



## **Media Release**

**Embargoed until Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015**

### **£2.3 million investment in Scotland's care experienced young people**

A new funding pot of £2.3 million has been launched by the Life Changes Trust to back the development of Champions Boards for young people with experience of the care system in Scotland.

The funding will be used to invest in the development of 'Champions Boards' across Scotland, to revolutionise how care experienced young people are involved in the decision making that affects their lives.

Champions Boards are relatively new in Scotland and provide a unique approach to transforming the quality of life and well-being of care experienced young people by involving them in the decisions that affect their own lives.

Champions Boards put young people in the driving seat, prioritising their views, opinions and aspirations. They build the capacity of young people to influence change, empower them by showing confidence in their abilities and potential, and give them the platform to flourish and grow. Trusting young people to drive and influence their own lives also challenges the stigma they traditionally encounter.

By bringing together care experienced young people and those who work with and for them - including senior local authority staff, elected members and service providers - Champions Boards lead improvements in the services and support available to young people to transform their lives for the better.

A successful Champions Board model is already underway in Dundee and other local authorities are also taking an interest, with some in the early stages of developing their own Boards.

**Heather Coady, Director of the Trust's Care Experienced Young People Programme said,** "Care experienced young people have already demonstrated what they can achieve with their amazing work influencing the Children and Young People Act. Their hard work and dedication now means that there is a very different landscape for young people leaving care in Scotland.

'Champions Boards are also about empowering care experienced young people on an ongoing basis, so their views about how their lives could be improved and their priorities for change are heard and acted upon by those with responsibility for ensuring their well-being.

'Care experienced young people have enormous potential to shape their lives and those of their peers for the better. Champions Boards provide a distinctive and powerful way of harnessing this potential. They also provide decision makers and service providers with a way of working with young people to achieve transformational and sustainable improvements in their lives and the services that support them.'

**David Martin, Dundee City Council Chief Executive and Chair of Dundee's Champions Board welcomed the launch of the roll out by the Life Changes Trust.**

"My experience of the Champions Board in Dundee has been hugely positive, particularly in the commitment, knowledge and skills of the care experienced children and young people who form the backbone of the approach in our city. The input from the Young Person's Participation Group is what makes Dundee's Champions Board 'tick' and it is those children and young people who have made Dundee's Champions Board what it is - *'a true pathfinder'* which is showing the rest of the country the way forward"

Dundee Integrated Children's Services Partnership is delighted to support the roll out of the Champions Board across Scotland.

The Life Changes Trust, is an independent charity set up in 2013 with a Big Lottery Fund endowment of £50 million to improve the lives of two key groups in Scotland: care experienced young people and people affected by dementia.

## **ENDS**

### **For further information and for media enquiries contact:**

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### **EDITORS NOTES:**

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

As of 31 July 2014, there were 15,580 looked after children and young people in Scotland.

Current challenges and poor outcomes faced by care experienced young people include:

- much higher rates of early death, including higher rates of suicide
- worse mental health and physical well-being
- greater rates of teenage pregnancy
- poorer access to continuing education or training
- greater unemployment and homelessness

There are several types of placements that looked after children or young people could be in, including being at home (subject to a Supervision Requirement), or away from home - in foster care, in residential care or in a kinship placement, where they are placed with friends or relatives.

We are committed to working with care experienced young people, care leavers, practitioners and other professionals in Scotland so that when young people leave care, they have positive life chances and outcomes just like other young people.

[www.lifechangestrust.org.uk](http://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk).