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Introduction

The findings of the Independent Care Review, published in 2020 gave us a clear, collective ambition for children and young people growing up in Scotland, which prioritises the needs of children, young people and their families. Our work to #KeepThePromise is ongoing and in 2021, intandem received funding from the Promise Partnership to explore the support available to children and young people who are looked after at home.

We wanted to **understand the support available**, and what support was missing, **from the perspective of children and young people, their families, and those who work alongside them**. We also wanted to understand where mentoring adds value, where there are gaps and what we can do to develop intandem in the way that children, young people and their families need.

This is an important piece of work as we know from previous research that children and young people who are looked after at home do not always have the support they need, in a responsive and timely way. We hope this report adds to the overall picture, and highlights where we can focus our collective efforts to respond to their needs.

This report is largely for our own learning and development, however we felt that it was important to share what children, young people and their families have told us. We know many are actively driving change, including the work being done to redesign the Children's Hearings System. What we have learnt will inform our future work but there are important takeaways for everyone supporting children and young people who are looked after at home.

The results of this research have once again confirmed the importance of developing services that meet the individual needs of children and young people; that work with and alongside families; and that are distinct but complementary to statutory services. To do this, we need to continue to invest in our approach to involve children and young people in the design and development of intandem; how we share learning with others and embed change across our partner charities; and how we collaborate and partner with statutory services, particularly social work teams.

This report will begin with a brief overview of recent research and what we know already. We will then touch on the method we took, followed by what we found and our reflections on how we will use this learning going forward.

What is intandem?

intandem is Scotland's national mentoring programme, offering mentoring on a regular basis to children and young people involved in the care system, specifically those living at home, under a Compulsory Supervision Order, and more recently, those in kinship care.

We believe that a consistent, long term, caring mentoring relationship helps children and young people to develop positive wellbeing and resilience, giving them the foundation they need to build strong relationships in the future and overcome trauma experienced in the past.

intandem is funded by Scottish Government and The Robertson Trust, and is managed by Inspiring Scotland.

intandem works alongside 12 partner charities in 19 local authorities to recruit, train and match volunteer mentors with children and young people.



Definitions

We have tried to make this report as easy to read as possible. However, there are a number of terms that we refer to throughout that we think need to be defined. These are:

Compulsory Supervision Orders

A Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) is a legal document put in place by the Children's Hearings System. A CSO means that the local authority is responsible for looking after and supporting a child or young person. A CSO can be put in place while a child or young person lives at home (referred to as a CSO with no condition of residence) or when they live somewhere else.

intandem Coordinator

The intandem Coordinator is a paid member of staff at one of our 12 partner charities who is responsible for supporting mentoring matches between young people and a volunteer from the community. Although their role is varied, the primary focus of our intandem Coordinators is building **relationships** with young people and their **families**, recruiting and training volunteers and supporting the mentoring match as it develops.

Looked after at home*

This term is used to describe when a child or young person continues to live at their home but has additional support from social workers to ensure that the requirements of a CSO, with no condition of residence, are being met.

Mentoring

Mentoring can mean different things, to different people. However, at intandem, we view mentoring as:

‘A relationship-based approach to supporting an individual (or group) by another or others. It should include both goal orientated social aspects of mentoring, based on the intrinsic value of relationships and the consent of the child or young person. It should be undertaken formally by trained mentors, taking into account existing relationships with family members and other informal mentor-type relationships with trusted adults.’ (Elsley, 2013)



Background and Context

Purpose: why is this research important?

In Scotland, in 2021, there were 7,959 children and young people subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) and of this number, 2,859 had a CSO with no condition of residence (SCRA, 2022). These types of CSO are now the most common form of CSO made by the Children's Hearings System (Henderson, Rogon and Kurlus, 2019).

To date, there has been limited dedicated research into the needs, preferences and support available to children and young people who are looked after at home. One piece of research that did focus on children and young people who are looked after at home highlighted that they often have distinct and complex support needs, that the support available to them can often be limited, and they generally have poorer outcomes than their peers (Welch et al., 2015).

More recent research conducted in 2019 by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and published in a series of seven reports reviewed the use and effectiveness of CSOs. The sixth report in the series researched the effectiveness of CSOs through the views and experiences of young people who had a CSO, and their parents.

The conclusions of this research were that a CSO can act as passport to receiving additional support but its effectiveness is largely dependent on the family accepting this support (Rogon, Kurlus and Henderson, 2019).

We know anecdotally from our partner charities that the wider support available to children and young people who are looked after at home, and their families, can be inconsistent. Positively, we know that there are great examples of children and young people feeling supported in a holistic and responsive way. Unfortunately, we also know that for others, the wider support available to them can be unreliable, that children and young people are not always included in the decisions that affect them and that the support available does not always respond to their individual needs.

Given the limited research, and what we've heard from our partner charities, we wanted to hear directly from children, young people and their families to better understand what support they have had and what support they feel they need in the future. intandem has been operating since 2016, and as we look ahead to the next phase of our work we need to adapt and develop to best respond to the needs and wishes of the children and young people who we are here to support.

We hope that this report will be useful to anyone involved in the lives of children and young people who are looked after at home.

Research aims: what did we want to find out?

By conducting this research we hoped to better understand the following from the perspective of children, young people and their families:

- ★ the support that was made available to children and young people who are looked after at home, and their families
- ★ the types of support children and young people would like to have in the future
- ★ the role and impact of mentoring for children and young people who are looked after at home



Methods

The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase of research used four distinct surveys to capture the views and experiences of:

- ★ children and young people who are looked after at home and mentored through intandem
- ★ parents of children and young people who are looked after at home and mentored through intandem
- ★ intandem mentors
- ★ intandem Coordinators

Table 1

Survey Participants	Responses
Children and Young People	64
Parents	25
Volunteer Mentors	69
intandem Coordinators	14

The 64 children and young people who had experience of intandem mentoring, and all who completed the survey were between the ages of 9 and 18. The survey was only sent to children and young people, and all were offered support to complete the survey if they wanted it.

12.5% of the respondents had been mentored for less than 6 months, and 31.3% had been mentored for 3 or more years.

The surveys explored the following:

- ★ the support that was made available to children, young people and families
- ★ the types of support children, young people and their families would like to have in the future
- ★ the role and impact of mentoring

The second phase of research involved semi-structured interviews with children and young people mentored through intandem; intandem Coordinators; and social workers. The interviews explored the topics outlined above in more depth, and were conducted in different ways, some were done in person and others were conducted over the phone.

Table 2

Interview Participants	
Children and Young People	17
intandem Coordinators	4
Social Workers	2

Limitations and Considerations

It must be noted that this research focused on young people mentored through intandem, and their families. Therefore, this research captures a small snapshot of the views and experiences of young people who are looked after at home, and those who support them. It was out with the scope of this research to hear from others central to managing CSOs such as, Children's Panel members. This may be an area for future research.

We cannot, and do not, claim that our findings are representative of every young person who is looked after at home. However, the findings in this report remain important as they are the views of young people who are seldom heard, and we must act on these.

We also feel it is important to highlight that this research was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. The past few years have had a profound impact on the lives of children and young people, much of which we will not understand for years to come. It has also put additional strain on all services and the support they have been able to provide. We believe this is important context to have when reading this report.



Key Findings

In this section we have outlined the key learning from the responses to the surveys and the in-depth interviews. We have organised the learning into different themes:

Support for children, young people and their families

- ✖ Multiple sources of support
- ✖ Support for families
- ✖ The impact of mentoring
- ✖ Exploring support and accessing opportunities

Roles, responsibilities and support provision

- ✖ The role of social work
- ✖ Implementation and removal of Compulsory Supervision Orders
- ✖ Partnership working and communication

Support for children, young people and their families

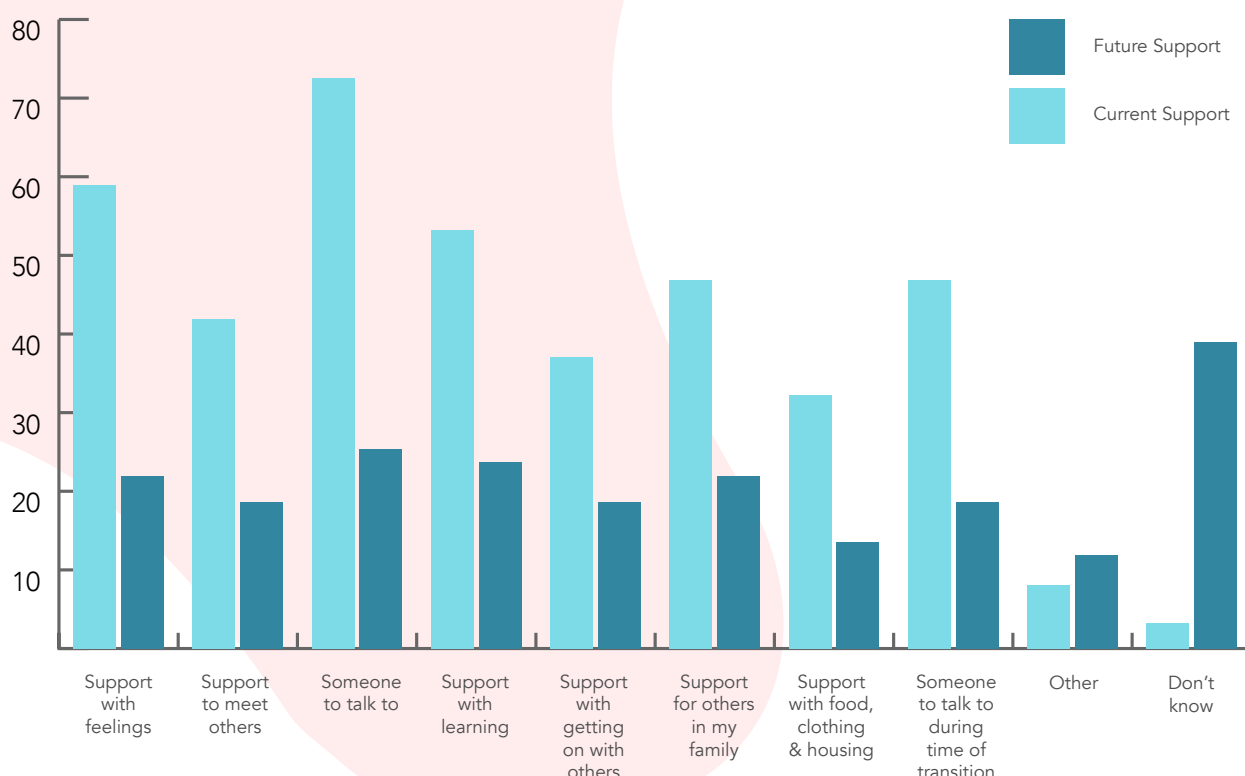
The main purpose of this research was to understand the support available to children and young people, from their perspective. We wanted to understand the reasons that children and young people are currently accessing support, and what they would like to have available in the future.

Figure 1 below shows the responses to these questions. Children and young people who completed the survey told us that the main reasons they were currently accessing support were to have 'someone to talk to' (73%) and 'support with feelings' (60%). These responses highlight the importance young people place on having someone else in their life to talk to and share things with. This is the main purpose of intandem - that children and young people have the opportunity to build a **positive and trusting relationship** with someone who is there just for them, for as long as they want. Therefore, it is no surprise that these two choices were selected the most.

Question: 'In your own words what is a mentor?'

'A volunteer that helps you go out and do stuff. It is good to have someone there to talk to when you are down.'
Young person

Figure 1



53% of children and young people told us they currently had 'support for learning' and 47% had 'support for others in my family'.

When asked to consider what type of support they would like in the future, the responses were more evenly spread than the responses to what support is currently received. Interestingly, as can be seen from Figure 1, the highest response to this question was 'don't know' (39%), closely followed by 'someone to talk to' (25.4%), 'support with learning' (23.7%), 'support with feelings' (22%), and 'support for others in my family' (22%).

We will now discuss the main themes related to the support currently available to children, young people and their families, and what they'd like to see in the future.

Multiple sources of support

Positively, 82% of the children and young people who completed the survey felt that they had the right amount of support in place. This is a really encouraging number but it is important for us to better understand the needs of the 8% who felt that they did not get enough support.

Although the majority of children and young people who completed the survey felt that they did have the right amount of support, it is important for us to acknowledge again that these results do not mean every young person who is looked after at home feels this way. All of the children and young people who completed the survey have, or had, access to a mentor which is not the case for every young person who is looked after at home in Scotland.

When asked who had provided support in the last few years, children and young people who completed the survey told us that the following people had done so:

Table 3

Children and Young People	Responses
intandem Mentor or Coordinator	86%
Family	75%
Social Work	57%
School	57%
Youth or Sports Club	22%
Other	22%
None	3%

The responses highlighted above show the importance of children and young people who are looked after at home having access to multiple relationships and sources of support that can respond to their changing needs. All, bar one, of the children and young people who responded to this question selected that they had received support from two or more people over the last few years.

The responses also draw attention to the important role intandem has in providing support for children and young people, together with family members, social work and school. We have a responsibility to work alongside other sources of support, and build upon other existing positive relationships that children and young people have.

'I was supported enough from my mentor and the school and social worker.'
Young person



Support for families

The Promise clearly states that, where possible, children must remain in the care of their families and that proactive, community support should be provided to help this to happen. The findings of the Independent Care Review also stated that the current approach to supporting children and young people who are looked after at home is not effective in providing enough support for families to thrive.

Due to this, and the knowledge that our partner charities already provide ad hoc family support it was important for us to further understand the needs of families from their perspective.

Although the focus of intandem is to provide one to one mentoring for children and young people who are looked after at home, our partner charities also do what they can to support children and young people, and their families in other ways. Examples include, offering free hot meals, identifying additional funding for families, offering peer support groups for parents and carers, and signposting to other support services within the local community.

However, from listening to our partner charities, we know that there is more to do. The additional support they offer to children, young people and their families has become more wide ranging and essential over the past few years. Anecdotally we also know that mentoring can be the first step in children, young people and their families accessing further support so it is important for us to reflect on how we can assist this to happen more, and where we can work with others to strengthen the support available to families.

As can be seen from Figure 1, on page 13, when asked what support they had received, nearly half (47%) of children and young people who answered this question shared that support had been 'for others in my family'. When asked what support they would like in the future, 22% of children and young people told us they would like 'support for others in my family'. These responses highlight the importance children and young people place on having wider support available to their family.

Some of the children and young people who felt they did not get the support they needed also told us why. A number of these responses referenced families, such as not being supported to see siblings placed in other care arrangements, and lack of support for parents and carers.

'My young person has spoken about wanting more support for his gran who he is in kinship with and also wanting more support from social work to have contact with his siblings who are currently in foster care.'

Mentor

'Help for Mum to move house.'

