



Department  
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# **The Break Staying Close, Staying Connected Project**

**Evaluation report**

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## Young person's summary

### The Break Staying Close Staying Connected Project

Break Charity received funding from the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to set up the Staying Close, Staying Connected project for young people leaving residential care. The project was evaluated by researchers at the University of York and York Consulting to find out how well it was working.

Overall, the Break Staying Close Staying Connected project (referred to as the SCSC project) was working successfully. It provided a support package for young people, which included semi-independent shared houses with other young people from the project and provided them with a team of professionals to support them in all life areas. The team included a transition worker, housing worker, education, employment and training (EET) worker, emotional wellbeing support and participation workers. This was in addition to a local authority leaving care worker.

Young people leaving residential care do not have the same opportunity to stay put as those in foster care do. The SCSC project aimed to help young people to maintain relationships with their previous residential placement or someone of their choosing. Not all young people were able to identify someone they wanted to stay close to. The project recognised that many young people leaving residential care have experienced early trauma and separation and multiple placement moves, so might not have access to support networks. All young people in the project were given a transition worker, whose role was to build a professional relationship with young people coming into the project and to support them throughout their Staying Close journey.

The success of the project was helped by the experience and expertise of Break and the SCSC project workers, who had a range of professional experience. The project also built good links with housing providers and local authorities to make sure that they found sufficient houses and that young people leaving residential care were aware of the project and how to be referred. The SCSC project managed the tenancy agreements.

### Findings

At end of the evaluation (December 2019), 44 young people had been accepted into the SCSC project and 33 (75%) of those who had moved in to a house-share agreed to take part in the evaluation by providing information through the project database or taking part in focus groups, surveys or interviews. Most of those in the project were male (64% compared to 36% female), and the average age at the time of entering the SCSC project was 17 (ranging from 16 to 20 years). Some young people identified multiple problems, including mental health difficulties. Before moving into their SCSC project house, some

young people had come directly from residential placements, whereas others had lived in several hostels or semi-independent places since leaving their residential unit.

Young people leaving residential care have often had challenging care journeys and might not be ready or have all the skills needed to live independently. The SCSC project supported young people to develop and build these skills to prepare them for independent living. Young people's views on their own life skills and the assessments of their workers, were gathered by the project and evaluation at several points. Findings suggested that independent living skills had improved after 6 months of entering the project. For example, young people were developing better cooking and housekeeping skills, with the support of their workers, and were aware of what skills they needed for living independently, as described by 1 young person; "Break project has helped me a lot but I know there's lots of things still to learn but it's getting there, it's great."

In addition, there was evidence that young people showed increased happiness with life over time, had better stability in their accommodation (most had lived in their house-share for 6 months or more) and there was increased participation in activities, whether education, employment or getting involved with activities with other people in the project.

During interviews, young people identified some difficulties with the project, such as experiencing changes in project workers, being unhappy with housemates and not being able to live in the area they preferred. The SCSC project team agreed that there had been early difficulties with recruiting workers to the project, and that they were improving the systems for working with housing providers and local authorities to find houses that were available in the right area at the right time to meet young people's needs. The SCSC project had developed a system to help match housemates and improve relationships, which was being used in some cases, however, decisions about where young people moved to was often based on the availability of accommodation, which meant that matching was not always possible. In any event, young people in the project suggested that they should meet new housemates before they moved in and that the housemates should all agree a set of house rules to give everyone a sense of ownership.

Break has received funding to continue the SCSC project.

## Key messages

The Break SCSC project was 1 of 8 Staying Close pilots funded by the DfE Innovation Programme. It began in January 2018 and worked in 3 local authorities (LAs). It provided supported accommodation and individualised support for residential care leavers to help develop stability, support networks and independent living skills. Messages include:

- staff experience of the sector and multi-agency working proved important for getting the project underway and for promoting it. Utilising existing contacts and expertise to get a foot in the door on housing panels and children's services meetings to actively raise awareness of the project amongst stakeholders, helped the SCSC project to secure referrals and properties, and to improve referral routes, timescales and transition planning for young people
- sufficient timescales (6 to 9 months) were needed for embedding the project and establishing the project management and frontline team (building workforce skills, a stable management structure and identifying new roles to meet emerging needs). Having the staff team in place prior to the referral phase can help avoid disruptions or pressures in relation to the project's capacity to meet demand
- the practicalities of a Staying Close offer were not always straightforward. The project's offer included staying geographically close where preferred and possible and staying connected if not. Some young people were unable to identify people or places they wished to stay close or connected to (some had been in residential units for a relatively short time prior to leaving care). Some identified other support networks that they wished to move closer to, while others recognised that former carers had new caseload commitments that affected scope for ongoing support. Facilitating Staying Close relationships with former carers, old and new networks, require time, resources and flexibility to meet young people's wishes
- SCSC young people were experiencing improved outcomes after 6 months of entering the project. Two-thirds achieved stability in their house-share. Some house-shares worked less well. An important factor in housing support was that responsibility for the tenancies sat with the SCSC project. This was welcomed by the range of housing providers, who, therefore, had little input, whilst the project had freedom to offer young people who experienced tenancy difficulties a restorative approach, so to develop strategies to help sustain their accommodation, rather than escalating to an eviction process
- estimated 1 year savings ranging from £1,685,092 to £1,755,446 compared with a delivery cost of £1,186,576, show a potential to generate a net saving to the state
- regular and clear communication of the goals and parameters of the project and progress towards achieving its aims, helped secure commitment and continued buy-in from LAs and housing providers to sustain and enhance the SCSC project

# Executive summary

## Introduction

This report presents findings from an independent evaluation of the Break Staying Close, Staying Connected (SCSC) project for young people leaving residential care. The SCSC project was funded via Round 2 of the Department for Education's (DfE) Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (Innovation Programme). It began in January 2018.

## The Break SCSC project

The project was developed and delivered by Break Charity, an established provider of children's residential care. It operated across Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. As the latter joined towards the end of the pilot timeframe, it was not included in this evaluation. The SCSC project was 1 of 8 Staying Close pilots commissioned by the DfE (3 of which were run by private providers and 5 by LAs). It involved a package of accommodation and individualised support to help residential care leavers to achieve housing stability and develop the skills and support networks required to successfully move towards independent living. Project young people were allocated semi-independent accommodation in SCSC house-shares and access to off-site support via a SCSC transition worker and housing support worker (with an average of 10 hours contact per week). Wider support was provided through other Break in-house services, including an emotional wellbeing service (EWS), education, employment and training (EET) worker, participation worker, a housing maintenance worker and mentoring service. The project also developed a staff training programme for residential and local authority staff, to improve and bring consistency to their provision of independent living skills support for young people. A care leaver co-developed and co-delivered the staff training sessions.

The project aimed to support 70 residential care leavers in 25 houses during the pilot. After initial delays, 44 young people were accepted into the project, just over half of the target sample. Of these, 33 young people had moved into 14 SCSC house-shares, acquired by the project by evaluation endpoint in December 2019, and they formed the evaluation cohort. Two-thirds of the cohort were male and the average age of the cohort at baseline was 17.2 years (ranging from 16 to 20). Data for the cohort showed that the project was working with a high-need group. Many presented with multiple risks at baseline, including difficulties related to mental health (48%), self-harm (36%) and drug misuse (52%). Over half (58%) were not in education, employment and training (NEET), higher than statistics for care leavers aged 18 nationally (30%) (DfE 2019). The SCSC cohort comprised young people moving directly from residential care as well as a group (42%) who had experienced a period of post-care instability and semi-independent living in-between leaving residential care and entering the project.

## The evaluation

A common methodology was used across the 8 Staying Close evaluations. This involved a mixed-method, theory based approach comprising 3 strands: implementation strand to explore how the Staying Close model was operating, to inform learning for sustainability and replication; outcomes strand, using a pre and post-exploration of impact on outcomes and progress for young people; and economic strand to explore costs and savings associated with the project. The absence of a viable comparison group (due to low response rates) prevented counterfactual analysis. Instead, contribution analysis (drawing on qualitative data from the evaluation and from existing evidence) was used to explore the likelihood that the SCSC project had contributed to observed changes in outcomes over time. A follow-up group of 23 young people, who had been in the project for 6 months or more, was selected for distance travelled analysis across outcomes identified in the project theory of change (such as accommodation stability, participation in EET, reduced risk behaviours and improved wellbeing, life skills and connectedness).

Data was collected from a total of 95 participants via peer interviews, focus groups and surveys with young people, SCSC managers, direct workers, LA managers and housing providers. It was gathered at baseline (from May 2018), midpoint and evaluation endpoint (December 2019). Child level data was gathered from the project monitoring database.

## Key findings

- Implementation evaluation

The SCSC project was operating as intended and achieving progress in its stated aims. After initial problems with recruitment and retention of transitions workers, the SCSC team was in place with access to Break's wider workforce development training to broaden skills and maximise direct, individualised support to SCSC young people. Putting 'Staying Close' into practice was not straightforward as some young people were unable or unwilling to stay close to former carers. The project offered support to stay connected as well as help to navigate existing and new relationships to stay close to.

Managing project capacity and LA demand had been an early challenge and time and effective collaboration were required to stabilise referral flows in line with the acquisition of project properties. Robust referral routes and lead-in times were agreed between the project and LAs, to ensure that referrals were suitable, young people were better prepared and had a planned (rather than crisis) move into the project; and so that young people could be properly matched with the most appropriate house-share. The high level of young people's needs and varying degrees of engagement also presented challenges, however, the project provided flexibility in the service offer to young people and adapted support-planning according to their needs, recognising that some require more time to build trusting relationships due to past experiences.

- Outcomes evaluation

There was evidence of positive progress in all the outcome areas that the project had set out to improve for young people through its activities. By endpoint (an average of 13.9 months after entering the project) two-thirds of young people were experiencing housing stability, 59% were in EET, and many who were NEET were recognised as needing intensive support to prepare them for EET. There were signs of reduced risk behaviour and young people's wellbeing, life skills and social connectedness appeared to have increased. Qualitative data suggested that the SCSC project was contributing to this progress. Most young people talked positively about the support from the project team and the networks developed with housemates and other project groups. Some difficulties arose with house-shares and with disengagement from staff, reflecting the high needs of the group and the importance of workers being on hand and able to adapt to meet young people's needs as and when they emerged.

- Economic evaluation

The cost analysis (associated with pre and post-intervention outcomes and accommodation costs) suggests that the project has the potential to generate a net saving to the state. Estimated one-year savings are between £1,685,092 and £1,755,446, compared with delivery costs of £1,186,576.

## **Lessons and implications**

Most young people were not staying close to the areas or contacts they had whilst in care. This could be due to logistical reasons, residential staff having other priorities, or young people being unable to identify someone they wished to stay close or connected to. This raised questions about what staying close means to young people and how it can be best supported. The SCSC group was supported to re-connect with support networks (mostly family) and forge new ones to stay close or connected to.

Adapting a SCSC property to become a training or short-term flat could help address issues with referral flows, lack of readiness for semi-independent living and provide respite for housemates if house-shares become unstable or unsustainable. This will require under-occupied accommodation and will have resource implications.

The LAs reported that the SCSC project was providing a valuable option within the wider service offer for residential care leavers. For 1 LA lead, this represented best practice rather than innovation. Break's experience and expertise in the sector, its range of in-house services and links with external services enabled the SCSC project to overcome challenges and adapt accordingly. This and multi-agency collaboration and commitment towards shared goals, secured continued buy-in from the DfE, 3 LAs and housing providers to sustain the SCSC project going forward. Break intend to extend to new LAs and expand the model to include family group conferencing and outreach workers.

# 1. Introduction

Statistics for 2018 reported 75,420 looked after children across the country of which 17,330 (23%) were aged 16 or over. There were 28,510 care leavers aged 19 and over. The numbers of looked after children, and subsequently care leavers, has been increasing year on year. In addition, the number entering the care system as older adolescents (aged 15 and over) has also been increasing (DfE, 2018). The latter has implications for the types of support and accommodation required by older teenagers, particularly those who have spent relatively little time in care.

In 2018, the majority of looked after children were accommodated in foster care, whilst 8,530 were living in secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living options (DfE 2018). Traditionally, residential care has accommodated a small proportion of the care population, around 12% nationally varying across local authorities (LA) from 0% to 20%. Most residential units for looked after children are run by private providers (67%). Less than a third (28%) is LA owned, with some areas no longer having in-house provision. The remaining 5% is third sector provision (DfE, 2016b).

A review of the residential care population reported that they tended to be older adolescents (56% were 10-15 years of age and 41% aged 16 and over), who presented with more complex behaviours and higher levels of need than other looked after children (DfE 2016a). For example, 53% of young people in residential units had a statement of special education needs or health and education plan compared to 20% of all looked after children and 62% had clinical mental health difficulties (DfE 2016b). Additionally, research shows that many young people moving on from residential care tend to do so before their 18th birthday, are poorly prepared for independent living and are particularly vulnerable to risk and poor outcomes after care (Stein 2012, Dixon 2007).

