some specifically suggested targeted organisational programmes or partnerships for young people to gain experience. Respondents thought that all levels of government should offer priority places, including short-term and permanent opportunities.

Some others emphasised the importance of starting work experience at a young age. They suggested this could help identify skills and interests early on and allow for a gradual entrance into work, rather than young people facing a stark transition when they leave care. Access to apprenticeships from a younger age was also mentioned by one respondent.

“In recognition of this, employers must consider their role in developing the skills and experience of care leavers to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Work-based relationships can be a source of informal support for care leavers. Contributing and being valued in the workplace can promote self-confidence and help overcome the care-experienced identity / stigma. This is particularly important for care leavers with a history of disrupted relationships.” – Public Health Scotland

Volunteering opportunities were highlighted by some as a beneficial way to get into job markets that may seem to be only accessible to people with previous experience, although a few of those responding noted the importance of stipends or pay for those positions.

“Care experienced young people need support to make the transition into the world of work. Opportunities for work experience programmes or internships which focus on skills for work prepare young people for the workplace.” - Shetland Islands Council

### **Career advice**

Career guidance and advice were mentioned by several respondents as an important type of assistance provided to young people leaving care and entering employment. This included assistance with understanding different types of jobs and awareness of different career pathways. Others noted the importance of practical considerations such as what to wear, and how to get to interviews and places of work. A few mentioned that career advice should be part of post-school planning and that opportunities for young people to engage with career advisers should be included at school or as part of their care plan.

Mentoring and peer support was mentioned by some respondents as another way to provide career guidance to young people leaving care. The importance of this approach was fed back to Aberdeen City Council by people with lived experience through their Aberdeen Bright Spots survey.

“Mentoring schemes and focused preparation for work or for interviews, including access to clothes, can support young people to develop practical skills and confidence whilst schemes such as guaranteed interviews and trauma-informed HR policies can further embed this in the long term.” - Stirling Council

### **Social and emotional support**

As with other questions, the importance of emotional support was highlighted by some respondents. Respondents noted the importance of helping young people build confidence and gain experience. Consistent guidance was also emphasised, ideally from key workers and trusted adults who can maintain relationships as young people start employment and education.

### **Raising awareness in employers**

Some respondents highlighted the importance of employers understanding the experiences of people leaving care. This included providing employers with a trauma-informed understanding of care experience and highlighting the need for flexibility in certain aspects of employment. One individual suggested creating toolkits for employers to understand the needs of employees with care experience.



Q40. Can you share any examples of good practice, in the private and public sector, where young people leaving care have been supported into employment or training, or have been supported to build their confidence?

### **Public sector programmes**

Just under half of respondents provided examples of best practice at Q40, providing examples of public sector programmes or support. Respondents highlighted different apprenticeships and work experiences offered by local authorities and public bodies such as the NHS, while others described employability support from local authorities that assist young people with interview skills, CV writing and increasing their confidence. A few others noted that social workers will work with Skills Development Scotland to assist young people as they transition into employment. Other specific examples included:

- Borders Family Firm through the Scottish Borders Council's Employability Service
- Care Inspectorate's Guaranteed Interview Scheme
- The Civil Service Care Leavers Internship Scheme
- East Lothian Works
- Scottish Police Authority's modern apprenticeship for a person with care experience
- South Lanarkshire Council's Aspire and Aspire Works
- Social Security Scotland recognises care experience as a protected characteristic
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration offers modern apprenticeships for people with care experience
- North Lanarkshire Council offers a "Supported Enterprise Service" and there are similar services in Fife and Dundee areas
- Aberdeen Council's ABZ works programmes
- The Scottish Government sponsored Developing the Young Workforce programmes run by third sector organisations around Scotland
- Wheatley apprenticeships and Wheatley environmental roots training programme

### **Third sector programmes**

Some respondents highlighted examples from third sector organisations, including:

- Prince's Trust Team Programme for confidence and motivation building
- Aberdeen Foyer for confidence-building courses
- InspiRide offers bespoke vocational training programmes
- Shared Lives programmes which can provide accommodation, and emotional and social support to people with care experience
- The Young Person's Consortium, a partnership that includes Barnardo's, the Prince's Trust and Action for Children
- Kibble uses the Skills Academy to help young people who prefer practical skills education to gain qualifications

## Private sector programmes

Private sector programmes were mentioned by some respondents. These included:

- Levenmouth railway offers a 12-week skills course
- The John Lewis Partnership offers the Building Happier Futures employment programme and has committed to training their staff with eLearning modules about care experience

## Colleges and universities

Two respondents noted the importance of collaborative work between education institutes and employers or employment agencies. For example, one individual said that Highland Council developed an award-winning college course ([LEEP](#)) specifically for care experienced students, which was taught by a lecturer who herself was care-experienced.