Young person

'My young person's family has received a lot of support, however this was mostly targeted at their older sibling. Which has often left my young person feeling as if they are pushed to the side or their feelings not being given priority.'

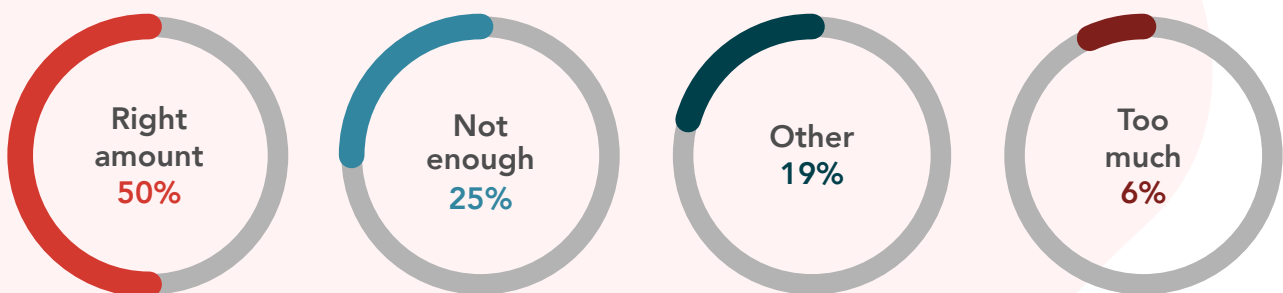
Mentor

Recommendation 1: Share good practice around the wider support for families provided by our local partner charities.

For the purpose of this research we were particularly interested in the support available to parents around the time a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) is removed. Therefore, as part of the survey for parents we asked what, if any, support they had been offered while there was a CSO in place.

Positively, 67%, of parents shared that they themselves had received support when the CSO had been in place. As can be seen in Figure 2, of this 67%, half felt that the support they had been given was the right amount, and 25% felt that they did not have enough. Of those parents that selected 'Other' in response to the level of support they had received, two shared that they had been offered support but that they did not want to use it for personal reasons.

Figure 2



Regrettably, 33% of parents felt that they did not have any support in place. From the responses to the surveys we understand that some parents were not offered support, and others were offered it but chose to decline it.

'Hated it, people watching and telling you what to do as if they know best, threatening us and telling me I had to do things or I wasn't doing it right, done this with all my kids and they are ok, no thanks to [social work].'

Parent

The responses highlight the need for dedicated support for a child or young person to sit within a wider package of support for their family. Neither should be viewed in isolation, and it is important for us to consider what role intandem currently has and could have in supporting families directly, or linking them to other services within the community. Our partner charities often build strong relationships with families and as such, are well placed to be able to support families to identify and access the support they feel they need.

**'Didn't use it
because she (wife)
wouldn't like it.'**
Parent

Recommendation 2: Develop a consistent intandem support framework for families to create a more tightly woven safety net.



The impact of mentoring

Although this research was focused on the wider support available to children, young people and their families, the value and impact of mentoring was evident.

From the survey responses, it is clear that children and young people value their relationship with their mentor. The mentoring provided by intandem was perceived as reliable, responsive and enriching. These included the 'stickability' of mentors and the longevity of mentoring relationships - with the average intandem mentoring relationship lasting 17 months.

Children and young people who took part in this research also highlighted that their mentor provided a regular, consistent and empathetic relationship. In the interviews, a couple of young people also reflected on the importance of a mentor volunteering their time to be there, just for them.

We asked children and young people to tell us whether or not having a mentor had improved five specific areas of their life, such as their self-confidence and social connections. The responses to these questions can be seen in Table 4, alongside the observations of parents and mentors. The majority of children and young people who responded to the survey felt there had been improvements in all five areas.

Table 4: Changes observed since having a mentor

	Child or young person	Parental observations	Mentor observations
Self-confidence	69% improved	88% improved	70% improved
Self-esteem	57% improved	68% improved	65% improved
Getting on with others	50% improved	80% improved	49% improved
Social connections	68% improved	80% improved	56% improved
Involvement in local community	55% improved	62% improved	47% improved
Response count	64	25	69

Parents and mentors were also complimentary about the role mentoring has played in the lives of children and young people. More than 80% of parents who responded to the survey felt that their child had increased self-confidence, quality of relationships and social connections since having a mentor. Interestingly, the responses from mentors were very similar to those of the children and young people who completed the survey.

'The mentoring has been really good and she has come out of her shell, and everyone can see the differences. She's definitely more open with family and can talk about her feelings rather than having emotional outbursts that go on for some time.'

Parent

The responses to the surveys, and the follow up interviews, highlight the value children, young people and their parents place on mentoring. However, we also know that there are improvements to be made. We are committed to creating opportunities for children and young people who are mentored through intandem to influence its development and future.

Recommendation 3: Share our approach to involving children and young people in our work, including what works well and what we would do differently.