Despite this, a change in policy affecting young people in foster care that enables them to 'stay put' with former carers until their 21st birthday, was not extended to young people in residential care, something the Narey report identified as inequitable and the Every Child Leaving Care Matters Alliance considered discriminatory (DfE 2016a). In response to this inequity and in recognition of the vulnerability of residential care leavers, 8 Staying Close pilots were developed under the DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (Innovation Programme), of which Break SCSC is one of the largest.

Existing evidence shows that many care-experienced young people are at risk of housing instability and homelessness, lower engagement in education and employment (Gill 2017, DfE 2019), mental health difficulties and loneliness (Baker 2017, Dixon and Baker 2016). The Break SCSC project aims to improve support and journeys for residential care leavers moving on to independent living. This report presents findings from the pilot phase on the process of setting up the project, how it was working in practice, its associated costs and its early impact on the progress of young people using the project.

## 2. Overview of the project

### Project context

The Break SCSC project began in January 2018 to support young people moving from residential care to independent living. The project is run by Break Charity, founded in 1968 as a short breaks provision for children and families. Break runs services across 3 counties, including 8 children's residential units, a foster service and leaving care service. It also runs 50 charity shops that generate income and provide work-experience and access to clothing and homeware for service users. In 2014, it developed a housing component for care leavers (a blueprint for the SCSC project). In 2018, Break Charity was working with 166 young people moving from care to independent living. At the time of reporting, the SCSC project was operating in 3 LAs (Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Peterborough). The third joined towards the end of the pilot project and was not, therefore, part of this evaluation. The 2 LAs are counties in the east of England. They had similar levels of economic inactivity and similar levels of secondary school children eligible for free school meals. The cost of living (including rent) was higher in LA1 (the average weekly rent was £101.27 compared with £75.13 in LA2 (ONS 2019)). LA1's children's services had been rated good in its 2014 Ofsted inspection and its 3 residential units were judged good or outstanding. LA2 was judged as requiring improvement in its 2017 Ofsted inspection. It operated 9 residential units, 8 of which were rated good or outstanding. There were 706 looked after children and 231 care leavers aged 19 to 21 in LA 1, 47% of whom were engaged in education, employment and training (EET) and 71% living in suitable accommodation. There was a higher number in LA2 (1,179 and 459 respectively), with 51% of care leavers in EET and 84% in suitable accommodation. Independent living was the most common type of accommodation for care leavers in both LAs, as was the case nationally (DfE, 2018). (See appendix 1b for further detail.)

### Project description, aims and intended outcomes

Break Charity developed the SCSC project in response to the challenges facing residential care leavers. Its approach offered individualised support from allocated project workers and semi-independent move-on accommodation within house-shares. It was aimed at young people aged 16 to 21 who were preparing to leave or had recently left residential care. It became operational in January 2018 via Round 2 of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (Innovation Programme).

The SCSC project aimed to achieve the following outcomes, as identified in its Innovation Programme bid and refined in the revised Theory of Change (see Figure 1):

- increased emotional and practical life skills



- accommodation stability, reflected by fewer moves and tenancy breakdowns, and housing satisfaction, as measured by the Good Childhood Index (GCI)
- young people are in or working towards participation in EET
- reduction or avoidance of risk (offending, drug misuse or antisocial behaviour)
- increased wellbeing, as measured by the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and the GCI
- increased connectedness and social integration
- cost savings, as measured by the costs analysis

## Project activities

To achieve these outcomes, the SCSC project involved a package of supported accommodation and individualised transition support to help care leavers develop the skills and support networks required for independent living. Project activities were largely delivered as planned with some additions during the evaluation timeframe and involved:

- provision of post-16 house-shares with off-site support for 33 residential care leavers in 14 houses acquired by the project from a range of providers
- a holistic pre and post-move support package including:
  - a matching tool to facilitate house-share compatibility
  - allocated transition workers to provide individualised support with life skills, EET and wellbeing and to link with other professionals and services (average 7 hour per person per week support with a caseload of 4 to 5 young people)
  - support attached to each house via a housing support worker (average 3 hours support per week per person)
  - an on-call service for emergency contact during evenings and weekends
- a menu of add-on support to meet individual need via the Break Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) for therapeutic support; the Break mentoring service; and a peer community to improve social connectedness
- development and delivery of a staff training programme and package of workforce development to improve leaving care awareness and skills for residential staff and professionals, to increase their ability to support young people leaving care
- a co-production approach to design and deliver the project by creating a care leaver forum, and involving care leavers in the development of the independent living tool and development and delivery of the staff training programme

The following changes to planned activities have occurred during project operation:

- fewer young people were supported than originally planned due to the additional time taken to recruit young people and acquire and allocate properties in the early months. Almost two-thirds (63%, 44) of the target group of 70 had, however, been accepted into the SCSC project by evaluation endpoint and 33 young people had moved into 14 of the SCSC project properties
- the SCSC project began operating in a third LA. As referrals did not begin until October 2019, this LA was outside the scope of this evaluation report
- towards the end of the evaluation Break was considering the use of family group conferencing and introducing disability transition workers to the SCSC approach
- Break was 1 of 2 Staying Close projects to pilot personal budgets for care leavers. It involved young people applying for money or a pre-paid card (up to £1,500) to fund personalised support and activities to aid their skills and development (such as driving lessons, gym membership or travel to see family). Personal Budgets were not assessed by this evaluation. The impact was reviewed by staff (who managed the budgets). SCSC staff considered them to be working successfully

Some activities were postponed or in the early stages of implementation by the end of the evaluation (such as peer mentoring, finalising an independent living assessment tool, and expanding the train-the-trainer staff training). The SCSC project transition worker and housing worker roles have become more fluid to adapt to young people's needs and reflect a relationship-based support model. Break secured DfE funding to continue the SCSC project for a further 12 months. This will allow Break to support the development of SCSC projects in other LAs.

## **Referrals and entrants to the SCSC project**

The project aimed to support 70 residential care leavers during the pilot, by providing 25 SCSC house-shares alongside individualised support. Almost half (47%, 33) of the target sample had moved into the 14 SCSC properties that had been acquired during the evaluation data collection timeframe (May 2018 to December 2019).

Overall, 101 young people were referred to the SCSC project of whom 44 (44%) were accepted and a further 8 (8%) were under consideration by evaluation endpoint. Almost half (48%, 48) did not proceed into the project. Reasons included being ineligible (for example, needs were too high), having other housing options in place, and declining to join. The latter 2 groups offered a potential comparison group for the evaluation.

Of the 44 young people accepted, 11 were awaiting move-in dates and 33 had moved into an SCSC house-share during the evaluation timescale. Just over half the group was from LA2 (55%, 18) and 45% (15) from LA1. By endpoint, 9 (27%) young people had left the SCSC project early (data on referrals is shown in Table 4 and Figure 5, appendix 4).

The evaluation sample comprised the 33 young people who had moved into SCSC house-shares. Most were male (73%, 24), reflecting the gender split in the residential population nationally. The average age at move-in was 17.7 years, ranging from 16 to 20. Most were free from physical health problems (70%, 23) however, over half was recorded as having mental health difficulties (55%, 18). There was evidence of multiple difficulties in the group at move-in, including offending (33%, 11), drug misuse (52%, 17) and self-harm (36%, 12). Over a third had 3 or more risk behaviours (39%, 13), indicating the level of need. Over half the group was not in education, employment or training (NEET) (58%, 19), higher than rates for care leavers nationally and in the 2 LAs.<sup>1</sup> Young people in EET (42%, 14) were mostly in education. Almost half of the group had moved into an SCSC property directly from their residential unit (45%, 15) while some came from foster care or family and friends (12%, 4). Two-fifths of the group (42%, 14), however, had lived in semi-independent accommodation (for some, numerous) for several months between residential care and moving into their SCSC property. At entry to the SCSC project, only 9 (27%) young people were able to identify a member of their former residential unit whom they wished to stay close to. The length of time young people had been in the SCSC project by evaluation endpoint varied from 1 to 26 months (mean 9.4 months). A follow-up group, for analysis of change in outcomes over time, was formed of 23 young people who had been in the project for 6 months or more, which offered a reasonable duration in which to expect some impact.

## Theory of change

The original theory of change, outlining proposed activities and outcomes for the SCSC project, was developed by Break for their bid to the DfE (Figure 2, appendix 1). As part of the evaluation's contribution analysis methodology, 2 theory of change workshops were held with project stakeholders from Break and the 2 LAs (June 2018 and April 2019). The purpose of the workshops was to review and revise the original theory of change so that it remained relevant and plausible during the SCSC project implementation. It also explored the assumptions underlying the theory of change and any risk factors that might undermine it. There was consensus amongst stakeholders that the Break SCSC theory of change provided a robust model of support to meet the proposed outcomes. The identified risks to the project model being effective included; lack of engagement from young people, lack of referrals from LAs, lack of buy-in from housing partners leading to insufficient properties, the presence of other accommodation projects that might limit the number of referrals to SCSC, and difficulties in project delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> National statistics for 2019 report that 30% of care leavers aged 18 and 39% aged 19 to 21 were NEET. The corresponding figures for care leavers in the LAs aged 17 to 18 was 27% in LA1 and unrecorded in LA2. Figures for those aged 19 to 21 in LA1 was 37% and 46% in LA2 (DfE, 2019).

Figure 1 Revised Break SCSC Theory of Change

INPUT	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOMES
Transition worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build relationships</li> <li>Create a SCSC plan</li> <li>Match flatmates</li> <li>Support &amp; build community &amp; family links &amp; connection to previous children's home</li> <li>Provide personalised budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP report improved Independence skills</li> <li>YP report consistency of relationships</li> <li>YP report improved community engagements</li> <li>YP show reduced risk taking behaviour</li> <li>YP show financial autonomy in own care package</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP have maintained their tenancy</li> <li>Increase in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engagement in opportunities</li> <li>employability skills</li> <li>aspirations for future</li> </ul> </li> <li>Increased practical and emotional skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>independent living &amp; self-care</li> <li>time management</li> <li>self-advocacy</li> <li>knowing where to access support services</li> </ul> </li> <li>Increased emotional wellbeing</li> <li>Reduction in risk taking behaviour</li> <li>Increase in positive support network</li> <li>Demonstration of value for money for LA/other agencies</li> </ul> <p><b>Long term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive engagement in society (social, emotional and financial wellbeing)</li> <li>Participation in EET</li> <li>Sustainable positive relationships</li> <li>Own tenancy / home</li> <li>Cost savings for service and society – including many public agencies</li> </ul>
Housing Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenancy support</li> <li>Tenancy preparation</li> <li>Eviction panels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP improving financial capability</li> <li>YP better prepared for move on</li> <li>YP have stable housing / avoiding eviction</li> <li>Evidence that YP able to live with others</li> </ul>	
Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquisition of houses</li> <li>Refurbishment &amp; maintenance to required standard</li> <li>Neighbourhood engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project has sufficient housing stock</li> <li>Good quality houses</li> <li>Good relationships with neighbours</li> </ul>	
EET Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do EET assessment &amp; plan</li> <li>Identify pre work / training &amp; work / education training opportunities</li> <li>Build network of resources &amp; community activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP making progress towards EET</li> <li>YP has identified aspirations</li> <li>YP showing improved routine</li> <li>Availability and access to learning &amp; work opportunities</li> </ul>	
Participation Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create peer networks</li> <li>Co-production opportunities</li> <li>Presentation opportunities</li> <li>Participation in recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP engaged in peer network</li> <li>YP engaged in all interviews</li> <li>All aspects of project coproduced</li> <li>YP co-present at events</li> </ul>	
Mentoring service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit &amp; train mentors</li> <li>Match young people with mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All young people offered a mentor</li> <li>YP report meaningful / independent relationships being developed</li> </ul>	
Emotional Wellbeing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral/assessments &amp; intervention plan</li> <li>Provide 12 week programme of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YP showing emotional stability</li> <li>YP developing strategies to prevent future crises</li> </ul>	
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create &amp; deliver train the trainer package</li> <li>Develop training package for YP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train the trainer package developed &amp; updated</li> <li>Workforce report upskilled</li> <li>YP participating as co-facilitators</li> </ul>	
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with LAs and Housing providers to support project</li> <li>Project Board - Referrals &amp; strategic oversight</li> <li>Data sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LA &amp; Housing engaged</li> <li>Engaged Project Board</li> <li>SCSC Project is embedded into LA care leaver strategy</li> <li>Improved data collection/use</li> </ul>	
Break systems & expertise, develop & manage efficiencies across resources & service delivery	<p>Manage resources including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of personalised budgets</li> <li>Matching matrix</li> <li>Housing stability</li> <li>Relationship based stability</li> <li>EWS/transition/housing support</li> <li>EET support</li> <li>Reduction in risk taking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced evictions/housing crises</li> <li>Increased EET-decreased NEET</li> <li>Reduced placement costs</li> <li>Reduced LA PA time</li> <li>Reduced police involvement</li> <li>Reduced hospital admissions</li> <li>Reduced MH crises</li> </ul>	

## 3. Overview of the evaluation

### Evaluation aims

The Break SCSC project is 1 of 8 Staying Close projects piloted by the DfE Innovation Programme. The pilots were evaluated at individual project level by researchers at the Universities of York, Oxford and Manchester Metropolitan. A common evaluation plan was designed to enable consistency in methods, research questions, data collection and analysis to allow comparison of implementation processes, costs and outcomes for young people in the pilot projects. This evaluation aimed to accurately describe the SCSC model, explore its early impact on outcomes for young people, explore the cost benefits of the model, and the factors necessary for implementing, sustaining and replicating the SCSC model of Staying Close.

### Evaluation questions

A common set of evaluation questions for all 8 Staying Close projects was developed by the evaluation co-ordinators Opcit Research, and the DfE (see appendix 4) and included:

- to what extent were the planned developments achieved? (See chapter 4.)
- what has been the character of the support package, was it implemented as planned and how has this helped young people to avoid problems with their tenancy or other untoward outcomes? Has there been meaningful contact with an identified worker? (See chapters 4, 5 and 6.)
- what is the impact of SCSC on outcomes and progress for care leavers? (See chapter 5.) What proportion:
  - are in accommodation that is suitable and stable (with reference to unplanned moves or disruptions in tenancies)
  - are in EET appropriate to their abilities, wishes and needs
  - are ready for independent living
  - are physically healthy with good emotional health, wellbeing and are resilient to unsafe behaviours (such as substance misuse, criminal justice system involvement, and unplanned early parenthood)
  - feel well-supported and report good social connections and greater social integration?
- how have young people, and other stakeholders, been involved in the co-production of the Break SCSC model? (See chapters 4 and 6.)

- what are the costs of delivering the SCSC intervention and what are the potential cost savings? (See chapter 7 and appendix 5.)
- what are the experiences of young people in residential care who do not access the interventions? (See Table 7, appendix 4.)

## Evaluation methods

The evaluation plan was approved on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and ethics approval was granted by the University of York Department of Social Policy and Social Work ethics committee, on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018. The evaluation took place between May 2018 and April 2020, with data collection ending in December 2019. It comprised 3 components: an implementation evaluation to understand set-up and operation of the project to inform learning for sustainability and replication; an outcomes evaluation to explore impact on outcomes over time for young people; and an economic evaluation to explore costs and savings associated with the project.

These 3 components were underpinned by a theory based contribution analysis approach, which, in the absence of a viable experimental design, was used to explore if and how elements of the SCSC project contributed to the outcomes. The methodology also used descriptive, before and after data analysis of key outcomes (largely drawn from project monitoring data) compared to local and national data. A co-production and participatory approach was also used, involving young people as participants, advisers and peer researchers. Peer research training was delivered for 8 Staying Close evaluations by University of York researchers in August 2019.

Data was gathered across 3 timepoints: baseline - at entry to SCSC; midpoint - around 6 months into the project; and endpoint - final data collection between November and December 2019. Methods and numbers of participants included:

- structured interviews with SCSC project managers (5 at baseline, 5 at endpoint)
- structured interviews with SCSC project workers (2 at baseline)
- structured interviews with senior LA managers (2 at baseline, 2 at endpoint)
- online survey of SCSC project transition workers and housing workers (13 responses at baseline, 18 responses at endpoint)
- endpoint online survey of housing providers (3 responses - 75% of sample) and SCSC young people's personal advisers (1 response - 11% of sample)
- SCSC referral and monitoring child level data for 101 referrals at baseline and 33 SCSC entrants at endpoint

- midpoint online survey for a subgroup of SCSC project young people who were in their accommodation (9, 47%) responses)
- six focus groups during the evaluation involving 23 young people overall
- endpoint semi-structured interviews with a subgroup of 9 SCSC young people conducted by peer researchers to explore views and experiences of SCSC
- case study interviews with 2 SCSC project young people at endpoint
- completion of GCI and SWEMWBS for SCSC project young people
- local authority administrative data gathered on EET, accommodation and risk outcomes for the comparison group at endpoint (LA1 13, LA2 9) and online survey of a comparison group of 22 young people at midpoint and endpoint (0 responses at midpoint and 1 (5%) response at endpoint)

## Changes to evaluation methods

The evaluation methodology was mostly implemented as planned with the addition of 2 extra focus groups with young people and a survey with housing providers at endpoint. The main change was the inclusion of a contemporary comparison group (instead of a historical group as originally proposed) as the number of referrals who did not proceed in to the SCSC project was higher than anticipated and those who were eligible but did not enter the project provided a natural comparison group. Responses were too low to include the group in analysis (see Table 7, appendix 4).

## Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation approach was appropriate for the project. Delays to recruitment led to a lower sample size for the SCSC group and a shorter follow-up timeframe. There was also variation in the duration of project intervention for young people, which reduced the number for whom follow-up data was available. This limited scope for statistical analysis. The lack of a viable comparison group due to low responses and missing data, despite working with the LAs, meant comparison of outcomes was not possible. Instead, comparison with national and local data was used alongside a contribution analysis. The evaluation team co-developed a referral and monitoring database with the project, to enable continued data collection and assessment of progress, outcomes and impact beyond the current evaluation. An extended follow-up will enable exploration of the long term impact of the project on young people as they continue their journeys to adulthood.

## 4. Implementation evaluation

### Methods summary

The implementation findings draw on data collected at evaluation endpoint, via interviews with SCSC senior managers (5), LA managers (2), SCSC local managers (2) and SCSC staff engaged in direct work (2), an SCSC worker survey at baseline (13) and endpoint (18) and an endpoint survey of SCSC housing providers (3).

### Findings

This section provides an overview of the enablers and challenges that emerged during implementation of the SCSC project, which influenced the ease of operation and potential for sustainability. (See appendix 6a for supporting quotes and detail.)

#### Freedom to adopt and adapt

The Innovation Programme resources (funding and guidance from the DfE, including support from their coach (a DfE implementation expert appointed to work with projects), alongside Break's expertise and knowledge within the sector, enabled Break to adopt a Staying Close offer and adapt the approach and the wider Break service to better meet the needs of young people and partner services, as they emerged. Break integrated the SCSC project into its wider service by incorporating existing in-house services and drawing in other approaches to enhance the SCSC support package offer for young people leaving residential care. This included:

- using Break's workforce development package, involving a variety of training such as Signs of Safety (Turnell and Edward 1999) and the Solihull approach (Douglas 2010), which informed SCSC project delivery as well as practice for all Break staff
- Break's Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) and mentoring service, which was available as part of the SCSC offer to young people
- access to personalised budgets for young people, which offered a financial means to respond to young people's individual journeys and needs (for example, private tutors for educational engagement, driving lessons to help stay close, gym memberships to promote health and wellbeing)
- further expansion of participatory practice and co-production activities, including offering young people a role in guiding the direction and design of the SCSC project, and inclusion of an experienced participation lead from the Break team and designated co-production apprentice to enable feedback mechanisms and initiate project and Break service-wide development



## **Multi-agency collaboration**

Meeting SCSC project outcomes hinged on sustaining collaborative relationships with all stakeholders to ensure multi-agency buy-in that extended beyond the pilot phase. Relationships with LAs were strengthened through membership of the SCSC project Board and direct meetings with LA staff, which increased opportunities for consultation and transparent ongoing review of the project development and impact. LAs welcomed the opportunity for collaboration going forward, with the addition of greater partnership work amongst the LAs, to strengthen learning and continued development of the SCSC project. Turnover in LA leadership was a challenge and proved disruptive to the necessary commitment to strategic direction and a sustained approach. This required SCSC project managers to revisit the steps to promote the project and secure ongoing commitment, which took time. The LAs highlighted a need for contingency planning for young people at risk of exiting the SCSC project to offset potential issues and improve learning. LAs welcomed the direct work of SCSC transition workers to work alongside PAs and in some cases free up PA time, which 1 LA manager noted had been achieved by transition and housing workers dealing with housing issues, and PAs and SCSC staff working jointly with young people to ensure a consistent and streamlined approach. A PA of 1 SCSC young person noted that the “current transitions worker has been excellent.”

Collaboration and buy-in from housing providers was central to the success of the SCSC project. Although the project was spread across 3 LAs, requiring a range of housing providers, SCSC project managers were able to build relationships and secure further commitment going forward. The managers expressed how they had been able to work alongside each housing provider effectively and draw on learning from early providers to support those that followed in offering the service and homes that young people required. Each provider surveyed noted the success of the project in the maintenance of tenancies for a vulnerable group of young people and reported no major issues in delivery. One noted, “as a housing officer, having to have no involvement with a tenancy is usually a sign of how successful it has been.”

Collaborative relationships with other agencies were forged for discrete work packages, which enhanced project delivery and the support offer for SCSC young people. Examples included establishing closer links with the police to reduce risk of exploitation and criminality; substance misuse or mental health services; and education and training providers such as the Prince’s Trust to help young people to work towards EET goals.

## **Balancing referrals, care planning and housing availability**

There were some early challenges in the management and flow of referrals between the LAs and the SCSC project. One LA lead suggested that there had been a lack of awareness about the SCSC offer among LA practitioners and that referral pathways between LA residential services and the SCSC operational team had not been strong

enough. Mutual clarity about the eligibility of referrals and the realistic timescales for accommodating referrals was essential and took time to achieve. For example, it was acknowledged the LAs had expected some referrals to be accommodated very quickly (particularly if leaving care planning was unexpectedly expedited), however, sufficient time was needed to obtain housing and get it ready, and to prepare young people for moving in. In some instances, pressured timescales, coupled with the issue of housing availability whilst allowing for that local connection, had contributed to insufficient housing choice and availability for some young people (see chapter 6 for young people's reflections on housing). Furthermore, the pressure for effective care planning processes to be met (to provide some certainty to young people leaving residential care and find housing options quickly) can lead to a young person being referred to the SCSC project when they were not ready or able to engage with the project offer. These challenges have stimulated an evolved SCSC referral management process, to enable improved referral routes and rates, and help mitigate against external issues and better meet the needs of young people and the LAs, which has facilitated continued project commitment.

## **Ensuring a consistent and sustained service**

Break managers highlighted that consistency of service can be difficult to maintain given the geographic spread of the implementation areas, where different LA service priorities and local contexts and issues existed. There was also an acknowledged turnover of staff within the children's social care sector, which was evident within the project. The project was particularly affected by the turnover of SCSC transition workers. An early approach had involved drawing in existing Break service transition workers to the SCSC project, but 4 out of 5 left in the early months. Further recruitment was therefore needed to employ sufficient workers for the SCSC project, however, some new transition workers subsequently transferred to other roles within the project or Break service. These difficulties in establishing a stable SCSC staff team during early operation presented an unforeseen challenge, which impacted on the consistency of service for young people. The turnover of direct staff inhibited the ability for young people to establish sustained relationships with their allocated worker and increased the challenge of maintaining young people's engagement in the project. SCSC staff turnover was directly highlighted as an issue by young people (see chapter 6) and by LA leads. The SCSC team recognised that this had been a learning curve, regarding the time needed for a new project to embed, recruit a team and for a team to become stable (a project manager suggested that it had taken 6 to 9 months to form the full team). Some SCSC staff raised the need for a higher staff to young person ratio and for strengthening team expertise, via specialist training in mental health and therapeutically-informed practice, going forward.

## **Adapting approach to maintain the involvement of young people**

There was a recognition that the Staying Close concept was, in practice, not possible for all young people. Some had no practical or emotional connections to the areas in which they lived while in residential care, whilst some commented that the competing demands on the practitioner was an obstacle. Break therefore adapted the project to focus on the staying connected aspect, allowing young people to identify someone they wished to have contact with. Learning from the project has stimulated additional adaptations to the Staying Close offer, including the imminent introduction of 'stay connected' workers to help young people to develop these social networks and re-establish family connections.

SCSC project managers also acknowledged varying degrees of engagement with the project's support package across the SCSC cohort. This was a challenge for the SCSC team as the key aims of the project were to enable young people to co-produce their plans and work alongside their key workers, whilst also building peer networks through shared living and participation activity. Break SCSC managers emphasised a need to be responsive to the individual journeys of young people once they entered the project, providing access to various project workers to support them with life areas and adapting the frequency and level of support as required. The introduction of a dedicated EET worker to focus on sourcing opportunities and undertake direct work with young people who might need additional support in this area, was reported positively by them.

## **Limitations**

The implementation evaluation was carried out as planned, with perspectives from a range of stakeholders. There was a lack of response from PAs, to inform findings on the SCSC project's impact on their work with SCSC young people and in general.

## **Conclusions**

The SCSC project was operating successfully and was increasing referrals. Both LAs felt that the SCSC project was a valuable option in their overall offers to residential care leavers and had seen outcomes for young people improve. Managing project capacity had been a challenge and required extended timescales to stabilise referral flows in line with housing availability. The SCSC team's success in establishing and sustaining collaborative working with LA staff (managers and frontline) and housing providers, and their clear communication of the goals and parameters of the SCSC project aided commitment to processes for future referrals and housing acquisition. Variations in young people's engagement and the practicalities of staying close presented challenges; however, the project strived to maintain flexibility in its offer to young people and adapt support-planning according to need, recognising that some require time to build trusting relationships. After initial staffing issues, the SCSC team was in place with access to a

range of staff training to maximise skills in direct, individualised support for young people. Break's expertise and experience, and in-house services, allowed the project to overcome challenges and adapt according to arising issues and need, while promoting the ethos of the SCSC project innovation. In doing so, Break secured continued commitment and buy-in from LAs and housing providers to sustain the project.

