

Practice guide

Family Help & Children's Social Care

Care leavers - Bright Spots Programme, Stockport

Background, purpose and rationale

The Bright Spots Programme is a research and service improvement project run by Coram Voice. The Programme was set up to understand what is important to children in care and care leavers and share learning about what makes life good for them. Official statistics on care-experienced children and young people give only a partial picture of their lives. Data focuses on adult perspectives using objective outcomes measures including placement types and educational attainment.

This information does not tell us about how children and young people feel: are they happy, safe and feel they are doing well? The Bright Spots Programme takes a different approach by measuring subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is defined as feeling good and doing well at an individual and interpersonal level. Measuring subjective well-being enables us to understand young people's experiences by putting their voice at the centre. Bright Spots helps local authorities (LAs) systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers about the things that are important to them. We work to ensure that the views and experiences of children are at the heart of decisions that are made about their lives.

What we did to improve young people's experiences

Stockport Leaving Care Team started their journey back in 2013 with the new belongings programme funded initially by the Care Leavers Foundation and latterly by Coram Voice. The aim was to ensure Stockport used the experiences and voices of their young people in improving their lives, opportunities and services for care experienced young people.

As part of Stockport's continued work alongside New Belongings the Bright Spots Survey was added in 2018, the first survey being undertaken in 2019/2020 with 81% of care experienced young people taking part. The Survey was repeated in 2021/2022 with 80% of young people in 2022/ 2023 the survey was completed by Children in Our Care, the most recent Bright Spots Survey was completed in 2023 / 2024 by 78% of our care experienced young people. The voices of care experienced young people has been and continues to be central in shaping the service design and delivery.

What was the impact?

We now have co-produced meaningful Leaving Care Action Plan that captures the key priorities from our young people's voices, to shape service design and delivery and support a strong and well-informed local offer.

The survey identified what was working well and 'Bright Spots'. These indicate a 'good news' story – a positive aspect of practice in your LA. This is where young people are doing significantly better than care leavers in other local authorities or report the same as or higher well-being than their peers in the general population.

- Leaving care worker - Trust - 98% of the care leavers reported trusting their worker 'all or most of the time or sometimes'.
- Care leavers in Stockport were statistically more likely than care leavers in other LAs to own a pet (43% vs. 28%). This is a Bright Spot of practice. Over half (53%) of pet owners identified their animals as a source of emotional support.
- Relationships - Most of the young people had a network of supportive relationships. On average, young people identified three different types of people who gave them emotional support. Friends, leaving care workers and partners were most often mentioned, 94% had someone who listened to them
- Leaving care worker - Qualities, Comments about leaving care workers were overwhelmingly positive. Workers were variously described as great, understanding, amazing, the best, caring trustworthy, kind and thorough.
- Smartphone and Internet use. Care leavers in Stockport more often had a smartphone than their peers in the general population (97% vs. 92%). Care leavers in Stockport were statistically more likely than care leavers in other LAs to live in households with internet access (91% vs. 83%). These are Bright Spots of practice.

Resources

[Bright Spots Programme - Coram Voice](#)

Find out more

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