Exploring support and accessing opportunities

We know that mentoring is one way to open up more opportunities to children and young people. Many of our intandem mentoring relationships regularly do activities as part of their weekly 'meet-up'. These activities may be of a particular interest to the child or young person, such as skateboarding or kayaking, or they may be clearly linked to a goal that they have, such as feeling confident on public transport or learning to play the guitar.

From the responses to the survey it was clear that children and young people really value the opportunity to try new things and do something that is different to what they normally do. We also had examples of the 'stepping stone' effect of mentoring. Where a mentoring relationship was the first step in a child or young person having the confidence to take up new opportunities.

'... mentor supported him to go into school. One day a week. It's not usually the kind of thing that we would do. But this guy had time and he wanted to do it. And he managed to get three National 3's just from his mentor taking him into school and sitting with him while the learning support teacher helped him. And then just from having that confidence then he got involved with Champions Board and he was going to walking groups and archery classes. And then he was doing really well at that so he became a helper for like, the younger kids archery group. And it was amazing just to see that transformation.'

intandem Coordinator

'They helped me just get outside again.'

Young person

A number of children and young people who completed the survey also told us that they would like to be able to do more activities in their community, including sports, such as swimming and football, with the support of a trusted adult.

'Activity availability and longer sessions with the mentor is beneficial.'

Young person

'More days out.'

Young person

'I would have liked to spend more time with my mentor and have more time to do stuff with them, as it was amazing, and I really enjoyed it and the mentor was amazing it was good getting out and I wouldn't change it.'

Young person

'It's fun going out and getting to the cinema, zoo, park, and getting to try and find the best macaroni and chips in the whole of the place.'

Young person

A handful of parents also highlighted the importance of their children having the opportunity to try new things:

'COVID has played its part, but my child really needs opportunities to try new experiences and socialise with a peer group'

Parent

'So they've been able to get out with an adult and be able to do stuff. It lets them gain a little confidence out in the world. When you do it, like even going to the trampoline park, you've got the confidence to go in there and just play about.'

Parent

Recommendation 4: Secure additional resources and funding to enhance our mentoring offer for children and young people.

Linked to the above, is how children and young people are encouraged to find out what support and opportunities are available to them. As highlighted above in Figure 1, when asked to consider what type of support they would like in the future 39% of children and young people who completed the survey selected 'don't know'.

Although it is difficult for any of us to predict what we need or would like in the future, these responses also point to the importance of children and young people being supported to understand and express their own needs, and to identify what opportunities are out there for them. Mentoring programmes, such as intandem, have a role to play in supporting children and young people to understand their own needs and help them access the support and opportunities that they feel will make a difference in their lives.

Recommendation 5: Enhance approaches to information sharing between intandem partners and resources to enable conversations that support young people to explore their own needs.



Roles, responsibilities and support provision

In addition to the above, those we surveyed and interviewed also shared with us their views and experiences on how support is identified and provided, and how services can better work together to respond to the needs of children, young people and their families.

The key themes we have identified are:

- ✳ The role of social work
- ✳ Implementation and removal of Compulsory Supervision Orders
- ✳ Partnership working and communication

The role of social work

Social workers have a fundamental role in the lives of children and young people who are looked after at home. On behalf of the local authority they are responsible for developing a care plan in partnership with children and young people, families and others involved in the care of the young person, such as education and health services. Due to their critical role, we asked children and young people what support they felt they received from their social worker.

Views and Experiences of Children and Young People

The responses were extremely varied, and showed the wide range of support that social workers provide. A number of young people highlighted the support social work had given to members of their family, particularly parents; their role in supporting families to access housing, clothing and food; and support around education.

Many of the children and young people who responded to the survey were positive about the support they received from social work. One young person who was interviewed said they felt *'happy'* when they met their social worker *'just because like she came out to help me. I can ask questions and she can help me with a lot more stuff.'* Others shared the following reflections when highlighting the range of practical and emotional support their social worker had given them:

'Helped me move schools because I was being bullied and helped my mum with nursery places for my wee sister and is helping us find a bigger house'

Young person

'A NEW LIFE.'
Young person

In contrast, 11 children and young people who completed the survey were impartial about the support from social work and were not clear about what support they had given them. Other children and young people had negative feelings about the role of social work, including the detrimental impact of a high turnover of social workers, not feeling listened to and feeling that the support they were given was not what they wanted:

'They just tried to get me back into school but that's not what I wanted.'

Young person

'Social work were no help at all and actually made things worse.'

Young person

Two young people also shared their feelings of their social worker being absent and not following through with their commitments:

'I didn't see him (social worker), I seen him for a couple of times, but I was on a supervision order without people seeing me that were concerned about my family and things like that, and how I was coping but he couldn't pick up a phone for me. Or he couldn't come in my house or try and get a hold of me or come and get me or anything like that. But they had a supervision order and said that they were concerned.'

Young person

'The support was meant to be there. I went to the panel, and they said that they were so concerned because my mum and dad were using drugs and they were so concerned. After the panel, they weren't so bothered. They were talking to me on the phone and then when I was phoning them, they weren't answering. They were blaming me and my mum for not answering the phone. That wasn't happening. They don't just have my mum's number, they have my number as well. Since they said that we weren't answering the phone, the support just stopped that they were meant to be giving me. When we were at panels, in front of all these people, social work were making out as if they had done this huge part but they didn't.'

