



## Media Release

### **£2 million funding to champion Scotland's care experienced young people**

Scotland's care experienced young people are to have a bigger say in the decisions that affect their lives thanks to a funding boost of £2 million.

The money will be used to set up and support a number of trail blazing 'Champions Boards' across Scotland.

Champions Boards provide a platform for young people to talk directly to local authority staff, elected members and service providers to ensure that decisions which affect their lives are informed by their own experiences. In this way, Champions Boards can influence improvements in the services and support available to young people.

Champions Boards are relatively new in Scotland and provide a unique approach to improving the quality of life and well-being of young people who have experience of being in care.

They provide an opportunity for young people to articulate the challenges that being in care can bring and how these challenges can be faced and overcome with the right support.

Champions Boards aim to put young people in the driving seat, where their views, opinions and aspirations are central.

They build the capacity of young people to influence change themselves by showing confidence in their abilities and potential, giving them the platform to flourish and grow.

Funding has come from the Life Changes Trust, an independent charity established 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.

The £2 million funding will support the set up or development of 8 Champions Boards in Aberdeen, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Dundee, Falkirk, Highland and Dumfries & Galloway.

**Cloe Geddes, aged 18, from East Renfrewshire, said** "I think the Champions Board will help decision makers understand and listen to young people who need their help and use their services. Sometimes it so hard for young people who are looked after to navigate themselves in an adult world if they have no support from family members and friends. It is important for others to step up and give us opportunities so we can achieve and reach our potential. The Champions Board will make a difference to looked after people's lives today and in the future. It's going to be amazing."

**Heather Coady, Director of the Trust's Care Experienced Young People Programme said,** "Champions Boards are about empowering care experienced young people, so that their expertise, opinions and experiences are taken into account by those with responsibility for their well-being. Allowing young people to have input into the development of services which directly affect them ensures that they are fit for purpose, relevant and most importantly effective and protective. Champions Boards show care experienced young people that they are supported, listened to and respected."

**ENDS**

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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 2015, there were 15,404 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)