## Other themes

Attendees at the Care Leaver Transitions (Customer Hub) engagement event provided examples of things that worked well, such as the benefits of work placement programmes and voluntary opportunities. One attendee spoke specifically about outdoor opportunities with organisations like Venture Scotland. One individual respondent mentioned the impact of her volunteering experience with her local authority.

“This is volunteering, in my experience, but despite having no experience, Falkirk let me, alongside two other young people, present a motion at a full council meeting. Then, I got invited back months later to hold the role of care experienced representative, which I still hold today. Because they took a chance and let three young people with no experience of full council meetings present something we were passionate about, [we were] able to make the region a better place for care experienced young people.” – Individual

Q41. How do you think employers can be better supported or encouraged to recruit, train, support and retain young people who are care experienced?

## Training for staff and leadership teams

Just over half of respondents answered Q41. Several respondents felt that employers can be better encouraged to recruit, train, support and retain young people with care experience by receiving trauma-informed training. This included understanding the experiences of young people who have been in care and information about The Promise. Managers, in particular, were highlighted as an important group to receive training in trauma-informed practice. One individual suggested that Skills Development Scotland could create and lead a programme to help support private sector employees in trauma-informed training.

Others highlighted the importance of training employers and Human Resource managers about targeted recruitment and treating care experience as a protected characteristic.

“They need to understand we are all human and just because a young person is care experienced they should still have the same chance as everyone else.” – Individual

### **Recruitment incentives**

Providing incentives to private organisations to support the hiring of individuals with care experience was highlighted by several respondents. Suggestions included funding from the Scottish Government or tax breaks. Actions employers could be incentivised to take include offering guaranteed interviews, more Modern Apprenticeships or funding to free up staff to dedicate extra support to those with care experience.

### **Narrative framing**

Some suggested providing information for employers about the framing of care experience and corporate parenting. One individual noted that there should be an emphasis placed on civic responsibility. Others noted the stigma that can be associated with care experience. In their response, CELCIS noted that how care experience is talked about matters to the children, young people and families that face stigma and discrimination. They noted that “Scotland is leading the way with the Each and Every Child initiative in how care and care experience is framed and understood” and they recommend employers use this tool to be as informed as possible about care experience, ensuring a welcoming and supportive place to all staff

### **Corporate parent training**

A small number of respondents suggested that protocols and training be provided to corporate parents and that those be consistent across Scotland’s 32 local authorities. Respondents noted the importance of sharing good practice across the system regarding reporting, opportunities and responsibilities. Barnardo’s Scotland highlighted consistent provision across local authorities which would allow for good quality and continued employer engagement, providing employers with reassurance that support is available to them. They highlighted Future Jobs Fund and Community Jobs Scotland as two programmes that supported the creation of opportunities for young people.

### **Other recommendations**

Other recommendations included the following themes from most to least mentioned:

- Providing specialised job boards or forums to make employment opportunities more accessible for those leaving care.
- Attendees at the Staf and CYCJ Youth Justice Voices Steering Group suggested promoting jobs as carer and care worker to those with care experience as they will bring lived experience to the job.
- Support for people with care experience who have children and who may lack support networks that can assist with childcare when their children are ill or during holiday periods.

“For example, if possible, the default presumption of flexible hours, regardless of whether staff are care experienced or not, can reduce stigma in the workplace.” - CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

## 6. Conclusions

A range of individuals and organisations with detailed knowledge and lived experience of care participated in the consultation, sharing their time, views and experiences on how best to support young people as they transition from care into adulthood. This report provides a high-level summary of the consultation responses. For more detail, readers are encouraged to read individual responses, where permission was given for publication, via the [Scottish Government's consultation website](#).

There was an overall consensus among respondents about the approaches and actions required to support young people moving on from care and into adulthood. Key themes reiterated throughout responses included the importance of multi-agency collaboration, staff upskilling professionals through trauma-informed training, and a person-centred, flexible approach to support.

Multi agency collaboration was highlighted as an important aspect of providing the necessary support for young people transitioning from care. Respondents emphasised the importance of different agencies working together while the young person was still in care and for children's and adult services to work together in preparation for the transition. A lack of communication between local authorities and other organisations in support systems was perceived as problematic, in particular when young people hoped to move closer to their birth family or decided to attend further or higher education institutions in a different local authority area.

Ensuring that all those who engage with young people with care experience have a good understanding of trauma was a common theme. They noted that building an understanding of care experience among those who support or provide services to this group, including future employers, teachers and university staff, midwives and housing officers, could improve the transition to adulthood and reduce any potential discrimination and stigma that those with care experience may face.

Considering each young person's individual experiences and providing flexible pathways and support, particularly around care planning and assessments, was also emphasised repeatedly. Respondents noted that each young person has a unique history, with their own diverse needs and will prefer varying levels of independence as they transition out of care. Respondents noted it is important to provide options, to listen to the desires of the young person and to be realistic about what next steps are available.

Beyond these overarching themes, respondents regularly noted the importance of clear communication; signposting young people to available support and services, particularly as they start to live independently; providing young people with the skills needed to live independently, including access to budgeting, cooking and homemaking skills; and support to access education and employment. Several respondents highlighted corporate parenting responsibilities and noted the potential to provide voluntary, work placement or employment opportunities for young people with care experience to fulfil these responsibilities.

Throughout the consultation and engagement events, respondents expressed concern about abrupt ends to support, preferring gradual transitions. A common theme was support for early engagement with young people, care workers and support teams around each transition. Several respondents requested protocols to provide young people with a 'no wrong door' policy, allowing them to access a range of support workers whom they could approach with questions and concerns as they move into adulthood.

A recurring theme throughout responses was a shortfall in funding and staffing to support young people as they transition out of care and into adulthood. Respondents noted budgetary restrictions limited the number of available staff and that excessive workloads were detrimental to staff retention. While extending eligibility for Continuing Care and Aftercare and providing access for young people with care experience to Lifelong Care was supported, respondents questioned how it would be possible within current budgets and with overstretched social work and social care staff. Similarly, resource challenges with specific support services were noted. For example, long waiting times for mental health support during the transition phase were highlighted, as were housing shortages, which can create a barrier to transitioning into appropriate tenancies.

Overall, there is widespread agreement about how to address the challenges faced by young people with care experience as they transition into adulthood. Alongside other evidence, the consultation responses provide valuable and informative evidence for the Scottish Government to draw upon when developing policies to help ensure all young people in Scotland who are care experienced can reach their full potential.

# Appendix A: Consultation Questions

Q1. How can we ensure that young people, and those who support them, are given enough time, advice and resources to effectively prepare them for moving on from care? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q2. Are there any barriers to starting the process of planning and preparing for young people leaving care at an early stage? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q3. How can we ensure young people receive the right support and guidance to build the life skills they need for adulthood before they move on from care? Please provide suggestions in the open text box.

Q4. What services and support should be considered and provided to a care leaver who returns home to live with their birth family? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q5. Can you provide examples of good practice where services have worked together in a holistic way to support birth families and young people moving on from care when the young person returns to live with their birth family? Please provide any examples and share your views in the open text box.

Q6. How do we ensure that young people with care experience, and those who provide them with care, can easily access information about entitlements and support? Please provide any examples of good practice you are aware of in the open text box.

Q7. Are there any changes you would like to see as part of the eligibility criteria for Continuing Care? Please provide details of your suggestions in the open text box.

Q8. What additional support do you think is required for families, professionals and practitioners who are responsible for providing Continuing Care arrangements? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q9. How do we ensure that young people, and their views, are heard during discussions on Continuing Care which impact them? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q10. How can we make sure young people can access the range of support they need when they leave care through the provision of Aftercare? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q11. Are there any changes you would like to see as part of the eligibility criteria for Aftercare? Please provide details of your suggestions in the open text box.

Q12. What do you think the challenges would be in changing the eligibility criteria for Aftercare? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q13. What do you think would be the best way to provide long term support and services to adults with care experience? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q14. What do you think the challenges would be in providing support and services to adults with care experience? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q15. What improvements do you think could be made to the support given to those leaving secure care? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q16. How do we ensure all young people in Scotland get equal access to the support services they need during the transition from and after leaving secure care? Please provide examples or suggestions in the open text box.

Q17. What improvements could be made to the support given to people with care experience at the transition point from leaving young offenders institutions or prison? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q18. How do we ensure all young people get access to the same support services when they are leaving young offenders institutions or prison, regardless of where they are located in Scotland? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q19. Can you share details of any services that are already working well to support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people transitioning out of care? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q20. What supports and/or improvements do you think could be implemented to ensure we meet the particular needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people transitioning out of care in Scotland? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q21. Can you tell us about any specific services or supports that already work well for disabled young people or people with complex health needs leaving care? Please provide details in the open text box.

Q22. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure disabled young people leaving care have the support they need when they make the transition into adulthood? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q23. What improvements can you suggest in the support provided to young people with care experience as they prepare to give birth or become parents? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q24. How can the workforce be better supported to help care experienced people as they become parents? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q25. How can children's and adults' services better work together to provide whole family support for parents who are care experienced? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q26. In what ways would you like to see peer support used by people leaving care and/or caregivers during a young person's transition from care into adulthood? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q27. Do you know of any examples where peer support networks have had a positive impact on the experience of leaving care, either for care leavers or those who supported them? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q28. How can we better enable young people and the supportive adults in their lives to maintain healthy relationships once the young person has moved on from care? Please provide any suggestions or examples you may have.

Q29. What types of support and advice do you think should be available to care leavers as part of an out-of-hours service? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q30. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure care leavers have access to services which support their physical health, and mental health and wellbeing? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q31. What improvements do you think could be made to ensure a smooth transition is made between children and adult physical health services, mental health services and wellbeing services? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q32. Please tell us about any good practice you are aware of that supports young people leaving care to find a home that meets their needs. Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q33. What do you think are the main barriers in securing appropriate housing for a young person with care experience? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q34. How can we ensure there is sufficient support, planning and preparation provided to care leavers moving into their own accommodation for the first time? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q35. What forms of support do you think would help someone leaving care and entering their first tenancy to stay in that property for as long as they want to? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q36. How can we ensure the views and needs of people leaving care are taken into account when decisions are made about where they should live when they leave care? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

Q37. In what areas would you like to see improvements to the service, support and funding for students who are care experienced? Please explain your answer and provide any suggestions in the open text box.

Q38. How can we better support care experienced students to complete their studies? Please explain your answer and provide any examples of good practice in the open text box.

Q39. What would help young people with care experience find secure and fulfilling work, develop their skills or build their confidence? Please provide examples in the open text box.



Q40. Can you share any examples of good practice, in the private and public sector, where young people leaving care have been supported into employment or training, or have been supported to build their confidence? Please provide examples in the open text box.

Q41. How do you think employers can be better supported or encouraged to recruit, train, support and retain young people who are care experienced? Please explain your answer in the open text box.

## Appendix B: Organisations responding

The following organisations responded to the consultation and gave permission for their response to be published.

### Corporate parents

Aberdeen City Council  
Care Inspectorate  
Children's Hearings Scotland  
Children's Services, Scottish Borders Council  
Dumfries & Galloway Council  
East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership  
East Lothian Council Children's Services  
Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership  
Perth and Kinross Council  
Public Health Scotland  
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration  
Shetland Islands Council  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Stirling Council  
West Lothian Council

### Other organisations

Aberlour  
Barnardo's Scotland  
British Psychological Society  
CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection  
Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (University of Strathclyde)  
Clan Childlaw  
COSLA  
Cyrenians  
Families Outside  
Goal 17 Ltd  
Inspiring Scotland (Intandem programme)  
MyBnk  
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Scotland  
National Youth Justice Advisory Group  
Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers  
Parenting across Scotland  
Rock Trust on behalf of A Way Home Scotland & Aff the Streets  
Scottish Association of Social Work  
Scottish Funding Council  
Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance  
Shared Lives Plus  
Social Work Scotland  
Staf  
The Fostering Network  
The Promise Scotland  
Who Cares? Scotland



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