Young person

One young person highlighted how different their experience had been depending on who their social worker was:

'S was constantly texting to me and talking to me and asking how things were in the house. She was on top of it and that made me think that she wanted good for me because she was trying even if she wasn't there every two weeks (face to face) she was on the phone, always texting or even when she was busy, she would text me and say, 'I've had a busy week'. But with P he wouldn't even turn around and say, 'I've had a busy week'. He wouldn't say anything, but S did. S would call me and text me just saying that I'm away on holiday and would let me know well in advance. But when P was on holiday you would get someone else telling you that he's on holiday. S would come and tell me herself'

Young person

Views and Experiences of Parents

Similarly to the views and experiences of children and young people, their parents had differing views on the role of social work and the support they provide.

'If we had a bit more support from social work, with consistency, there would have been better communication and we would be in a better place than we are right now.'

Parent

'I don't want or need social work my family are fine without them now.'

Parent

'Support was often unhelpful and focused on the wrong things if anything, social work made my life worse rather than helping it.'

Parent

'Social work made things worse for my daughter. She was threatened with residential school and I was threatened with child neglect charges. They refused to believe she might be autistic, kept pushing her to attend school regardless of the massive anxiety it caused her.'

Parent



From what children, young people and their parents shared with us it is clear that their experiences and perceptions of social work can vary hugely. For some young people they credit their social worker with providing invaluable support and advice, going the extra mile and sourcing additional support for them and their family. Others felt indifferent about the role of their social worker. For others, however, they shared negative experiences, including not feeling listened to, times where commitments were not followed through and providing different support than what children, young people and their parents felt they needed.

As we referenced earlier in the report, it was unfortunately outwith the scope of this research to hear directly from large numbers of social workers. However, we do want to acknowledge the challenging circumstances that many public services, including social work teams, are currently facing. This was further highlighted in interviews with intandem Coordinators and two social workers.

'At the same time, social work is such a high intensity job, and our caseload are sometimes unmanageable. And that's the sad reality of it. I would love to be able to see, like, I've told you, I love seeing the young people, I'd much rather do that than be stuck doing all the paperwork.'

Social worker

'Exactly, it's rubbish, because it actually really affects your mental health, because you go into this job hoping to help everyone.'

Social worker

intandem Coordinators who completed the survey referenced the impact of the pandemic and the need for social work teams to prioritise child protection cases. They also mentioned the capacity of social workers and their intense workloads:

'Social work are still mainly supporting those on child protection orders and I understand that child protection has increased in at least one of our local authorities quite a bit... are struggling to meet the needs of all the young people and their families and I find that we are doing more to support. It is difficult to get in touch with social work because of this and phones (mobiles) are often unanswered or unmanned or office phones unanswered. They don't have the time available to put in to support and so we are spending more time doing this. Schools are much the same as pupil needs have increased exponentially.'

intandem Coordinator

'I think social workers I work with are just busy. They're busy with other cases and supporting other young people in other circumstances. They hand them over to intandem for us to carry on their support and be the main supporters for them which we are, and then obviously, we touch base - I touch base with social workers on all children, to get an update from social work and have meetings with them. They'll get included in the child planning meetings as well.'

intandem Coordinator

Recommendation 6: Develop deep local partnerships with social work teams to understand our respective roles and responsibilities, and where we complement each other's work.

Implementation and removal of Compulsory Supervision Orders

Although we have covered some aspects of Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs) in other sections of the report there were two main themes that stood out in relation to the implementation of CSOs, and the support that is made available when they are lifted.

As previously mentioned, the use of CSOs is one way to trigger additional support for a child or young person, and their family. This is the case for intandem too – to be eligible for mentoring support, children and young people referred to intandem must be on a CSO.

‘I definitely know a few social workers have said to me, the only reason they were put on CSO was to help access services.’

intandem Coordinator

‘Why do I have to put them on a CSO for them to have a mentor in intandem? Why do that? Why does it have to go that far? So this is where I think again, it’s like, intervening before we get to that stage, early intervention. So let’s look at families involved with social workers - so before a CSO could have been slapped on them. And this is where intandem can do better for young people and families.’

intandem Coordinator

Providing the right support at the right time is what we are all striving to do. Although a CSO can be used to generate additional support, we should also be considering whether there could be a clearer link between being referred to the Children’s Hearing System and more timely and responsive support being provided.

Recommendation 7: Develop an intandem national offer for children and young people who experience the Children’s Hearings System to connect them to our support as early as possible.

Inconsistencies and disparity in the operation and implementation of CSOs were highlighted by intandem Coordinators, particularly in terms of geographical differences depending on the local authority. This led to one Coordinator saying that due to this variation ‘a CSO is not really one thing’. These discrepancies were attributed by intandem Coordinators to ‘variances in individual practice, team-level practice and hugely uneven support provision across the country’.

