

'Moving On' From Care Into Adulthood - consultation – October 2024

Inspiring Scotland's response

Submitted: 3 October 2024

The Scottish Government wants Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up. However, many young people with care experience may not have the same informal support networks that other young people have during transition points in their lives. We need to ensure the right level of support is readily available and easily accessible for young people moving on from care and into adulthood.

The 'Moving On' From Care Into Adulthood consultation is about ensuring young people leaving care and moving into adulthood have the right scaffolding of support available to ensure they thrive.

About intandem and our response

Managed by Inspiring Scotland, intandem is Scotland's mentoring programme for children and young people at risk of care or with experience of care. Most young people supported are living in kinship care or are looked after at home, but some are in other forms of care. Mentoring starts between the ages of 8 and 15 years meeting once a week in the community for as long as needed.

Established in 2016, intandem is delivered by 12 partner charities across 20 local authorities. Partner charities and mentors often build trusted relationships with the family and it allows families to benefit from support.

intandem submitted the following response to the consultation after seeking the opinions of the following groups:

- young people mentored by intandem and approaching the stage of moving on from care into adulthood,
- young adults who are volunteer mentors with intandem and have their own lived experience of moving on from care into adulthood,
- kinship carers supported by intandem, and
- staff of intandem partner organisations who work directly with young people and families.

intandem responded to questions where those consulted had views to share.

Planning and preparation for moving on from care into adulthood

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?

We consulted young people, young adults with lived experience of leaving care, kinship carers and professionals within our intandem partner organisations and all agreed it was essential that young people are given enough time, advice and resources to effectively prepare for moving on from care.

A pathway plan wasn't something any had direct experience of it was something they considered might be available to young people living in residential placements rather than in kinship or at home on a CSO. However, a plan was seen as a positive step to help support young people.

There was a sense of young people slipping through the net, particularly those in kinship care and those at home on CSOs. Information isn't readily available for young people and it seems to be missing at such a vital time in their life. There appears to be an assumption that all parents and kinship carers are able to support young people with the transition to adulthood however this is definitely not the case.

One professional commented *"some kinship carers are struggling to cope and are focused on surviving day-to-day. They don't have the information or capacity to help a young person prepare for moving on from care into adulthood."*

Professionals observed young people in residential care have a package of support around them and help with transition, but other forms of care slip through the net. They felt strongly there should be support available to help with the transition to adulthood for all young people in care, or with previous experience of care.

Accessing information, services and support

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?

Everyone consulted – young people at the stage of moving on from care, young adults who have lived experience of moving on from care, kinship carers and professionals – agreed that school is the ideal place to build the life skills young people need for adulthood. It should be part of the curriculum; it can't be left to chance.

One young adult commented *"someone needs to guide you, teach you about not wasting your money, or how to stop people who want to stay at your gaff. I was lucky I had a good care worker, and I was proactive about having a different life. I downloaded budgeting apps. I don't want to be like my family in Dundee."*

A young person pointed out *"school should give you life skills like budgeting, cooking and how to make an appointment with a doctor. We get health and wellbeing at school from S1 to S4 but life skills should be part of this."*

Another young person commented *“teach life skills in school. Some schools don’t even do cookery anymore, so you don’t know how to cook dinners.”*

While all agree school is the ideal place for young people to learn life skills, we recognise there are problems with this approach:

- schools currently do not have the capacity or knowledge to teach these skills. One of the professionals we spoke to was previously a teacher and she commented *“schools are a good way to teach life skills, but teachers are not informed, and you have so many other responsibilities.”*
- Young people not attending school would miss the vital life skills lessons.

For young people not attending school, utilising Link Workers was a suggestion. The professionals we spoke to widely agreed they are trusted by families and often build up a good relationship with young people so could be a good option for teaching life skills.

Another suggestion was teaching the skills in a hub setting where young people could attend. This idea came from professionals working with young people with care experience, but was also endorsed by a young adult who had attended a course run by Action for Children on life skills. She said:

“I was 22 years old, but some were 16. We covered budgeting, council tax, and one afternoon we had to do fake calls to a plumber! It was life changing. It should be in the schools because you can elect out of home economics.”

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?

One young adult with lived experience of moving on from care into adulthood commented *“my Aftercare worker was great and told me what I was entitled to.”*

Young adults felt their workers were the key to getting information about entitlements and support. However, this relies on workers having access to the right information, and every young person having a worker they trust.

Professionals commented that information was not always easily accessible, and it wasn’t being shared with those who could really benefit, for example, kinship carers or young people who have experience of the care system but are no longer in care, or have a relationship with a social worker when they move into adulthood.

Young people highlighted a central place would be helpful to access information about entitlements and supports, for example a helpline or a website. However, this would only be effective if young people knew about the website and helpline.

