



# SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS FOR TRANSITION-AGED YOUTH IN ENGLAND

Introducing “Staying Close”

# A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

- The key term we'll be using is "care leaver". This is defined in legislation as a young person over 16 who was in state care for a defined length of time as a child/teenagers. It is generally used to describe young people in the 17-21 age bracket, although some entitlements (such as support from a Personal Adviser) extend to 25.
- The equivalent American phrase might be "transition aged youth".
- In the English context, the phrase "foster care" only refers to young people living with a family that isn't their birth family. We use the term "residential care" or "children's home" for settings comprising some type of group care setting employing paid staff.
- Although many of the principles are common across the UK, each of the four UK nations has different legislation. This presentation refers to England.

# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

1

- Care Leavers – the Legislative and Policy context
- Care Leaver Statistics

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- Staying Close Overview – What is Staying Close?
- Staying Close – Learning from the pilots

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- Staying Close, Staying Connected – the Break approach
- Scaling SCSC

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- Looking Ahead – The Care Review
- Looking Ahead – a National Entitlement to Staying Close?

# LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT (1)

- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Introduced requirements for Local Authorities to:
  - Assess the needs of a young person as they left care
  - Appoint a Personal Adviser to support the young person's transition
  - Prepare a Pathway Plan to set out agreed plans such as accommodation, education etc.
  - Responsibility of Local Authority extended to age 18, (21 if young person was in education).
- Children & Young Persons Act 2008 extended the duties:
  - LAs required to assist care leavers in education, including a £2000 bursary for those in higher education
  - PA support extended to 21 and 25 for those in education

# LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT (2)

- Children & Families Act 2014 : This introduced the “Staying Put” programme, allowing young people 16+ to stay with their former foster carers until age 21 if both the young person and the family wanted
- Children & Social Work Act 2017 required Local Authorities to:
  - Provide and publish on their website a “local offer” describing support available to young people leaving care
  - Provide PA support for all care leavers until the age of 25
- In 2017 A National Implementation Adviser was appointed to identify and share good practice between Local Authorities.
- In 2018 “Staying Close” pilots were announced – a variant of “Staying Put” for young people leaving residential care.



# LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT (3)

- 2021 – Government commissioned an “Independent Care Review” to review the operation of the whole care system, including improvements to support for young people leaving care.
- 2022 - The English Care Review reported in May 2022 and recommended:
  - “Care Experience” should be treated as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act – similar to disability or age, to challenge discrimination.
  - “No young person should leave care without at least two loving relationships”
  - “Double the proportion of care leavers attending University”
  - “Create at least 3,500 well-paid jobs and apprenticeships for care leavers each year”
  - “Reduce Care Leaver homelessness now” - including offering Staying Close to every young person leaving residential care.
  - “Increase life expectancy and narrow health inequalities”.

# LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT (4)

- 2023: Government Response:
  - Protected Characteristic: Recommendation not accepted
  - Relationships: Consultation on a new “lifelong bond” legislative order & funding for pilots of new approaches to support care leavers’ relationship with family
  - Education: Additional funds for Care Leavers attending University
  - Employment: Additional funds for Care Leavers doing an apprenticeship – limited support for other employment opportunities
  - Housing: Accepted in principle recommendation for Staying Close to be available to all young people leaving residential care – but no time for legislation
  - Health: additional staff training but no additional funding for support
- Consultation on the Government’s Response runs until 11<sup>th</sup> May.

# CARE LEAVER STATISTICS

- In March 2022 there were nearly 46,000 care leavers between 17 and 21, of which 33,600 were aged 19-21.