‘The supervision aspect of a CSO means the same thing in each area, but the driver of change that comes from a CSO is the support plan that is implemented.’

intandem Coordinator

‘NO support after I came off my CSO’

Young person

‘I’d say for the young people where their CSO has been removed. There has been a reduction in support. But when you think about it, that makes sense for that to happen, because if the CSO has always been removed, then the social worker or the panel, whoever decides, obviously feels as if they aren’t as much at risk, as much as they were when the CSO was put in place.’

intandem Coordinator

We also asked parents if they felt that any of the support that was in place for them or their child was stopped once a CSO was removed. 15 parents answered this question, with 9 answering ‘Yes’ and 6 answering ‘No’. Some parents elaborated further, with 3 sharing that they felt social work involvement had stopped when a CSO was removed.

'Once the young person came off the CSO they got no support, it went from lots of support to no support!'

Mentor

'Not enough support after the CSO was removed has been left with broken promises. He has been in the [social work] system since he has been 5 and he is now left with nothing.'

Parent

Although a reduction in support is in line with the decision to remove a CSO, the survey responses indicated that in some cases ongoing support beyond a CSO being lifted was needed and wanted. References were made to a sudden withdrawal of support, as opposed to a more gradual and tailored approach to reducing the support provided.

In contrast to the references of a sudden withdrawal of support, two parents highlighted the benefits of their child continuing to have a relationship with their mentor once a CSO was removed. This practice was also highlighted by intandem Coordinators.



The social worker that we interviewed provided another perspective on CSOs and how decisions are made to lift them.

'But I think the way the panel view it, which I do understand is when children get to a certain age, they're allowed to make their own decisions, and they're very much aware of what's bad and what's good.'

Social worker

They also shared an example of where they wanted to keep a young person on a CSO but the panel felt differently:

'...recently, I've had a young person who I wanted to keep on a CSO, but the panel decided that kind of, because they would be going to the army, and somewhere there was no point in having a CSO in place, you know, there's little things, which may be, we're still seeing that kind of risk that possibly that child is at. And it doesn't always work out. So yeah, I guess what you're saying is, we wouldn't really want to terminate them unless we felt 100%. Because at the end of the day, I see that as the CSO is there to protect the child.'

Social worker

Recommendation 8: Work with others to understand how best to establish consistent access to support for children and young people when Compulsory Supervision Orders are put in place, or removed.

Case Study: Chloe and Ruth*

Chloe was on a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) for three years in her early teens. When we interviewed Chloe, she was 16 years old and her CSO had been lifted. Chloe shared that the CSO was put in place to help as both her parents were dealing with addictions. Though the difficulties of her mother and father improved, the CSO was continued because her school attendance remained poor. Chloe shared some of her experiences of being on a CSO:

'Most of the times I met my social worker was at panels, because he really has to be there. He had told me that he was going to see me once every two weeks or something like that, and it never happened. The way I see it, they cannae be that concerned if they don't want to come the times they're saying. I've had lots of social workers but I just can't remember them.'

But Sally (Chloe's next social worker) '...knew about her job, Sally was more on the ball. And she was phoning and texting a lot'. Chloe went on to tell us that she and her family were doing better, and spoke of her experiences of having a mentor. Ruth (Chloe's mentor) '...has been the best support to me. If I was to just call Ruth right now and say 'Hi. I'm not feeling too good, she would just come. She would come straight away, (apart from if she was working). She's known me since I was 13 and now I'm 16. So that's good.'

We asked Chloe to look back over her time on a CSO and she told us this:

'See if I'm being honest, I was bottling it all up and keeping it to myself and not telling my mum. I didn't cry at all. The support was meant to be there. I went to the panel and they said that they were so concerned because my mum and dad were using drugs and they were so concerned. After the panel, they weren't so bothered.'

Chloe's experience of being mentored was different. Chloe shared that her mentor is no longer working with intandem but that she is still seeing her, even though their formal mentoring relationship has ended:

'If Ruth was to leave, I wouldn't let her alone. But Ruth doesn't work for intandem anymore. Ruth stuck with me for 3 years. At the beginning I said to her, see if you are only going to stay for a few months then don't come, just leave me completely. She said 'No, that's not the case' and then she still comes and chooses to take me out for a long time.'

**names have been changed.*

Partnership working and communication

Partnership working and communication were recurring themes in the surveys completed by the intandem Coordinators. We were interested in their reflections of how information is shared between services and how they can better work together.

We heard strong examples of close partnership working between different support services, particularly between intandem, social work and schools.

'It is great to see a joined up approach between Coordinator and social worker who communicate well to support the mentee and family. On occasions the mentor or Coordinator are first to identify issues the mentee is facing so having positive relationships with the family and social work are crucial.'

Mentor

'This varies on case to case and also areas basis. It has been noted however that more so recently and pre-lockdown, school staff are becoming more involved once they realise young person is working with an intandem project. They usually arrange regular Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings and will invite Coordinator to these for input and look to put this on the given order.'

intandem Coordinator

However, we also heard examples where improvements could be made to standards of communication and information sharing. There were geographical and personnel differences in the way in which statutory services and intandem partner charities worked together.

'For cases in [local authority 1], information and communication is generally good. I have found communication between [local authority 2] services lacking at times and there is a bit more effort required on our part to try and find out what supports are available to our young people.'

intandem Coordinator

'I would say that communication is improving but I would put this down partly to the relationship between volunteer and family; updates from the volunteers and families lead to contacting the social work teams and then being invited to meetings or receiving updates.'

intandem Coordinator

There is work to be done to ensure that statutory services and the third sector, such as intandem, work together to effectively share information and consistently create a package of support that is not only in the best interest of children and young people, but that also meaningfully involves them in this process.

'We often aren't told important information or updated on matters which affect the young person and therefore their mentoring.'

intandem Coordinator

Recommendation 9: Work with statutory and third sector organisations to further explore where we can add value to each other's work by sharing learning and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Conclusion

The findings of this research have confirmed the importance of developing flexible support that can respond to the individual needs of children, young people and their families. This echoes and supports the results of other similar studies. Children and young people told us clearly that building positive, long-term and trusted relationships with others is important to them. Everyone working to support children and young people needs to find ways to enable these relationships, and work together to strengthen and develop them.

Despite the many positive views and experiences shared by children and young people about the support they receive, we also heard numerous examples where improvements could be made. This was particularly clear around the support local authority Children and Families Teams are able to provide; the implementation and removal of CSOs; and how young people and their families are involved in discussions and decisions about the support they receive.

We know there is more to do and intandem is committed to following through with these recommendations and developing our working practices to best support children and young people.

We can only be successful in delivering on The Promise if we work together.

We will work at pace on the following recommendations and look forward to collaborating more closely with others supporting children and young people with experience of the care system to deliver change.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Share good practice around the wider support for families provided by our local partner charities.

Recommendation 2: Develop a consistent intandem support framework for families to create a more tightly woven safety net.

Recommendation 3: Share our approach to involving children and young people in our work, including what works well and what we would do differently.

Recommendation 4: Secure additional resources and funding to enhance our mentoring offer for children and young people.

Recommendation 5: Enhance approaches to information sharing between intandem partners and resources to enable conversations that support young people to explore their own needs.

Recommendation 6: Develop deep local partnerships with social work teams to understand our respective roles and responsibilities, and where we complement each other's work.

Recommendation 7: Develop an intandem national offer for children and young people who experience the Children's Hearings System to connect them to our support as early as possible.

Recommendation 8: Work with others to understand how best to establish consistent access to support for children and young people when Compulsory Supervision Orders are put in place, or removed.

Recommendation 9: Work with statutory and third sector organisations to further explore where we can add value to each other's work by sharing learning and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Recommendation 10: In delivering the above, we will follow the intandem values of commitment, openness, respect and aspiration. We will #KeepThePromise to ensure that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

A note from the researcher...

Josh Hurd, the Development Officer Intern for intandem, was supported to deliver this research over the past year. His role on this project was varied and included developing the wording of surveys, deciding the interview questions and working on the analysis. Below, he shares his reflections about the research process.

What parts of the research process did you enjoy the most?

There were quite a lot! The most important one was talking directly to children and young people, and hearing their stories when they felt comfortable sharing them with me. I really enjoyed going to meet the young people who took part in the research, spending time with them and travelling around Scotland to do the interviews. I also enjoyed looking at the statistics, managing the information and analysing it.

What were the biggest challenges you came across when doing the research?

The biggest challenge was the engagement of participants. This was a challenge because young people have a lot going on in their life and it was important for us to build a foundation of trust with the young people we interviewed so this took more time than we initially anticipated. It was also more challenging to engage with social workers and Children's Panel Members.

If you were to do this research again, what would you do differently?

We would involve partners from the beginning. For example, involving intandem Coordinators in the wording of survey questions to ensure that the ones we used were appropriate and sensitive to the lives of children and young people.

Doing this research has confirmed that there is more work that can be done, particularly understanding the implementation of CSOs from the perspective of children, young people and their families. If we'd had more time, we would have liked to involve those that have roles and responsibilities for CSOs, specifically social workers, Children's Panel Members and those responsible for the Children's Hearings System.

Do you have any other reflections on this research?

The report as a whole has shown us that there is still work to be done to Keep the Promise and to better the lives of care experienced young people. We know that children and young people who are looked after at home are often not prioritised. By doing this research we hope that we have once again highlighted their needs and what we can do to support them.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to this research, particularly the children, young people and parents who generously shared their personal experiences.

We would also like to thank Dr. Gary Clapton, Honorary Fellow, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, for his guidance. Also, thank you to Josh Hurd, Development Officer Intern for his contribution, dedication and participation in this project. His genuine understanding of the voice and views of those we support through intandem played an integral part in the design and delivery of this report.

Finally, we would like to thank The Promise Partnership for funding this work.



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Thank you

intandem is only possible thanks to the incredible dedication of our partner charities, our funders and volunteers who are there to support our children and young people.

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