## 5. Outcomes evaluation

### Methods summary

Findings are based on data from the Break SCSC referral and monitoring system and LA data. They also draw on evaluation measures, a midpoint survey of 9 young people, 9 peer research interviews, 6 focus groups, 2 case studies and SCSC worker data. Findings relate mainly to the follow-up group of 23 young people, to explore outcomes over time. These young people had been in the SCSC project for 6 months or more, which offered a reasonable timeframe for the project to have an impact and for change to occur. The lack of a viable comparison group prevented analysis to test whether changes in outcomes could be attributed to the SCSC project. Instead, a contribution analysis methodology was used to explore what outcomes were achieved, what helped and whether there was reasonable evidence that the project contributed to these outcomes. This was a small sample without a comparison group, therefore findings are tentative.

### Findings

Findings relate to distance travelled across each outcome identified in the SCSC theory of change and evaluation questions (see Figure 1 and chapter 3). They are considered within the context of existing evidence from local and national data and research, and in light of the qualitative findings from this evaluation in order to explore plausibility that the SCSC project contributed to the observed outcomes.

### Existing evidence base

Existing evidence shows that many care leavers lack the practical and emotional skills and support to embark upon the responsibilities of independent adult living at a young age. This can lead to housing instability and episodes of homelessness and impact on EET and wellbeing (Dixon and Lee 2015, Gill 2017). Care leavers are also at higher risk of being NEET. Data for LA1 and LA2 showed that 37% and 46% of care leavers respectively, were NEET compared with 19% of their non-care peers (DfE 2019). Providing stable accommodation that young people are happy with and that meets their needs, offers a protective factor that can mediate the impact of earlier difficulties, is associated with positive wellbeing and provides a foundation for progress in EET (Wade and Dixon 2006). Research also shows the importance of having at least 1 positive and reliable relationship to guide young people through the transition from care (Parry and Weatherhead 2014). Findings and further contextual evidence are discussed for each outcome below.

## Distance travelled in outcome areas

The follow-up group was representative of the full SCSC sample in terms of baseline characteristics and circumstances (see Tables 4 to 8, appendix 4).<sup>2</sup>

### Accommodation stability and satisfaction – young people have maintained their tenancy

Most (74%, 17) of the follow-up group experienced stability in their Break SCSC properties, maintaining their tenancy between 6 and 26 months.<sup>3</sup> Some young people who had experienced post-care movement in-between leaving residential care and moving in to their SCSC property, had since settled in their accommodation (see chapter 6). As described by one SCSC front line worker, “some young people have stayed within the SCSC project longer than they have been in any other placement” (staff survey).

There was evidence of housing movement and while this might include a positive move for some, 5 (22%) had moved between 4 and 8 times. Moves had occurred when 1 house-share became unsustainable and young people were moved in and out of separate temporary accommodation until suitable SCSC houses were acquired. In other cases, difficulties had arisen between housemates or when young people could not comply with tenancy expectations and were moved to other SCSC properties. Although the level of movement was high for some, the project had stuck with young people, continuing to support them and had eventually provided them with other SCSC properties, thus maintaining them within the project and avoiding homelessness and evictions.<sup>4</sup> One, who left the project early, had been in the process of being evicted. Overall, the level of stability 6 to 26 months after moving into the project was positive compared with existing evidence of multiple moves, homelessness and evictions for some care-experienced young people soon after leaving care (Gill 2017, MyBNK 2018).<sup>5</sup>

In terms of accommodation satisfaction at endpoint, most young people were happy with the house they lived in (73%, mean 7.0), how safe they felt (72%, mean 7.5) and to a lesser degree, the local area (64%, mean 6.0) on the GCI.<sup>6</sup> They were less happy with

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<sup>2</sup> There were twice as many males (15) as females (8) and the mean age at endpoint was 19. There were similar numbers from both LAs and the duration of intervention ranged from 6-26 months (mean 13.9).

<sup>3</sup> The average number of moves for the group was 1.9 (range 0 to 8) over an average of 13.9 months.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 5 who left the project early, 1 had a positive move, 1 was facing eviction and receiving on-going support from the SCSC project, 1 had experienced accommodation breakdown, 1 had failed to engage and 1 had moved to live with family.

<sup>5</sup> Definitions of stability and instability vary in the looked after children and care leaver literature. Instability usually refers to 3 or more moves per year or during contact with children’s social care (there is often a lack of distinction between positive moves and disruptions) (DfE 2016c, Webster et al 2011, Unrau et al 2008)

<sup>6</sup> Data on young people’s satisfaction with their accommodation at endpoint was gathered via a 10 item GCI scale, which is scored from 0 to a maximum score of 10 and is available for 48% (11) of the group.

the people they lived with (44%, mean 5.3) (see Table 9, appendix 4). Most of the group had lived with other SCSC young people throughout, though had occasionally been sole occupants while waiting for new housemates to move in. House-shares could provide a friendship group and reduce loneliness, however, they could also be problematic. Happiness with housemates seemed to deteriorate for some over time, reflecting the existence of tension in some house-shares. This was evident in young people's views (see chapter 6) and worker's reports of incidents of bullying or being bullied (48%, 11), some of which involved housemates.

### **Increased participation in EET and reduced NEET – young people have increased aspirations for the future**

There was some increase in levels of participation in EET for the follow-up group over time from 10 (43%) at baseline to 13 (57%) at endpoint. There was, therefore, an overall reduction in the proportion who were NEET. The picture at individual level shows the fluctuations in participation. Five (22%) who had been NEET at baseline were participating in part-time work, apprenticeships or in alternative provision, such as training, at endpoint. Eight (35%) were in EET and 8 (35%) were NEET at both points, while 2 (8%) who had been in EET were NEET by endpoint, both after finishing their college courses. The percentage of young people NEET (43%) was higher than national statistics for care leavers aged 19 to 21 (39%) (DfE 2019), reflecting the level of need in the SCSC group as discussed in chapter 2. Comments from the staff survey highlighted that some young people had lacked motivation, abilities and past encouragement to participate in EET, and required intensive support to prepare them for EET opportunities. There were indications of progress, with young people being supported to identify their EET aspirations. Monitoring data showed that 21 (91%) young people had identified career goals and many were accepting help or engaged in strategies to work towards meeting them, including doing online courses. The introduction of a dedicated EET officer to focus on building links and sourcing EET opportunities had made a difference and young people talked highly of this support with EET and the wider support they offered.

### **Increased emotional wellbeing**

Young people's wellbeing was explored using measures of life satisfaction through the Good Childhood Index (GCI) and mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS). The total scores for both measures and individual item scores illustrated how young people were feeling about various aspects of their lives (see appendix 4 for information and data for the measures). The measures were administered by SCSC project staff and evaluation researchers at 3 points:

- baseline when a young person moved into the SCSC project
- 6 months after the young person moved in. This provided a uniform duration of intervention for the follow-up group (baseline to 6-month point)

- endpoint in December 2019 (the final evaluation data collection point for young people). The intervention duration for this point was variable and reflected how long each young person had been in the project by endpoint (range 7 to 20 months for those completing measures). Therefore, durations between this measure and the 2 previous ones vary for each young person

Analysis is based on 13 young people who completed measures at more than 1 timepoint. This sample is too small to detect statistically significant change; hence findings are largely illustrative of the direction of travel.

- The GCI

The GCI measure of wellbeing comprised a single overall measure of happiness with life and (scored from 0 low to 10 high ) and a 10-item scale providing a total life satisfaction score of between 0 and 100, based on a range of life areas that research suggests are important to young people (The Children's Society 2010). Five extra items were added to the evaluation scale to explore other areas relevant to the SCSC group.

Data for the young people who had completed a GCI at more than 1 timepoint (13), suggested increased life satisfaction over time (see Table 10, appendix 4). Scores for the first 2 timepoints, which covered a uniform duration of 6 months in the project, showed increased satisfaction for the group in all areas, with the exception of EET, which went from a mean of 5.4 to 5.0. One of the areas that showed the greatest improvement was how happy young people felt about the future (mean 4.2 to 7.0). There was also an indication that satisfaction with family relationships had increased, perhaps a result of some young people moving closer to relatives, or rekindling links with them (mean 4.2 to 6.0). The group's happiness with life as a whole had also increased (mean 5.0 to 6.0).

Scores at endpoint also pointed to improvement over time, although there was some fluctuation in levels of satisfaction in specific life areas after the 6-month point (indicated by a decrease in the total mean scores from 65.4 at 6-months to 63.2 at endpoint on the 10-item scale). As noted earlier, there was a reduction in satisfaction with the people they lived with, which after an initial increase between baseline and 6-month point, had reduced at endpoint (means of 6.0, 7.0 and 5.0 respectively). Areas that improved most by endpoint were how happy young people were with the level of choice they had (mean of 5.4 to 8.0) and with the amount of support they received (mean of 6.5 to 8.0).

- The SWEMWBS

The SWEMWBS measure of wellbeing comprises 7 statements scored from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) with a total score range of 7 to 35, higher scores indicating



more positive mental wellbeing.<sup>7</sup> Scores for the follow-up group ranged from 9 to 35 with a quarter scoring below 17, a threshold for probable signs of depression or anxiety (see Table 11, appendix 4). Data for those who completed measures at more than 1 point, suggested signs of improvements in mental wellbeing over time. The mean score for the group increased from 18.8 at baseline to 22.9 at 6-month point and, albeit to a lesser degree, to endpoint (22.7) (see Table 12 and Figure 5 in appendix 4).

Overall, patterns within the data for both measures suggested that wellbeing appeared to be improving for the SCSC group 6 months after moving into the project. However, it remained lower than UK population averages. For example, the SCSC group had lower life satisfaction compared with 10 to 17 year olds nationally, as shown by GCI mean scores (see Tables 9 and 10, appendix 4) (Rees et al 2010, The Children's Society 2018). This was the case for overall satisfaction at baseline and endpoint and for all but 1 life area (choice in life) at endpoint. This reflects existing research that shows lower life satisfaction in the care and leaving care populations (Blower et al 2017, Dixon et al 2017). Wellbeing, as measured by the SWEMBWS, also remained lower than the UK population norm (mean of 23.6).

Mental health difficulties are known to be higher amongst care-experienced populations (Meltzer et al 2003, Ford et al 2007). Existing research suggests that such difficulties are likely to emerge during adolescence for the general population (McCrory et al 2010) and that for care leavers in particular, the experience of transitioning from care and taking on the responsibilities of adulthood early, can itself trigger mental distress and anxiety (The Scottish Health Survey 2001, Dixon 2008, Matthews and Sykes 2012, Dixon and Lee 2015). Such difficulties are unlikely to resolve within a relatively short period of time and can often require specialist intervention. SCSC monitoring data showed a high incidence of mental health difficulties in the SCSC group at baseline (55%, 18) and 12 (52%) of the follow-up group were identified with mental health difficulties at endpoint. Many of these young people had received targeted support from Break's in-house EWS (57%, 13) and 5 (22%) had accessed CAMHS or adult mental health services. Furthermore, positive progress in housing stability, EET participation and establishing support networks can promote positive wellbeing. All were evident within the SCSC group by endpoint.

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<sup>7</sup> The SWEMBWS is designed for use with samples in excess of 30 so statistical analysis was limited by the smaller than anticipated SCSC sample (33 instead of 70) and further compromised by low completion rates (20 at baseline and 10 at further timepoints). It was not possible to detect statistically significant change over time. Instead, the data gives a tentative illustration only of the direction of travel for the group.

## Increased practical and emotional life skills

Young people's abilities across 17 life skills were assessed and recorded by SCSC staff on the project monitoring database.<sup>8</sup> Ratings for each skill were added to give an overall score of life skills competence. Data was available for 23 at baseline and 20 at endpoint (see Table 13, appendix 4). There was a significant change in scores between move-in and endpoint, suggesting an overall increase in life-skill competence for the group.<sup>9</sup>

At an individual level, most young people's scores improved, although there was some balance to be had with an increase in some skills and a decrease in others. For some, the realities and responsibilities of independent living had become a challenge, with an overall decrease in skills for 7 (30%) young people (ranging from -1 to -13 points). For 2, this represented a small difference across several skills, however for 5, there was a decrease of 2 to 3 points in 1 particular life skill, most often in tenancy responsibilities, where issues included failure to pay rent, not helping housemates to keep the communal spaces clean or not keeping rooms tidy. Cooking, food shopping, money management, and organising themselves and their time were also areas that deteriorated for these young people. Overall, most appeared to be growing in competence and this was echoed in young people's assessment of their skills development (see Figure 6, appendix 4).