One young person suggested *“I think a pack should be sent to where you are staying with information about entitlements and support. It could have a QR code to where you can find more information and a helpline number which would be useful for those with no internet. It could even have a voucher for food or clothes”.*

Lifelong Care

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

Professionals felt it important there was support available long term for people with care experience. One commented *“often young people are desperate to be out of the care system, it often hasn’t been a positive experience for them. But they should have the option to link back in at a point when they realise they need it. Information provision is key.”*

This point is backed up by the young people we met keen to move into adulthood and be out of the care system. They didn’t see themselves needing long term support, however all commented that it might be useful for people with additional support needs.

However, a young adult commented *“everyone needs support at some point in your life”* and another recognised that *“support might be needed if you don’t have a good network.”*

A young adult felt the charity sector would be best to provide long term support as they build trust and positive relationships with people with care experience rather than statutory services. These are essential qualities for the organisation providing long term support, so people feel comfortable to reach out and ask for support when they need it without fear or judgement.

Wherever the service was delivered everyone we consulted felt it should be well publicised and information about the service easy to find.

A kinship carer commented *“there may be times a young person does need to access long term support during their life, particularly if they have additional support needs, but it shouldn’t really be needed if we meet the Promise.”*

Peer support and maintaining lifelong links

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?

Everyone consulted – young people, young adults with lived experience of leaving care, kinship carers and professionals within our intandem partner organisations – felt peer support was very positive and could make a big difference to a young person transitioning from care into adulthood.

A young person highlighted *“being able to speak to someone slightly older who understands and been through something similar would be a really good idea”*.

This was backed up by a young adult who now lives independently who commented *“peer support would be helpful, someone with experience of similar things. Someone to ask questions. When you leave care you don’t want everything done for you but you don’t know how to do anything!”*.

When discussing peer support a young person who is part of the intandem youth forum immediately thought of another member of the youth forum as someone she could turn to for peer support as she is

older and about to transition to adulthood. For some young people they may already have a network they can access, but for others peer support would need to be a service offered and managed professionally.

A professional we spoke to felt offering one-to-one peer support would be great, but a group setting would be best. She commented *“peer support in a group setting, where the young people are all at the same point to share ideas and experiences could be huge. They would realise they aren't alone in experiencing worries and challenges. It would also be a good place to celebrate successes which is really important. This could be tied in with teaching life skills and they could cook for each other and have a discussion with older adults who have done it to learn from what they have been through.”*

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?

Lifelong links was felt to be very important and something that should be encouraged and promoted where appropriate.

A professional commented *“we create these huge relationships, and they are really hard to create, so it can be a big loss. Boundaries need to be set with a young person and a manager to work out the best way to continue the relationship. Is it a Christmas card or is it meeting once every couple of months for a coffee? I still have a relationship with some young people I worked with when I was in residential and it's really important to me.”*

A young person about to move on from care mentioned *“I'll keep in contact with carers, you create bonds with staff.”*

It's clear this area is very important to both young people and the adults who care for them. It should be something openly discussed when appropriate and the boundaries of the ongoing relationship agreed by all parties. Every relationship is unique, and the nature of an ongoing relationship will also be unique.

Health and wellbeing

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?

Information provision is essential for young people leaving care so they know how to access services.

A professional commented *“signposting is really important here – how to make a GP appointment, but also ensuring they have the confidence to make the call and understanding what you go to the doctor for”*. This point also ties into the importance of life skills being taught to young people.

Young people felt more mental health support was needed. They all mentioned more counsellors should be available to young people in the care system, or once they have transitioned to adulthood.

One young person commented *“it’s important that you can choose who you want to speak to, in fact young people should be involved in the recruitment of counsellors. My experience is they aren’t there when you needed it, you can only get access at random times. The school counsellors only wanted to talk about school, they are awful, but I needed to talk about other things.”*

If mental health support isn’t available for young people when they need it when *in care*, it feels like this is storing up problems for later in their life.

A young adult highlighted the importance of signposting young people transitioning from care to things that support health and mental health. It isn’t just about how to access a counsellor or a doctor, it’s about promoting aspects of life that support wellbeing. She highlighted *“volunteering is really good for your mental health and helps get a job. I joined activities at the YMCA to stop feeling lonely and I even joined a women’s cycling group. These things are all good for your mental health and young people need to be made aware of what’s available in the area they move to.”*

Housing

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.

Speaking to young adults and professionals we heard of good practice supporting young people leaving care to find a home that meets their needs.

A young adult mentioned the importance of her Throughcare worker to get a house that met her needs. She commented *“my Throughcare worker fought for a particular area for me due to my mental health and good support network in that area. They tried to give me a house in a different area but it wouldn’t have been good. I’ve got a house in that area now and it’s worked out well because I know people, it’s better for my anxiety and stress.”*

A professional mentioned that Shelter is good at linking in to help young people transition. However, they also highlighted this needs an adult or support worker to facilitate the process. This is ok if you are living in residential care with support workers available, but what about those who don’t have that support, for example young people in kinship care. Kinship carers can be living day-to-day and don’t have the capacity or knowledge to support a young person to transition to adulthood.

