



Media Release

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Half a million pound investment in Scotland's young people

Six projects providing vital support for care experienced young people from across Scotland have been given a combined funding boost of half a million pounds.

The money will be used by local charities to run peer mentoring services.

Peer mentoring helps young people with experience of being in care by offering support, advice and guidance from someone who has been there too, someone who understand the challenges that care experience can bring.

Peer mentors also have a deep awareness of the emotional impact of being 'looked after', and for many young people, being able to connect with someone who has faced similar challenges helps them feel less alone and in a safe space to be themselves.

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.

Mentoring provides relationship-based support and encouragement to give them the opportunity to develop the practical and social skills, confidence, and resilience they need to overcome the challenges they face.

The six projects facilitate mentors and mentees to meet up regularly, developing a sense of trust and friendship as they do so. The long-term impact can be transformational in supporting young people's aspirations, helping them reach their full potential.

Mentors are usually recruited from the local community and will have been in care themselves or have other relevant life experience.

The six funded projects are Barnardo's (South Ayrshire), The Rock Trust (West Lothian), Y Sort It (West Dunbartonshire), Ypeople and Up-2-Us (Glasgow area) and Move On (Glasgow and Edinburgh).

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 these peer mentoring initiatives for care experienced young people over the next two years.

Heather Coady, Director of the Life Changes Trust care experienced young people programme said: "Care experienced young people tell us that, above all else, relationships matter to them. They tell us how important the support is of someone "who has been there" – someone who can genuinely walk beside them. Having that one-to-one support can take away some of the fear and loneliness often felt by care experienced young people, and gives them a positive and consistent role model and friend. Peer mentoring is a key strand of the work we are doing to improve and transform the lives - and outcomes - of care experienced young people."

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For further information and for press enquiries contact:

Deborah Cowan, Communications Manager: 0141 212 9606

For more information, please see the Trust's website:

www.lifechangestrust.org.uk

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.