## Reduction in risk and risky behaviour

- Involvement in crime

The number of follow-up young people involved in crime reduced over time, from 7 (30%) at baseline to 2 (9%) at endpoint. Offending had resulted in community resolutions and youth cautions, however none of the follow-up group was attending youth offending or probation services at endpoint. One young person interviewed at follow-up considered the SCSC project to have been responsible for keeping them out of trouble with the police, "the main thing is [SCSC] helped me keep out of prison 100 percent, I reckon if I'd gone anywhere else I'd have been in prison."

National statistics for 2018 show that 8% of 16 to 17 year old looked after young people were convicted or subject to youth cautions or youth conditional cautions (DfE 2019). Data for the residential care population specifically, shows that 15% of 10 to 17 year olds in residential care had been convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand (DfE

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<sup>8</sup> The SCSC life skills measure, designed by the project team, included a range of practical and emotional skills rated on a scale of 0 (low skill) to 5 (confident) to give an overall score, a high of 85 indicating confidence in all life skills. A test of internal consistency was carried out to explore how well the 17 life skills items worked together as a measure. Analysis returned a Cronbach alpha score of .91, indicating strong scale reliability.

<sup>9</sup> Life skills scores increased from a mean score of 38.48 at baseline to 46.30 at endpoint ( $p=.003$ ).

2016b). Although data gathered by the SCSC project might include a broader category of offending (such as known offences that have not led to youth justice involvement), it suggests that the SCSC follow-up group comprised a higher number of youths involved in offending at baseline, reflecting the types of need amongst the cohort that the SCSC project was working with.

- Drug misuse

Drug misuse was defined as problem drug use and was evident for 10 (44%) of the follow-up group at baseline and 11 (48%) at endpoint. An exploration of drug use at individual level provided a more nuanced picture. While some young people had ceased drug use, 2 had begun. There was evidence of continued misuse for some young people throughout the follow-up period, however, staff reported that misuse had noticeably reduced for 4 of these young people. In total, staff assessed that 14 young people had shown substance misuse problems at some point over the follow-up period and that for 6 (43%) of these, problems had reduced by endpoint.

The incidence of drug misuse is higher than that recorded nationally, where 10% of looked after children aged 16 to 17, have substance misuse problems (DfE 2019).

- Anti-social behaviour

The existence of anti-social behaviour within the follow-up group more than halved between baseline and endpoint from 12 (52%) to 5 (22%). Examples had included noise, damage to their home and bringing unwelcome visitors to the house-shares.

At the same time, experiences of being bullied or bullying others increased from 3 (13%) to 11 (48%). It is difficult to say how many were victims and how many within the project were perpetrators, however, qualitative data indicated the presence of bullying within the house-shares, with 4 (17%) exhibiting bullying or challenging behaviour to others.

### **Reduced early parenthood**

There was a low rate of young parenthood within the SCSC follow-up group (4% at baseline) and no evidence of parenthood or pregnancies over the follow-up, some 6 to 26 months into the SCSC project. This compares favourably with existing evidence, which shows a higher incidence of teenage parenthood within the looked after population, who are more likely than their non-care peers to become young parents (Weston 2013, Craine et al 2014). Research on care leavers shows that 22% of females become young parents (during their teenage years) (NAO 2015) and 8% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 who were NEET, were recorded as inactive due to pregnancy or parenthood (DfE 2018).

Several factors may have contributed to the low incidence of parenthood in the SCSC group. The use of general house-shares is less appropriate for young parents, which

might reduce the number of young parents referred to the SCSC project, and it might well be an influencing factor for young people once they were living in the house-shares.

### **Improved social connectedness and integration**

Three indicators of social connectedness were used; identifying someone close, having contact with positive networks, and engagement in activities. Young people were asked if they could identify up to 3 people they felt close to. There was some indication of improved connectedness over time with fewer young people reporting that they had no one close at endpoint (2 (9%) compared with 5 (22%) at baseline). There was some increase in contact with a positive peer network from 1 (4%) to 6 (26%), while 15 (65%) were engaging in SCSC activities and participation groups by endpoint. A further 9 (39%) had engaged with the Break mentoring service. Workers noted that for some young people who had struggled socially, this represented a considerable achievement and confidence boost. Examples of engagement included taking part in sport activities, volunteering, attending the Break youth forum and events, and socialising with friends, housemates or family. Personal budgets had been used to promote leisure and social activities, including purchasing gym membership. Additionally, the SCSC team worked to find ways of enhancing young people's integration and sense of belonging in the neighbourhood they had come to live in. SCSC workers supported young people to introduce themselves to their neighbours to build positive links with their local community.

### **Plausibility and contribution narrative**

There was positive progress in the outcome areas that the project had set out to improve for young people, through its activities. This and qualitative data from young people and staff, provided good evidence that the project contributed to progress, for example in developing independent living skills and finding settled accommodation.

The SCSC model was underpinned by a credible, evidence-based theory of change, and the expert knowledge of project staff and LA partners of the obstacles to achieving positive outcomes facing residential care leavers, and the support and protective factors that help overcome them. For example, stability in accommodation and EET, positive wellbeing and life skills, and reliable social and professional networks to stick with young people through the ups and downs of the transition to adulthood. These are consistent messages in existing research, and formed the basis of the SCSC project's support offer.

Break's SCSC project was delivering activities as planned, realising its aims and providing a comprehensive support package. Transition and housing workers came from a range of professional backgrounds, bringing diverse experience and expertise and were involved in bespoke and intensive direct support. They had access to training through Break to help prepare them and support them in their role (see appendix 3). Data for the final month of the evaluation provided an indication of the intensity of support.

Transition workers recorded daily contact with almost a fifth of the group (17%, 4) and weekly contact from half an hour to 7 hours with others. In addition, housing workers had daily contact with 3 (13%), fortnightly contact with 2 (9%) and weekly contact of between 1 and 3 hours with others (78%). SCSC workers also reported that young people could draw on increased or disproportionate amounts of support, particularly those in distress or crisis. Staff also noted meanwhile, that other young people did not want to engage with contact and for those in work or college, contact was not possible during working hours. Staff turnover in the early stage of the project meant that 14 (61%) young people experienced between 3 and 5 changes of transition worker. Unsurprisingly, some commented that this had hampered attempts to form consistent and trusting relationships with staff.

By endpoint, many of the young people valued the support from staff, as illustrated in interviews and case studies, and summarised below (see chapter 6 and appendix 4).

### **Tyler's experience of the Break SCSC project**

Tyler was told about the Break SCSC project by their social worker during their leaving care planning meeting. Tyler had initially been "terrified to leave care", but said that entering the SCSC project "was the best thing I ever did". Tyler was not able to stay geographically close to their chosen networks, however the SCSC project provided travel expenses to enable those relationships to continue. Tyler was supported by a transition worker, housing worker, participation team and a peer mentor from the SCSC project. Tyler said "[I'm] overwhelmed with how amazing the support is". They had also built new support networks with housemates, commenting that: "we're all really supportive of each other."

As the SCSC project expanded, workers noted that a larger staff team was needed to deliver direct work and build relationships with a larger SCSC group. Overall, SCSC young people appeared to be mostly relying on support accessed through the project. Only 9 (39%) were recorded as receiving support from external services (such as mental health, substance misuse, education and job centre services). Young people continued to be supported by their local authority PAs, as per statutory requirements. One LA manager noted however, that the SCSC staff support had led to a reduced demand on PA time, including reducing their travel time to take young people to appointments or reducing the need to address accommodation needs as 1 manager described; "[SCSC] are resilient with young people, PAs do not spend so much time looking for placements for young people who often struggle to keep tenancies and move around a lot."

SCSC staff noted that an important aspect of their approach was understanding the impact of young people's histories and being able to adapt strategies accordingly, including using multi-disciplinary approaches and bridging gaps in wider provision. They noted that previously, housing and emotional wellbeing needs were seen as discrete areas of support within leaving care services, however, young people often faced barriers to accessing mainstream support to address emotional needs, which might lead to tenancy breakdowns. Break was able to consolidate existing aspects of their wider service into the SCSC project and bring in practitioners to provide 1 stop wraparound support. Examples of targeted activities and support included:

- accommodation - A SCSC worker described initial difficulties in engaging with a young person who had experienced evictions prior to moving to the SCSC property, and was again facing tenancy breakdown. The SCSC team worked alongside a health practitioner to tailor support to the young person's needs and make that necessary connection to address the difficulties. They noted that other housing providers were likely to have moved to eviction. Other strategies to help young people sustain their tenancies included working with housemates to address tensions by using a strengths-based approach to support them to manage problems and encouraging them to take a lead in mediation, where appropriate
- EET - Staff recognised that some young people were not ready to enter work and required strategies to reach a stage where they would even consider opportunities. There was evidence of positive work between young people and the EET worker, who focused on opening the minds of young people who were NEET to what they may like to engage in, rather than taking a direct remedial approach. They commented that "the provision of services for NEET young people who are not really ready to go into EET are almost non-existent. Without the project there would be almost nothing for them." (staff survey)
- wellbeing - Sessions with Break's EWS provided space for young people to talk and develop strategies to manage their emotions. Staff indicated that it could often bridge a gap for young people until they could access mainstream mental health services to better meet their level of need

Monitoring and qualitative data showed progress across all outcome areas, however, national data indicated that the SCSC group were doing less well in comparison with care leavers and young people generally (with the exception of young parenthood). It is important that young people's progress is considered in the context of their starting points, rather than existing evidence only. As noted, the SCSC project was working with vulnerable young people who had complex and multiple needs. Some had experienced considerable instability prior to the project, many were experiencing mental health difficulties and were susceptible to risk behaviour. Nevertheless, there was plausible evidence that the SCSC project was contributing to improved outcomes. One young

person said of the project “they’ve changed me as a person for the better. All young people who have been through care deserve this.”

## Limitations

The small sample, variable intervention durations (which for some, meant a short timeframe for follow-up), and lack of a viable comparison prevented analysis of attribution of the SCSC project. As such, it was not possible to provide definitive evidence of the project’s impact on outcomes at this stage. Findings are illustrative of the project’s contribution to the direction of travel for young people.

## Conclusion

Findings showed that the SCSC group had multiple and complex needs at baseline, with a higher prevalence of mental health difficulties, self-harm, offending, drug misuse and low wellbeing compared with national data on care leavers and young people. Evidence from SCSC project monitoring data and evaluation data at follow-up suggested improvement across all outcome areas. Two-thirds of the group had experienced housing stability, over half was in EET, there was a reduction in risk behaviour and signs of increased wellbeing, life-skills and social integration some 6 to 26 months into the project. Qualitative data from young people and workers highlighted the role of the SCSC project in facilitating this. Challenges in managing the house-shares and young people’s engagement with the project reflected a lack of readiness for independent living and problems forming trusting relationships with professionals for some young people. The provision of allocated workers to offer flexible, bespoke support, together with the EWS, mentoring and staff training in strengths based methods, offered a range of avenues to engage and support young people.

The SCSC project was delivering planned activities and looking to expand. Continued monitoring is needed to fully assess and understand the project’s impact on young people’s long-term outcomes and journeys to adulthood and whether they maintain progress, and stay close to support networks.

## 6. Voices of young people

### Methods summary

Participation of SCSC young people was central to the evaluation. Opportunities to participate included co-developing evaluation materials, and contributing to focus groups interviews and surveys. One SCSC young person became a peer researcher. (See appendix 6b for further views from SCSC young people.)

### Findings

Data was gathered from 9 young people during a midpoint survey and from 23 focus group participants. Ten young people were interviewed at endpoint (1 opted not to include their data in the report). Young people's views on the SCSC project included:

#### Knowledge of SCSC and reasons for joining the project

Some young people did not have clear information or a full understanding of the SCSC project. Only 2 of those interviewed knew what the SCSC principle was. Reasons for entering the project included previously living in a Break residential home and wanting to maintain support they were accustomed to, "I know how good Break is, when I was in a care home with Break the support and that was just unreal." Others wanted to be closer to family or to have opportunities to learn skills for independence. Some felt that they "didn't have a choice" due to their insecure accommodation circumstances, which left them with no option but to join the project.

#### Staying close and staying connected in practice

Seven of the young people interviewed had not been able to live in the location they had chosen, although some had managed to stay connected. Four had wanted to remain close to parents or other family members. Three young people expressed a desire to maintain a relationship with their residential workers, however, they stated there were often dilemmas and barriers to staying connected after leaving care, as 1 described, "I wanted to be in LA2, because that's where my life is now [but] I also wanted to stay close to my proper members of staff from my home, because I was very close to them."

#### Accommodation journeys before SCSC

The SCSC young people had experienced a range of accommodation and a degree of accommodation instability prior to the project. Only 2 interviewees had moved straight from their residential placement to their SCSC accommodation, others had lived in



hostels and semi-independent options, as described by 1 interviewee “I left the children’s home when I was 16 and lived in 7 or 8 hostels before coming to Break”.