Age of care leaver	Number of care leavers					Percentage the LA in 'in touch' with				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
17 years	610	490	470	480	460	77%	74%	74%	73%	68%
18 years	10,420	10,700	11,190	11,580	11,890	94%	94%	95%	95%	95%
19 to 21 years	28,490	29,910	31,250	32,490	33,590	88%	89%	90%	91%	92%
19 years	10,090	10,470	10,760	11,280	11,630	91%	92%	93%	94%	94%
20 years	9,430	10,030	10,460	10,750	11,240	89%	89%	90%	92%	93%
21 years	8,980	9,410	10,040	10,460	10,720	84%	86%	86%	88%	89%



# CARE LEAVER NUMBERS & ACTIVITY

- Local Authorities are required to collect data on a number of care leaver characteristics. This includes:
  - Whether young people leaving care are in education, employment or training
  - What sort of accommodation they are living in
  - Whether the accommodation they are living in is considered suitable.

	17-year-olds	18-year-olds	19- to 21- year-olds
<b>Number of care leavers</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>11,890</b>	<b>33,590</b>
<b>Percentage who were not in education, employment or training</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Percentage whose activity was not known</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>

# CARE LEAVER ACCOMMODATION

- As care leavers get older, they tend to transition into more independent living arrangements.
- For 18-year-old care leavers 32% were in semi-independent transitional accommodation, 20% were with former foster carers, 12% were living with parents or relatives and 10% were in independent living . 4% of 18 year-old care leavers were considered to be living in unsuitable accommodation.
- For 19- to 21-year-old care leavers 36% were living independently, 18% were living in semi-independent transitional accommodation, 10% were living with parents or relatives and 9% were living with former foster carers. 6% of 19-21 year-old care leavers were considered to be living in unsuitable accommodation.
- 62% of 18-year olds and 31% of 19 & 20 year-olds who had been living with a foster carer when they turned 18 were in a “Staying Put” placement 3 months after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

# CARE LEAVER IMMIGRATION STATUS

- Asylum-seeking Children and young people who arrive in the UK unaccompanied before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday here, have a right to be looked after by a Local Authority in the care system.
- A significant (and increasing) proportion of young people leaving care are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

UASC Care Leavers	Number 2022	Percentage 2022
18 years	2,910	24%
19 years	3,100	27%
20 years	3,050	27%
21 years	2,570	24%

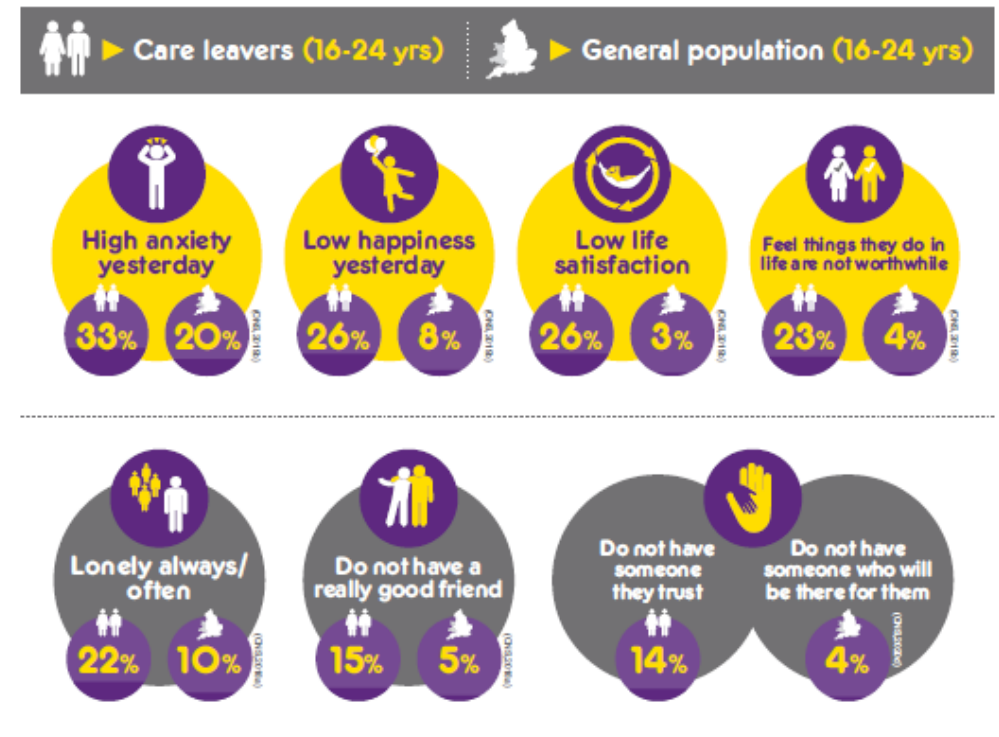
# CARE LEAVERS' WELLBEING (BRIGHT SPOTS SURVEY)

Not-for-profit organisation Coram Voice works with Local Authorities to help them find out more about how care leavers in their area feel about life (Bright Spots Survey).

Recent data shows that care leavers in England are more likely to be anxious, unhappy, lonely and feel they don't have someone to trust, than the general population.

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/bright-spots-programme/>

Figure 3: Comparative well-being – care leavers compared with peers in the general population



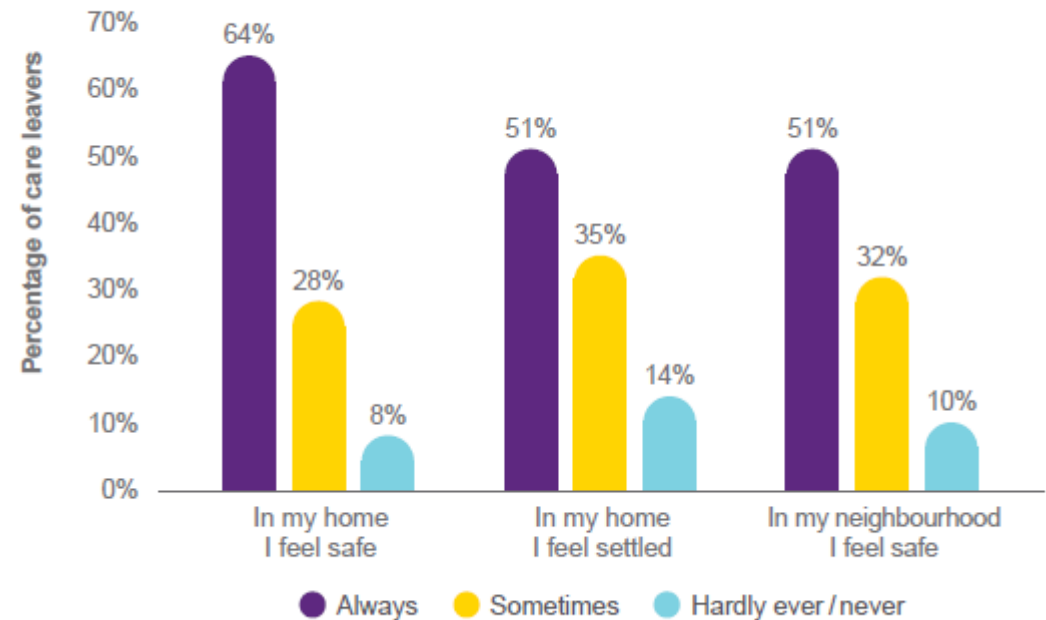
# HOW CARE LEAVERS FELT ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVED

The Bright Spots Survey shows that

- Only 64% of care leavers always feel safe in their home
- Only 51% of care leavers always feel settled in their home, or safe in their neighbourhood.
- 14% of care leavers say they never feel settled in their home.

