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£90,000 funding boost for young people in West Lothian

A new service providing peer mentoring support for care experienced young people in West Lothian has been given the green light thanks to a funding boost of £90,000.

The funding has been awarded to The Rock Trust, a charity working with young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The new project focusses on providing peer mentoring for young people who have been in care, and are making the transition out of care and into independence.

This transition is often a difficult and overwhelming experience for a young person who has been in care, who may not have the family support networks other young people take for granted. Mentoring provides relationship-based support to give them the opportunity to develop the practical and social skills, confidence and resilience they need to overcome the challenges they face.

This support can be vital for care experienced young people who, as a group, face much poorer outcomes and quality of life than other young people. Peer mentoring is a powerful way of offering support and guidance from someone who has been there too.

Mentors will act as positive role models, encouraging their mentees to develop communication and personal skills and to feel more confident.

Mentors will be recruited from the local community, and will have been in care themselves or have other relevant life experience or interests. Mentees will be young people with care experience aged 15 to 21 and from the West Lothian Area.

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

The Trust will invest over half a million pounds in peer mentoring initiatives for care experienced young people over the next two years.

Alistair McDermid, Rock Trust Operational Manager in West Lothian said: "We are very excited to develop this Life Changes Trust peer mentoring project in West Lothian. We believe that mentoring has a very positive impact on the young beneficiaries, and this project will support care experienced young people to develop supportive relationships which will allow them to take positive steps forward in their life, improve their confidence and boost self-esteem".

Harriet Dempster, Chair of the Life Changes Trust care experienced young people programme said: "Peer mentoring is the kind of interaction and support that young people themselves say works for them. This is why it is a key component of the work we are doing to improve and transform the lives - and outcomes - of care experienced young people."

www.lifechangestrust.org.uk.

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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.

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.

Peer mentoring: by this the Trust means providing a means of both giving and receiving support in the context of a voluntary relationship where the people involved have shared experience.

The Rock Trust works with young people between the age of 16 and 25 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless across Edinburgh and the Lothians. This includes young people who are in transitions, leaving care or home and those involved in offending, alcohol or drug misuse.

www.lifechangestrust.org.uk.