## **Readiness for independent living and skills development**

The young people were asked to reflect on whether they felt ready to move into independent living. Six of the interview group stated they were not ready and that they lacked an element of choice in when they left due to the legal leaving care age being set at 18. Information was collected at baseline and endpoint on a range of life skills via the young people’s transition workers as described in chapter 5. Five of the interview group were identified as consistently improving their scores and offered some insight into what had helped. Some described how their confidence had improved since entering the SCSC project as they saw how their general skills were improving. They also stated that their social relationships had improved through taking part in peer learning activities with their housemates and other project participants.

## **SCSC house-shares**

There was evidence that some young people were facing challenges in their SCSC house-shares, where some had not always felt comfortable. Young people noted the tensions and aggressive behaviour amongst housemates. They also commented about problem drug use by some housemates. For others, sharing a living space was difficult due to varying levels of skills as 1 noted, “my housemate doesn't clean. There was rubbish over the floor, mouldy food on the side, all sorts”.

When discussing the difference in support between living in residential care and their Break SCSC house-share, some young people were missing having staff support on-site:

“[Residential unit] support was essentially there 24/7, they put staff round all the time. Now I have zero adults around me. The only adult in the house right now is me.”

Others, however, commented that their house-shares felt too much like a residential unit because of the décor or the rules. This highlighted the challenges for the SCSC project team in getting the right balance to meet young people’s varied levels and types of need.

## **Support from the SCSC project**

Young people’s perceptions of the benefits of the support provided through the SCSC project tended to align to the quality of the relationship with their allocated transition worker. This in turn, was often measured by the duration of the relationship or the number of changes in transition worker a young person had experienced. Only 1 of the young people interviewed had the same transition worker throughout, with others each having between 2 and 4 since entering the SCSC project. The level of change in worker

was highlighted as a concerning experience for young people leaving care, as they had often struggled to maintain relationships in the past. Others appeared resigned to this, as one young person commented, “I’m used to it, I’ve been in these sorts of places before, so I’m used to having people change all the time and stuff.”

Several young people were positive about their relationships with workers and the support they had received (see appendix 6c for case studies). One young person felt that the support from the SCSC project had helped steer them away from prison: “[SCSC] helped me keep out of prison, 100 percent.”

SCSC project young people also took part in a range of participation events, which enabled them to meet other SCSC young people and feed into the development of the project. Young people commented that the introduction of an EET officer had made a difference and that this role extended to supporting them with general life skills such as cooking and filling in application forms, as well as understanding EET options.

## **Advice for young people leaving residential care**

Interviewees were asked what advice they would give to young people leaving care and thinking of entering the SCSC project. Participants gave a range of advice, including:

“Don't rush everything, don't try and become independent all at once then try to move out in 6 months. Stay as long as you can, learn as much as you can.”

“I would say to double check the flat, if it's basic speak to your worker, coz when I first moved in, checked everything, there wasn't hardly anything in it so it made it a lot harder to make meals, but now it's progressing.”

## **Young people's recommendations**

Young people need clear information about the SCSC project and support available to them. Generally, the SCSC project was empowering young people to have more decision making in the project and their transition to independence. The support offered to young people allowed more choice, however, some young people noted that they were unable to move to their chosen area and some struggled with their housemates. Finding houses in the right areas depended on wider factors, however, the SCSC project could improve the matching process for housemates and allow young people to meet their future housemates prior to moving in. Young people also suggested the introduction of housemate agreements within each house (alongside the Break SCSC house rules) to allow young people more ownership in the home. Young people also wanted to introduce a young person friendly tenancy agreement to allow young people to understand what a tenancy means and what they need to adhere to.

## 7. Cost analysis

### Introduction

The approach taken to estimate the potential cost savings generated by the Break SCSC project combines 2 data sources:

1. pre and post-intervention data relating to 23 of the young people supported by the SCSC project. Each of these young people had, by December 2019, been in a Break SCSC project property for at least 6 months. Data was also available for a further 10 young people, although none of them met the 6-month threshold. That threshold was chosen because it is unrealistic to expect the SCSC project to generate positive outcomes for young people within a few weeks, or a small number of months, of them moving in to 1 of the properties
2. estimates from the evaluators and Break staff about the savings that the project generates for the LA in the form of residential care and semi-independent living costs that it no longer has to pay

The advantage of this approach is that it uses 'real' pre and post-intervention data supplied by young people who have been supported by the SCSC project. The drawback is that the pre and post-intervention data is unlikely to tell the full story about the preventative effects of Break SCSC. For example, a young person may have no offending behaviour in the pre-intervention period and none during the period of their support through the project. In the context of this cost analysis, that will show as no change or saving. However, it may be the case that without Break SCSC, that young person would have fallen into a pattern of offending behaviour. As such, the preventative effect of the project may actually be significant and could have prevented the LA, the police and other partners from incurring significant additional cost. It is also important to make clear that this analysis can only provide, at best, an indication of the types and scale of fiscal savings that Break SCSC project might be generating for the state (see Table 14 in appendix 5 for assumptions). The relatively small cohort, combined with the absence of reliable comparator group data, dictates that any assessment of the counterfactual is going to rely on subjectivity.

### Methodology

The variables in Table 1 have been included in the analysis. This is for 2 reasons:

1. it was agreed with project staff that Break SCSC has the potential to have a positive impact on these variables (see theory of change, Figure1)

2. in most cases, pre and post-intervention data is available for them (although there are incidences of missing data and 'not known' entries)

**Table 1 Pre and post-intervention outcomes**

<b>Pre and post-intervention variables</b>
Education, employment or training status (EET)
Drug taking behaviour
Criminal activity
Anti-social behaviour
Sexualised behaviour
Physical health
Mental health (2 variables: a) improvement in a young person's mental health and b) savings to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS))
Self-harm
Homelessness <sup>10</sup>
Evictions <sup>11</sup>

In addition to those in Table 1 above, feedback from the project has also been included on the likely savings to LAs in the form of residential placement and semi-independent living costs avoided. Taking the variables in Table 1 first, the approach has been to:

- compare the baseline and endpoint status for each of the 23 young people that had been in a SCSC property for at least 6 months by December 2019
- where there has been a positive change (for example, where a young person had a history of self-harm but they are no longer considered a self-harm risk at endpoint), assign a proxy saving. These proxy savings, including their sources, are shown in Table 14 in appendix 5

Data in Table 14 enables us to calculate, for each of the 23 young people in the analysis sample, estimated annual savings that 'might' be attributable to the Break SCSC project. Accurately assessing the counterfactual, and therefore attribution, is challenging,

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<sup>10</sup> Pre and post-intervention data is not available for homelessness as a distinct category. However, insight from the qualitative research suggests that 3 of the young people supported by the SCSC project were very likely to have experienced homelessness in its absence.

<sup>11</sup> Pre and post-intervention data is not available for evictions as a distinct category. As a proxy, it has been assumed that 30% of the cohort would have been evicted in the absence of Break SCSC. This is derived from the report, 'The Money House: Estimating the benefits to social landlords and other public services' (MyBNK, 2018), which found that 30% of care leavers that hadn't been supported through The Money House experienced eviction.

although it is unlikely that Break SCSC would be the only factor influencing positive changes. Low attribution, medium attribution and high attribution adjustments have therefore been applied, which assume that 33%, 50% and 66% respectively of any positive change observed can be attributed to the SCSC project.

In terms of placement activity, it has been estimated that, had Break SCSC not existed:

- eight of the young people they supported would have remained in LA residential care for an average of 6 months each and would then have moved into LA semi-independent living for an average of 6 months each
- three of the young people would have remained in a Break residential unit for an average of 6 months each and would then have moved into LA semi-independent living for an average of 6 months each
- one young person would have been in foster care for at least 12 months
- eleven of the young people would have been in LA-funded semi-independent living for an average of at least 12 months each
- two of the young people would have lived with family and/or friends for an average of at least 12 months each

The costs to the state associated with the above are shown in Table 15 in appendix 5.

## Results

Table 2 (below) shows the indicative (that is estimated) savings for each of the low attribution, medium attribution and high attribution scenarios. The key points are that:

- indicative 1 year savings associated with the pre and post-intervention data in relation to the cost of delivering Break's SCSC project range from £70,356 in a low attribution scenario to £140,710 in a high attribution scenario
- by contrast, the total placement cost savings account for the vast majority of the total indicative 1 year savings (£1,614,736). These do not vary according to the different attribution scenarios because they are already based on the assumption that the Break SCSC project is responsible for the full accommodation saving
- the indicative 1 year savings generated by Break, therefore, are estimated at between £1,685,092 and £1,755,446

The indicative savings shown in Table 2 are for a 1-year period. With the exception of residential care costs, it is feasible that all of them could persist for longer (residential care costs cannot because it is assumed that the young people would have left local authority or Break residential care after 6 months). Table 16 (in appendix 5), therefore shows the 2 and 3-year indicative savings. These have been calculated by applying the

government's standard discount rate of 3.5% to the 1-year savings (see HM Treasury 2018, [The Green Book](#)). They range from £1,839,907 to £2,065,078 in year 2 and £1,989,304 to £2,363,873 in year 3.

**Table 2 Indicative savings**

<b>Category of cost saving</b>	<b>Young people to which it applies</b>	<b>Total value/saving (without attribution adjustment)</b>	<b>Low Attribution (33%)</b>	<b>Medium Attribution (50%)</b>	<b>High Attribution (66%)</b>
A positive change in education, employment or training status	5	£52,330	£17,269	£26,165	£34,538
Reduction in drug taking compared with the pre-intervention period	4	£15,976	£5,272	£7,988	£10,544
Reduction in criminal activity	5	£20,720	£6,838	£10,360	£13,675
Reduction in anti-social behaviour	7	£4,907	£1,619	£2,454	£3,239
Reduction in sexualised behaviour	2	£26,164	£8,634	£13,082	£17,268
Improvement in physical health	2	£134	£44	£67	£88
Improvement in mental health	2	£4,606	£1,520	£2,304	£3,040
Savings to CAMHS	6	£31,350	£10,346	£15,675	£20,691
Self-harm	1	£1,664	£549	£832	£1,098
Homelessness	3	£8,727	£2,880	£4,364	£5,760
Evictions	6	£46,620	£15,385	£23,310	£30,769
Sub-total		£213,198	£70,356	£106,601	£140,710
Residential care cost savings for the local authority (6 months per young person)	8	£1,018,992	£1,018,992	£1,018,992	£1,018,992

Category of cost saving	Young people to which it applies	Total value/saving (without attribution adjustment)	Low Attribution (33%)	Medium Attribution (50%)	High Attribution (66%)
Semi-independent living cost savings for the local authority (6 months saving for the 8 young people above)	8	£43,152	£43,152	£43,152	£43,152
Residential Break	3	£382,122	£382,122	£382,122	£382,122
Semi-independent living cost savings for the local authority (6 months saving for the 3 young people above)	3	£16,182	£16,182	£16,182	£16,182
Foster Care	1	£35,620	£35,620	£35,620	£35,620
Semi-independent living cost savings for the local authority (12 months for 11 young people)*	11	£118,668	£118,668	£118,668	£118,668
Family and friends	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>£1,827,934</b>	<b>£1,685,092</b>	<b>£1,721,337</b>	<b>£1,755,446</b>

\*A different 11 people to those listed in the rows above in the table. These 11 young people were in semi-independent accommodation before moving into a Break SCSC project property

The project's anticipated total spend during the Innovation Programme period, excluding start-up costs that would not be incurred under a business as usual model, is £1,186,576.

Based on the results of this exercise, the SCSC project would, therefore, be generating a net saving to the state in each of the low, medium and high attribution scenarios for year 1 costs as well as years 2 and 3. However, the significant assumptions and limitations involved in the calculation of these results should be noted.

It should also be noted that the expenditure figure of £1,186,576 covers 33 young people and not just the 23 in the follow-up sample. However, the impact of these young people on that total expenditure is relatively small given that (at December 2019), they had each been supported for an average of 3 months, compared with an average of 13.9 months across the 23 young people in the analysis sample.

## 8. Summary of key findings on 7 practice features and 7 outcomes

As reported in the Innovation Programme Round 1 Report (Sebba et al 2017), evidence from Round 1 evaluations led the DfE to identify 7 features of practice and 7 outcomes to explore in subsequent rounds. Those features evident in the SCSC project are outlined.

### Practice features

- A strengths-based approach

A strengths-based approach underpins Break Charity's approach to working with young people and the SCSC project consolidated various components to channel this through to their direct work. Building relationships with young people was central to this and there was evidence of young people building positive relationships with their direct workers, with whom they "celebrate when things go well" and seek out when that "safe space" is required for young people to "process their experiences" and receive support to develop coping strategies to enhance wellbeing. A strengths-based approach had been utilised to promote accommodation stability, through an adapted eviction process that provided a "secure base" for the worker and young people to work towards solutions to issues that arose, rather than initiating reactive processes. Potential tenancy breakdowns were considered in respect to a public law outline, where the team and young person co-produced a list of improvements and changes needed to be followed to secure a tenancy agreement. Through engraining a strengths-based approach, the SCSC team "really stand by young people and work with them [to] create change" (SCSC local manager).