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/bright-spots-programme/>

Figure 8: How care leavers felt about where they lived



Base: 1,707-1,742



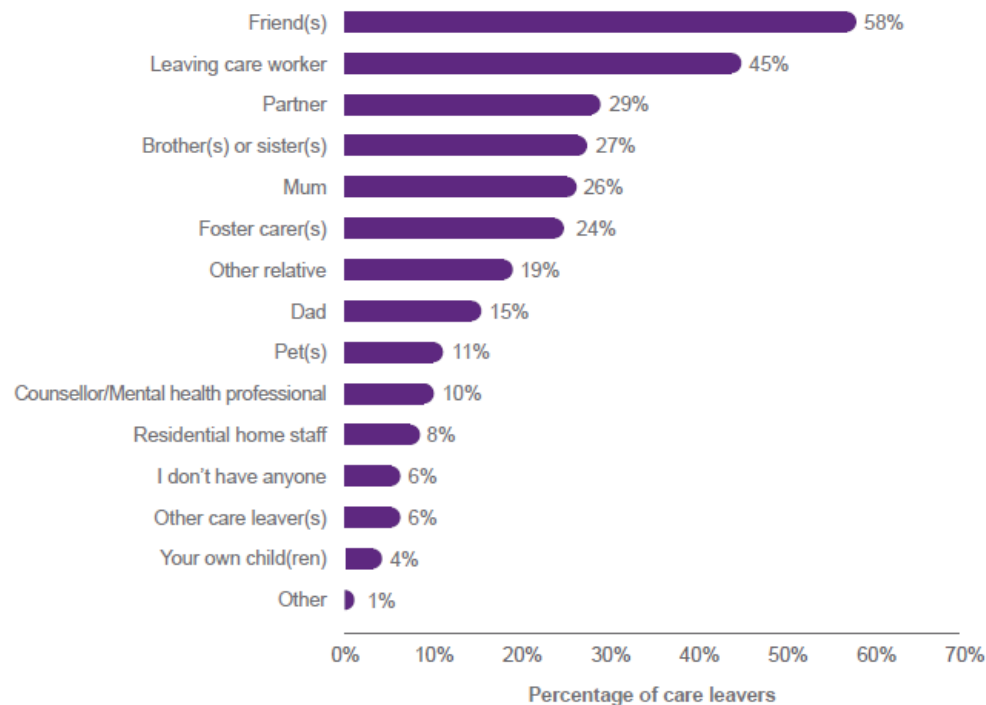
# EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Bright Spots Survey asks where care leavers get emotional support from. This shows that:

- 58% of care leavers say they get the most emotional support from their friends
- 45% say they get the most emotional support from their leaving care worker
- 29% say they get the most support from their partner
- 27% say they get the most support from their brother(s) or sister(s).