Whilst there are examples of good practice out there, and success stories of young people successfully transitioning, we also spoke to young people slipping through the net and ending up homeless or in inappropriate housing.

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

Everyone consulted – young people, young adults with lived experience of leaving care, kinship carers and professionals within our intandem partner organisations – felt there were challenges around a lack of information about housing options for young people moving on from care, the long timescale required to apply for housing and be successful, the availability of suitable housing, and the risk of ending up in homeless accommodation.

A young adult shared he had ended up in homeless accommodation when he couldn't stay at home any longer and had to move quickly. It was a frightening experience as a teenager with exposure to violence and addictions.

Another young adult shared having to be on the list for social housing for two years before she was able to get an offer of a house. She said young people need to get on the list early because it takes so long. A professional confirmed this by highlighting *“there isn't enough social housing for young people, particularly in their local area where they have a network of support. We're setting them up to fail right away with isolating them from their local community.”*

A young person we spoke to must move out of kinship care next year and she has started to look into getting onto the list for social housing. She shared feeling scared she'll end up in an area of Glasgow where she doesn't feel safe and won't have any network of friends or family. She has started to look into the options but it feels confusing and she isn't sure where to get help.

A kinship carer we spoke to commented *“the default option for young people leaving care shouldn't be to access social housing, I don't think it should be encouraged. It would be better to have a system where you are supported to stay where you are until you are able to afford rent or to buy.”*

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

In general, more information is needed, more time to plan, and more suitable accommodation options for care leavers.

A preference suggested by various young people, young adults and professionals was the introduction of dedicated housing for care leavers to avoid them ending up in homeless accommodation which can be a very unsafe environment. A professional commented *“there should be a certain place for young people that services that age group, so they don't get into dangerous situations with everybody and anybody in homeless accommodation.”*

A young person commented *“we need secure homeless accommodation for young people. There isn't anything like that at the moment so we end up in general homeless accommodation and there isn't enough spaces. It should be accommodation that is secure and there could be links with a nurse and police to ensure young people are safe and their health and wellbeing is looked after.”*

A young adult commented that a community links person helped her become more integrated into her new community when she moved on from care and it was very positive. This paid member of staff made sure she was connected in the community and linked in with her mental health nurse to make sure she was supported and had everything she needed to support her mental health. She commented that a year on she doesn't need this support but initially it was excellent. This resource feels like a positive way to ensure young people have a supported transition.

Further and Higher education

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

In general, those consulted felt the support available for young people heading to further and higher education was good. In some instances, the funding wasn't considered enough for young people who had no support network, but this wasn't the case for everyone.

A bigger issue raised was the support available if young people weren't going to further or higher education. One professional commented *"young people are let down if they aren't going into further or higher education, that's where the real problem is."*

Employment

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

One professional commented *"how scary a time it is for a young person moving on from care and having to find a job. They need to grow up so quickly as they suddenly have a lot of adult responsibilities. We need to help bridge the gap here. More work experience when in school would definitely help, possibly one day a week. This would give them experience of interacting with adults."*

Volunteering is great and a brilliant way to get experience and build confidence, but if a young person is moving into their own accommodation, they need money. They need to take a job at McDonalds for money rather than think longer term about a career. They are often living day-to-day and just focused on getting to the end of the week. Unfortunately planning for a better life gets pushed to the side so they can just survive."

A young adult we spoke to was able to volunteer while she was still in care and really benefited. She commented *"I got loads from volunteering – communication skills and working with different people. You're not just sitting on your arse doing nothing. I'm so happy I did it"*. Her volunteering work led to paid work and a career path.

Young people could be supported more to take on volunteer roles while they are still in care to build experience and skills, standing them in good stead for moving into paid employment.

Young people commented on the need for more modern apprenticeships and help with finding a job. A young person told us *"I don't know how to find a job"*.

Thank you

Inspiring Scotland would like to thank everyone who contributed to this response including young people mentored by intandem, young people who are members of the intandem youth forum InVoice, young adults who are now trained intandem mentors with lived care experience, kinship carers and staff of intandem partner organisations who work directly with young people and families. Our partner organisations are Aberlour, Barnardo's, Move On, YMCA Edinburgh, Right There, Y Sort It, Kirkcaldy YMCA, Befriend a Child, Quarriers, Action for Children, COVEY, and TCA.

For more information please contact Christine Roxburgh, intandem's Policy and Participation Lead on christine@inspiringscotland.org.uk.

Follow us:

Website: www.intandem.scot

X: [intandemScot](#)

Facebook: [intandemScot](#)

LinkedIn: [intandem Scot](#)