- Multi-disciplinary skill set

The SCSC project brought together staff with a range of professional experience to provide a wraparound service, including a mentoring team, EWS, EET officer, participation worker and direct workers to support transitions to independent living and housing support workers to assist with tenancy responsibilities (see Table 3, appendix 3).

- High intensity and consistency of practitioner

The SCSC project includes allocation of a transition worker to provide each young person individualised support for up to 7 hours per week (caseload of 4 or 5 young people); and a housing worker to provide practical tenancy support up to 3 hours per week. Difficulties with staff recruitment and retention initially led to some changes in allocated worker.

- Creating greater stability for young people

The enhanced wraparound support during young people's transitions into independent living helped promote longer-term stability. The SCSC managers stated that a significant



proportion of project young people were experiencing their longest placement by being in the SCSC project and were progressing towards achieving the milestones set out in plans co-produced by young people and their workers. The SCSC project held responsibility for managing the tenancies on behalf of the housing providers and this had helped young people to manage and sustain their tenancies. For example, if a young person had difficulties paying their rent on time, SCSC put in place support to help them rather than the situation escalating straight towards a swift eviction process. SCSC staff commented that the project mechanisms provided the “ability to stick with young people in situations that would result in other landlords seeking a notice to quit.” Transition and housing workers jointly supported young people to understand the expectations of tenancy agreements and ensured that paying rent and bills became routine.

## Outcomes

- Reducing risk for young people

The SCSC group appeared to be a high need group, many presenting with multiple risk factors at baseline. By endpoint, there was some evidence of a reduction in drug misuse, involvement in offending and antisocial behaviour for the follow-up group, who had been in the SCSC project for 6 months or more. There were also tentative signs of improved wellbeing. The project provided access to individualised support via the project transition and housing workers and the EWS to work with young people to address these needs.

- Creating greater stability for young people

Two-thirds of the group had experienced stability in their Break SCSC houses by endpoint. There was some instability with 21% having 4 or more moves, however, most had been helped by the project team to move into other SCSC properties, thus avoiding potential eviction or homelessness. The SCSC project managed the properties, which enabled them to adopt a less punitive approach to housing difficulties that might have led to eviction, by working with young people to redress problems and work towards stability.

- Increasing wellbeing for young people

There were signs of improved wellbeing for the follow-up group (measured by the GCI and SWEMWBS). Young people reported being happy with the house they were living in and feeling better supported, and 57% had been supported by the Break EWS.

- Generating better value for money

The cost analysis suggests that the project has the potential to generate a net saving to the state. Estimated 1 year savings are between £1,685,092 and £1,755,446, compared with delivery costs of £1,186,576.

## 9. Conclusions and recommendations

### Concluding summary

The Break SCSC project was operating as planned by the end of the evaluation, albeit below its original target capacity. The cost analysis indicated that the project had potential to make a cost saving to the state in each of the 1, 2 and 3 year scenarios. Despite initial delays in stabilising referral routes and acquiring properties, the project was working with 33 residential care leavers in the SCSC house-shares. The SCSC team had utilised their experience of the sector and expertise in working with young people in care to navigate some of the early project challenges and adapt to the emerging needs and circumstances of young people and service partners. They had forged productive relationships with multi-agency partners to facilitate the effective operation of the project and secure commitment for future collaboration with LAs and housing providers. There was evidence of improvements for young people in the outcome areas that the project had set out to address. Although not statistically significant, the direction of travel at least 6 months after moving into the project was positive, with two-thirds experiencing accommodation stability, 59% in EET, and signs of increased wellbeing and reduced risk behaviours. There were also reports of increased connectedness for young people and a significant improvement in life skills. This signified positive progress for a group that presented with high needs and multiple difficulties at baseline.

Data from young people, project and partner staff highlighted the SCSC project's contribution to progress in outcomes. Stakeholders agreed that the project was providing an enhanced leaving care offer for care leavers. An added value of the SCSC project was located in having an integrated support package to meet the variety of distinct needs of young people leaving residential care. One SCSC local manager described the project as taking a "whole life approach" to supporting its young people. Providing a variety of in-house support, instead of referring to other organisations, was essential to maintaining responsiveness and continuity, ensuring that young people had ready access to individualised support and a familiar person. It could also offer a safety net, especially in the context of demands on external services and lengthy waiting lists.

### a) Lessons and recommendations

Some components of the SCSC project raised issues for further consideration regarding the complexity of delivering a Staying Close model of accommodation and support. Several messages and recommendations emerged from the pilot project:

- Planning referrals and accommodation availability

A shortage of good quality semi-independent accommodation for care leavers, particularly the more vulnerable who might be facing a crisis move or have already

exhausted other provision, placed pressure on LAs to find timely and appropriate options. This introduced pressure on the SCSC project to take in referrals and house them within compressed timescales. This resulted in a lack of time for applying the house matching process, and accepting referrals that were not ready to engage with the project. Rushed timescales also resulted in disappointment for young people (as noted in chapter 6, with properties not being ready or unavailable in their preferred areas) and could unsettle existing housemates if time was not made for pre-move introductions or if there was a clash of personalities. It also affected the process of relationship building and preparation undertaken by SCSC staff. The SCSC project and LAs were refining referral procedures to enable better planning and alignment to the availability and suitability of house-shares. The reality of leaving care plans often becoming accelerated is unlikely to resolve the issue completely. A recommendation is for one house-share to become a supported training flat perhaps with on-site support, to provide a stepped move from residential care into a house-share once young people are ready and a suitable house-share is available. This has resource implications, particularly if it is under occupied or unoccupied at times.

- Using house-shares with off-site support

The house-share model worked well for some young people, providing a friendship group and offering a solution to the problem of loneliness and isolation that many care leavers experience after care. For others, shared living brought difficulties, such as tensions over housekeeping standards, conflict and the impact of risk behaviour on housemates. It was evident that the varying degrees of readiness for independent living and the levels of difficulties and needs of some housemates, required careful management. The SCSC matching matrix had not always been employed due to timing of referrals or an initial lack of housing capacity and choice. SCSC young people recommended that matching processes are improved, that housemates meet prior to move-in, that tenancy agreements are easy to understand and that housemates formulate and sign-up to an evolving house agreement, to engender buy-in to household expectations. Again, the provision of a training flat to support those for whom the step from residential care into a house-share is too great, or while waiting for a more suitable house-share to become available, might help improve the house-share experience. It might also provide a respite or emergency option if house-shares become unsteady or unsustainable. The SCSC staff survey also highlighted a need for clear planning and management of procedures for young people moving on from SCSC house-shares. This requires ongoing links with providers to secure move-on independent tenancies.

- Engaging with a high need group

The SCSC project was supporting young people with high needs and multiple difficulties. Staff noted the accumulative impact of a young person's past trauma and experiences on their complexity of needs, their readiness for embarking on independent living and for their engagement with the project's support offer. They recognised that for some young people, there was a barrier to receiving support and working alongside direct workers

comfortably, due to historic difficulties in forging trusting and sustained relationships. Staff recommended sufficient time, consistency of staff, flexibility of approach and a range of options for young people to engage, accept support and build relationships. They also recommended the use of therapeutic based approaches such as trauma informed practice. One LA lead recommended that for the model to withstand the challenges associated with the needs of referrals, the SCSC project could provide some young people with a “stabilisation period” of additional intense support prior to move in.

- Staying close in practice

The practicalities of providing a Staying Close offer raised some challenges, as staying close meant different things to different young people and did not always reflect the spirit of remaining close to former residential carers and networks. This was particularly apparent where the residential unit had been located out of area. SCSC staff recognised that some young people “gravitate back to family” after leaving care, so the support offer becomes one of supporting young people to navigate those relationships and nurturing them, where appropriate, to become closer. Who to stay close to also posed a dilemma for some young people who would have liked to stay close to their residential carers, but recognised that their post-care life and connections were elsewhere. Break had therefore included a staying connected offer to support continued contact regardless of geography. Even so, this was not possible for all.

Some young people had not formed close attachments to staff or social networks from their residential unit (few SCSC young people had identified someone to stay close to). In some instances, young people might not have lived in their residential placement long enough to build close and trusted relationships. For example, the increase in young people coming into care aged 15 and over, some of whom will be cared for in residential units, means that some will have been in care for a relatively short time before leaving.

A further barrier to operating a Staying Close model, even in close geographic proximity, was the availability of time, resources or motivation of residential staff to maintain a consistent, supportive relationship with their former young people. The more immediate focus of their current young people and caseloads might well prevent attempts to stay close or connected. These of course are not new issues and most residential units will have some facility to support ongoing contact, such as enabling former residents to visit. To facilitate a Staying Close offer, further resources, opportunities and agreements are required to enable residential staff to maintain contact, either remotely or via an outreach approach, alongside their existing caseloads.

Finally, the SCSC project provision of semi-independent housing with intensive and individualised support, aimed to create a stable base to build new relationships with professionals and with peers, with whom young people can stay close to as they go forward to independent living. In this, a particular value of the Break SCSC project was

providing residential care leavers with good semi-independent accommodation, and a holistic support offer that aimed to stick with them through any difficulties and throughout the journey to adulthood. For one LA lead, the overall SCSC approach was considered an example of best practice rather than innovative practice.

## **b) Conditions necessary for the SCSC project to be embedded.**

Evaluation findings highlighted several factors that aided effective implementation:

- sufficient timescales and resources to establish the foundations of the project, including recruiting the SCSC team (ensuring appropriate staff expertise via training and workforce development) and establishing transparent referral criteria and routes. Resources and space to adapt and innovate according to emerging need within the boundaries of overall aims was also important to refining the offer
- consistent leadership to steer direction and provide focused oversight of the project alongside external strategic and front-line awareness of the project
- access to a range of in-house services such as EWS, EET support and mentoring offered scope to bridge the gap in existing provision and enhanced the SCSC offer
- securing and maintaining multi-agency collaboration and buy-in at all levels was facilitated by regular communication and having a common purpose and shared goals. This was particularly important as the Break SCSC project was operating in competitive markets, needing to secure its place as a provider to LAs and its ability to secure properties from housing providers
- the project depended on acquisition of suitable properties in areas that young people wanted to live in. This depended on the project linking with a range of housing providers, raising awareness of the needs of care leavers and being an attractive offer to housing providers. For example, Break took on management of properties and was able to exercise more freedom and a needs-led approach to enable young people to sustain accommodation during times of difficulty. Housing providers meanwhile, had little input as the project was the first point of contact for tenants with any issues. This offered a mutually beneficial relationship where the LAs and Break had the means to offer young people accommodation stability as a basis for developing tenancy skills, and housing providers secured good tenants

## **c) Future development and wider application**

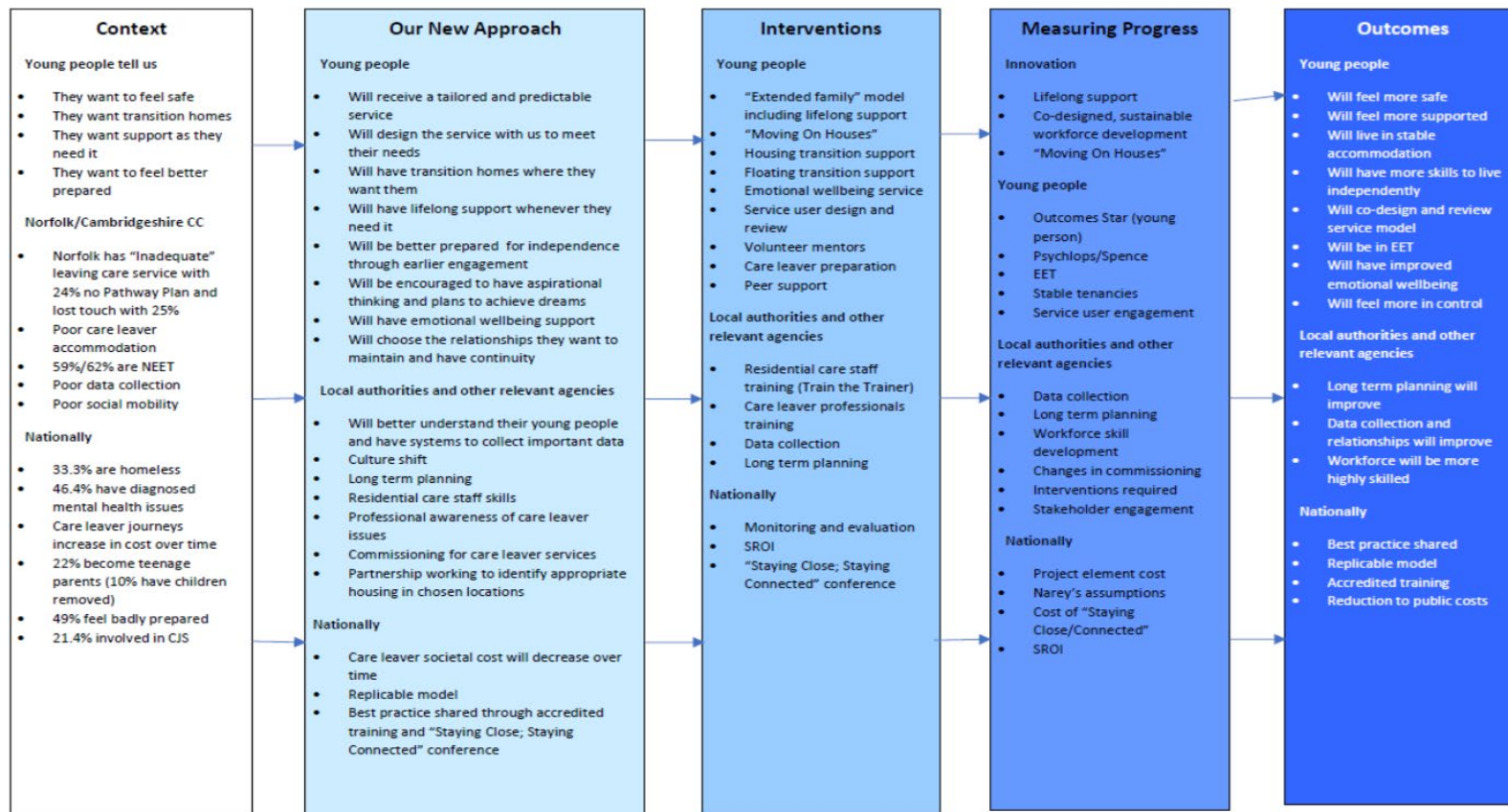
In addition to expanding the referral and housing base, Break plan to introduce further developments to the SCSC offer to facilitate sustainability and replication. Plans include, family group conferencing, trauma informed practice, outreach support via staying connected workers and introducing disability transition workers. Break also plans to have a pivotal role in scaling and rolling out the SCSC approach, by acting as consultant to

LAs that develop the Staying Close project in their areas. Break's role will include advising on implementation and recruitment of project staff and supporting LAs to adhere to model fidelity and maintaining quality in their Staying Close, Staying Connected offer.