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/bright-spots-programme/>

Figure 20: Sources of emotional support for care leavers



Base: 1,804

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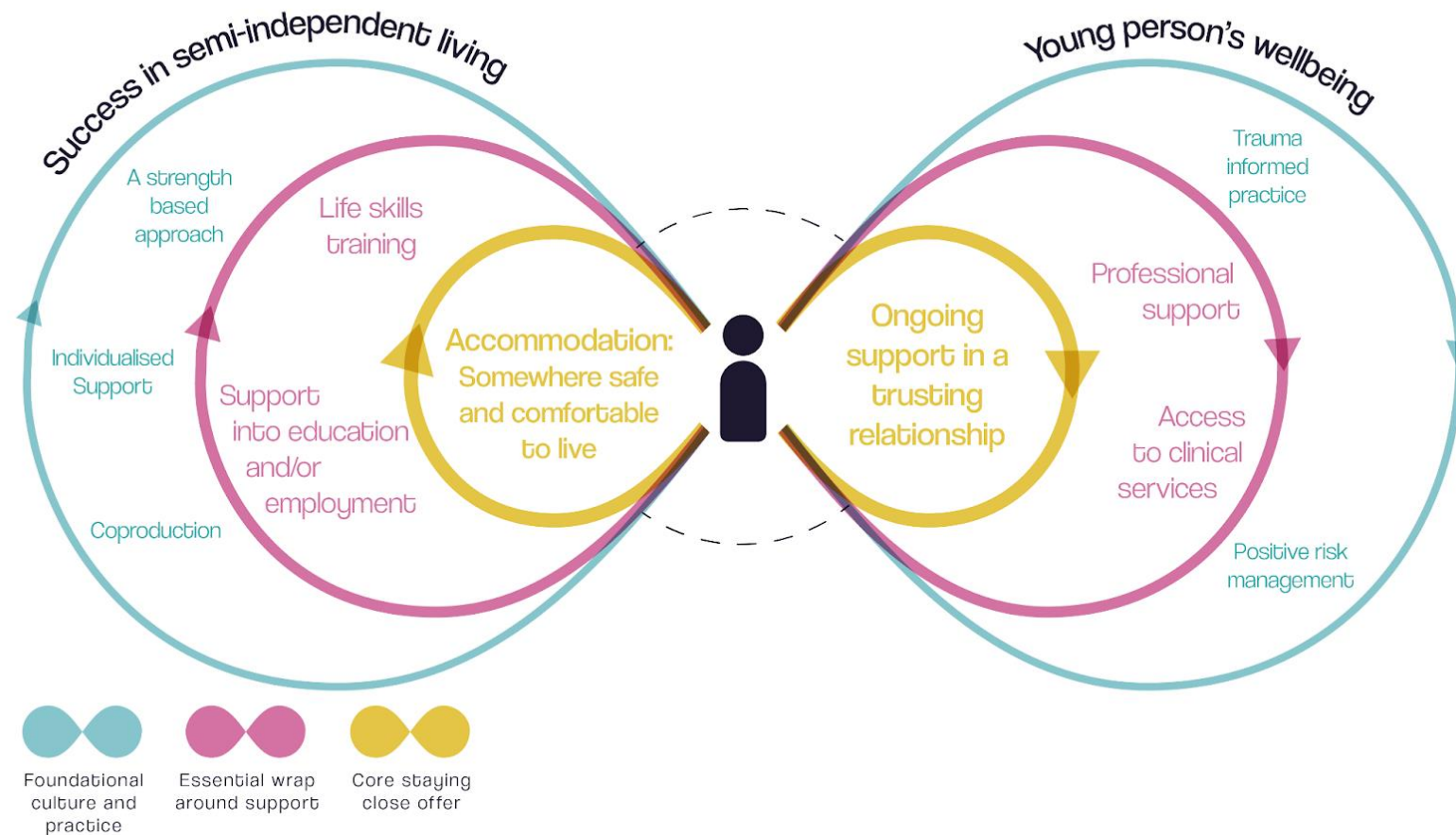
# STAYING CLOSE OVERVIEW

Staying Close extends the period of support for young people leaving residential care, giving them more time to prepare and to determine the right time for them to live independently

# WHAT IS STAYING CLOSE?

- Staying Put introduced in 2014 – no equivalent entitlement for young people leaving residential care
- Scoping report looked at options involving young people
- Martin Narey report 2016:
  - Recognised impact of transition out of residential care homes
  - Staying Put for residential care leavers to 'Stay Close'
  - Recommendation 33: Subject only to verifying my cost estimates through a number of Innovation Programme pilots, I urge the Government to commit to introducing Staying Close
- 8 pilots funded in 2018 – independent evaluations
- In 2022 15 further Local Authorities funded

# STAYING CLOSE CORE FRAMEWORK





# STAYING CLOSE CORE FRAMEWORK

The framework is intended as a starting point for other local authorities and voluntary organisations hoping to offer Staying Close in their locality.

There are three parts to the framework:

- **The Core Staying Close offer** - somewhere to live and a trusted person to offer ongoing support.
- **Essential wrap around support** - other services and opportunities adapted for the needs of young people leaving residential care. Many of these will already exist; some may need to be newly provided/commissioned.
- **Foundational Culture and Practice** - the values and ways of working that help young people to thrive.

# PILOTING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

- Staying Close projects have trialled a range of accommodation, depending on the local housing market and what young people want:
  - Supported (staffed) accommodation
  - Independent flats in the social housing sector
  - Independent flats in the private rented sector
  - Shared houses/ bed-sits
- Staying Close projects have provided a range of additional support:
  - Music/art therapy
  - In-house health & wellbeing service
  - Commissioned clinical psychology support from NHS or not-for-profit provider

# LEARNING FROM THE PILOTS

This the advice the pilot sites would give, if they were starting again....

<p><b>Make time for implementing Staying Close and for exploring how to adopt and adapt this way of working to meet the needs of your young people.</b></p>	<p><b>Keep young people at the centre of all that you do: offer support that is tailored to their individual strengths and needs.</b></p>	<p><b>Build good relationships with young people and with partners.</b></p>	<p><b>Engage early and ensure young people move when they are ready to do so, avoiding emergency moves</b></p>	<p><b>Young people may see their key trusting relationship as being with someone from their home - or someone else. Young people should have a say in who supports them.</b></p>
<p><b>A range of housing options should be available including shared and single accommodation.</b></p>	<p><b>Young people need different support at different times and relationships can change over time. But as support tapers off they need to know they will be 'held in mind.'</b></p>	<p><b>Set up monitoring processes from the start.</b></p>	<p><b>Establish governance arrangements so that you secure senior management support and buy-in from the outset.</b></p>	<p><b>Provide or arrange additional support to help young people develop positive emotional health and wellbeing.</b></p>

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# Staying Close, Staying Connected: The Break approach



Stephen Hulme | ACRC Conference May 2023





# Who are Break Charity?

- A charity supporting young people in care, on the edge of care and leaving care.
- Based in Norwich, Norfolk
- Services across Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk



# What needed to change?

- YP leaving residential care had significantly worse outcomes in relation to:
  - Homelessness
  - Employment and education
  - Mental Health
  - Alcohol/Drug use
- When young people left our homes, the transition was often too big a step
- There wasn't move on options that suited young people's needs





# What needed to change?

- Young people told us
  - They want to feel safe
  - They want transition homes
  - They want support as they need it
  - They want to feel better prepared
- Young people told us they felt overwhelmed by contact with too many staff – they preferred consistency



# What we set out to achieve

## **We committed that young people would:**

- Will receive a tailored and predictable service
- Will design the service with us to meet their needs
- Will have high quality transition homes where they want them
- Will have lifelong support whenever they need it
- Will be better prepared for independence through earlier engagement
- Will be encouraged to have aspirational thinking and plans to achieve dreams
- Will have emotional wellbeing support
- Will choose the relationships they want to maintain and have continuity







# Key Features

- Staying Close to what is important to the young person
- Support plans tailored to the young person
- Starting with relationships
- In-house emotional wellbeing service and trauma informed practice
- Genuine Co-production
- A Lifelong offer and building social networks
- Increased tolerance built into housing approach
- Tenancy flipping – their transition home can become their home



# Emotional Wellbeing Service

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) carried out research into the provision of mental health services for care leavers

They identified that ‘**Leaving care teams can lack experience of mental health difficulties** and how they can be recognised and managed.’ The report also identifies that a ‘Lack of uptake by service users, according to the young people, is largely due to: the **emotional challenge of accessing support**; a lack of satisfaction with services; **poor relationships with service staff**; stigma; and **service inaccessibility**.’

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/lat01/lat01summary.pdf>



# Emotional Wellbeing Service

- In-house team who are 'present' in the service
- A service that meets young people where they are (geographically, emotionally, developmentally)
- No waiting lists and no session limit
- Provide reflection sessions and support for staff team
- Support the journey towards trauma-informed practice





# Trauma-informed practice

Developmental Trauma is the term used to describe the impact of early, repeated trauma and loss which happens within the child's important relationships, and usually early in life.

*When the trauma occurs in childhood, because children's brains are still developing, trauma has a much more pervasive and long-range influence on their self-concept, on their sense of the world and on their ability to regulate themselves.*





## The lens we look through...

mental health difficulty or developmental trauma?







## At the beginning

housing

participation  
and  
employment



peer support

transitions worker

Emotional wellbeing



## What we are moving towards

peer support

housing

Emotional  
Wellbeing Service

awareness of and support to manage the impact of early  
(dev) trauma for yp and for staff



participation and  
employment

transitions worker



# Proving the Impact

## Independent evaluations:

- York University [The Break Staying Close, Staying Connect Project: Evaluation Report — York Research Database](#)
- University of East Anglia [Staying Close, Staying Connected - Evaluation Report 2022 - Break \(break-charity.org\)](#)

## Impacts and outcomes

**64%**

in education, training and employment  
\*compared to 39% locally



**3%**

experienced criminalisation  
\* compared to 25% regionally



**50%**

accessing emotional  
wellbeing



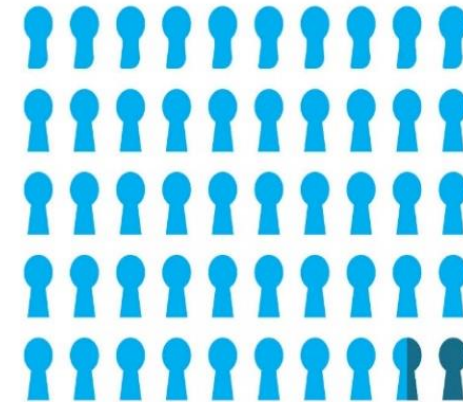
**0%**

experienced homelessness  
\*compared to 30% locally



**97%**

stability for young people  
\*compared to 36\*% locally



# Quotes from the evaluation....

“There was evidence of positive progress in all the outcomes the project had set out to improve (including housing stability and participation in education, employment and training”.

“After initial problems with recruitment and retentions of transitions workers, the project was operating as intended and achieving progress in its stated aims.”



# Scaling Staying Close

- In Autumn 2021 the East Midlands region embarked on a five-month Development Programme, with the aim to learn about Break's Staying Close model
- Participants talked about three areas as 'game changers':
  - New solutions to housing challenges
  - An integrated emotional wellbeing service informed by developmental trauma and attachment theory
  - Co-production at the core of everything you do





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# THE ENGLISH CARE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAYING CLOSE

- The Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England recommended that
  - All young people leaving residential care should have a legal right to "Staying Close"
  - Staying Close should be available to age 23 (rather than 21, as now)
  - Staying Close should be available on an "opt out" rather than "opt in" basis
- The Review assumed that there would be savings to the public purse from reduced homelessness, increased participation in Employment, Education & Training, so that there would start to be a return on investment in twelve years
- The Review recommended legislation be introduced in 2023 to give the required statutory powers



# THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE ON STAYING CLOSE

- The Government responded to the Independent Review in February 2023.
- The Government's response committed to bring forward legislation to make Staying Close a national entitlement.
- However this depends on Parliamentary time being found, which is unlikely before 2025. This means national roll-out is at least three years away.
- The Government has said that it will explore extending Staying Close to age 23. There is no time-frame for this.



# TOWARDS A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT – SLOWLY!

- Fifteen local areas started Staying Close pilots in October 2022.
- A further round of pilots was announced in January 2023, for the two years 2023 – 2025.
- There is funding of £8.1 million per year in 2023-24 and 2024-25, with an ambition for half of Local Authorities in England to be delivering Staying Close by March 2025.
- A Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) will be run alongside the 2023 – 2025 pilots to test the impact of the Staying Close model on young people's outcomes and to inform the design of a national entitlement.

# THANK YOU

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