# Appendix 1. Original Break SCSC theory of change and planned activities

## A. Theory of Change

Figure 2 Original Break SCSC Theory of Change



## B. Break SCSC project context and activities

The SCSC project became fully operational in January 2018 via Round 2 of the Innovation Programme. For the majority of the pilot phase, the project operated in 2 LAs (Cambridgeshire and Norfolk). A third (Peterborough) joined towards the end of the evaluation and was not included in evaluation activities.

The Break SCSC project aimed to support young people moving from residential care to independent living. The project is run by Break Charity, founded in 1968 as a short breaks provision for children and families. Break runs a range of services across 3 counties, including 8 children's residential units, a foster service and a leaving care service. It also runs 50 charity shops to generate income and provide work-experience and access to clothing and homeware for service users. In 2014, it developed a housing component for care leavers (a blueprint for the SCSC project). In 2018, Break Charity was working with 166 young people moving from care to independent living. At the time of reporting, the SCSC project was operating in 3 LAs.

LA1, a county council providing services to a population of 648,237 is within the 20% least deprived areas in England, ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> out of 152 upper tier LAs, where rank 1 is the most deprived ([Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (IMD)). There is, however, distinct pockets of severe deprivation at localised level (DCLG, 2015). Around 25% of work-aged people were economically inactive in 2017 to 2018 compared with a national average of 22% and 7% of residents claimed benefits, higher than the national average of 3% (see: [nomisweb](#)). Around 13% of children in LA1 were living in poverty in 2014, with 10% of secondary school children eligible for free school meals, compared with 5% nationally (Ofsted 2014). The cost of living (including rent) was higher than in LA2 (for example the average weekly rent in LA1 was £101.27 compared to approximately £75.13 in LA2 in 2018 (ONS 2019)). Its children's services were rated good in the 2014 Ofsted inspection (and requires improvement in 2019). LA1 had 3 residential units (1 good, 1 outstanding). At the time of inspection, 56 children were in residential care of whom 52% were out of area. Data for 2018 reported 706 looked after children in LA1 and 231 care leavers aged 19-21, 47% (108) of whom were engaged in education, employment and training (EET). Most 71% (165) were living in suitable accommodation. Independent living was the most common type of accommodation for care leavers, as was the case nationally (DfE, 2018).

LA2, a county council with a population of 898,390, is ranked 88<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 152 LAs on the IMD, with 21% of its population economically inactive in 2017-2018, similar to the national average (22%). The rate claiming benefits was 5% compared with 3% nationally ([nomisweb](#)). A fifth of local children lived in low income families with 11% of secondary school children eligible for free school meals (Ofsted 2017). LA2 was judged as requiring improvement in its 2017 Ofsted inspection. It operated 9 residential units, 8 of which were good or outstanding. Ofsted reported that 33% of 98 children in residential



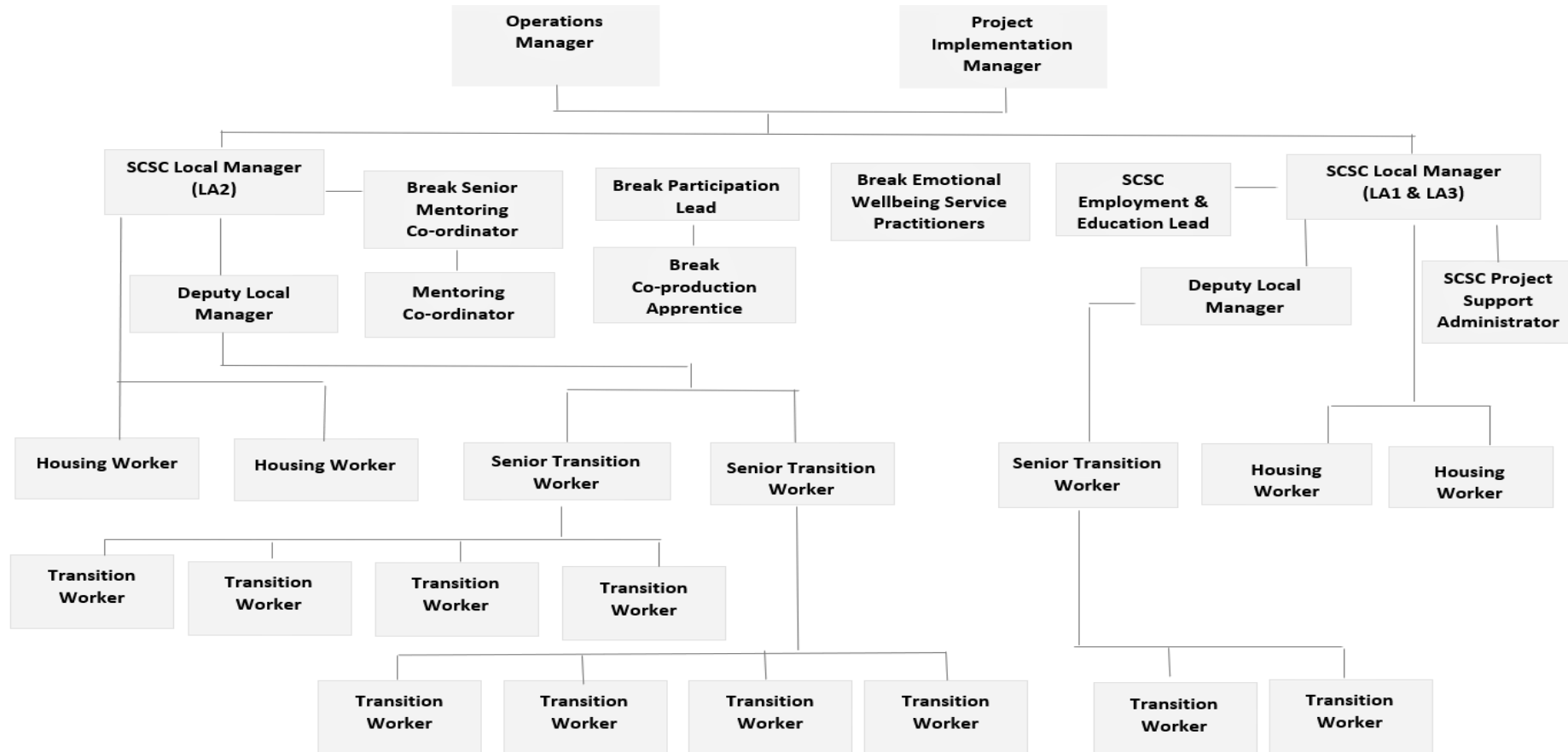
care at the time were living out of area. LA2 had larger care and care leaver populations than LA1 (DfE 2018). In 2018, 1,179 were looked after and there were 459 care leavers aged 19 to 21, 51% (234) of whom were engaged in EET. Data showed that 84% (385) were in suitable accommodation, independent living being the most common type in LA2 also.

The SCSC planned to include the following activities:

- provision of shared, moving-on houses for 15 to 20 residential care leavers per year over 2½ years (25 houses or flats for between 50 to 70 YP)
- a holistic pre and post-move support package including:
  - an independent living tool for skills assessment and development
  - improved leaving care planning
  - a matching tool to facilitate house-share compatibility
  - support attached to each house or flat via a housing support worker role
  - allocated transition support worker to focus on EET and to link with other professionals and services
- a menu of add-on support to meet individual need:
  - mentoring service
  - peer community to improve social connectedness
  - access to Break's Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) for therapeutic support
  - access to a local project to support physical and mental health
  - development of a 'train the trainer' staff training package to improve leaving care awareness and skills for residential staff and other professionals in contact with care leavers
- a co-production approach to design and deliver the project by:
  - creating a care leaver forum
  - involving care leavers in the development of the independent living tool and staff training
  - involving care leavers in project monitoring activities (e.g. gathering feedback from staff training days)
- re-engagement with previous support networks and forge new ones

## Appendix 2. Break SCSC management and staff structure

Figure 3 Break SCSC staff structure



## Appendix 3. Break SCSC staff profiles, experience and responsibilities

Table 3 Break SCSC project staff profiles and roles

SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)	Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)	Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas	Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work	Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work
Staying connected managers (2)	Leaving care social worker; team manager of leaving care service; operational manager of SCSC Housing officer (HO) for housing association, involving direct support work and tenancy management; manager of HOs.	<p>Each Staying Connected manager oversees an LA area (with one now having managerial oversight of LA3) through project monitoring and quality assurance. Consultation with young people to ensure they are receiving a holistic support package. Conducting property visits or holding meetings when there are issues that may lead to instability.</p> <p>Collaboration with commissioners, social work teams, and housing providers, in respect to referrals and SCSC service components.</p> <p>One Staying Connected manager coordinates the transition support aspect of the SCSC project and management of the mentoring programme.</p>	N/A	N/A

SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)	Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)	Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas	Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work	Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work
		<p>Attending referral meetings with LA and SCSC team. Sourcing housing and ensuring the SC properties are set up and ready for the young people.</p> <p>Line management responsibilities for SCSC deputy managers, project support administrator, senior mentoring coordinator, employment and education lead, and housing workers.</p>		
SCSC deputy managers (2)	<p>Worker within Break's residential homes (as a support worker, senior support worker, deputy and acting home manager).</p> <p>Support worker focussed on young people struggling to access mainstream schooling; LA specialist youth worker offering targeted support around CCE, emotional wellbeing and mental health. As part of these roles,</p>	<p>Oversees the delivery and quality of the SCSC support package, liaising with wider SCSC team and discussing safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Conducting monthly informal visits to each SCSC property alongside housing workers to see young people.</p> <p>Carrying out initial visits with referred young people. Attendance at referral meetings with LA and SCSC team.</p>	N/A	N/A

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
	worked with families and young people focussing on preventative and intervention work.	Liaising with housing providers re. SCSC properties. Managerial responsibilities for senior transition workers.		
Employment and education lead (1)	Learning facilitator at organisation supporting young people excluded/isolated at school due to bullying or trauma; LAC and assessment social worker; Specialist in behaviour department at a secondary school. Holds a postgraduate certificate in counselling skills and masters in social work.	To facilitate engagement and participation in EET through tailored support and increasing access to opportunities. Meeting with young people to consider EET preferences and goals. Supporting young people so to reduce any anxiety around participation in EET. The lead may share EET planning and support activity with a young person's transition worker, depending on preferences of young person.	Safeguarding Children; ADHD & Autism Awareness; Steps training; Solihull approach; Child Safeguarding Board training in child protection; child exploitation; professional boundaries; motivational interviewing training; NEET training.	In depth training around how to understand and translate behaviour that direct workers are exposed to during face-to-face interactions (such as focussing on behaviour as a form of communication).

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
Senior mentoring co-ordinator (1)	Experience in behaviour management, mental health and coaching with young people; learning support worker for young people excluded from school; volunteer mentor at youth club; support worker/senior support worker in a residential home.	Leading on the mentoring service that SCSC young people can access, which includes advertisement and recruitment of volunteer mentors; management and supervision of mentors, including observation of interactions with young people; and, matching and mentors to mentees.	Preparation for independence – basic and advanced; positive identity and self-esteem; professional Boundaries; essential first aid – all ages; child protection; nutrition on a budget; housing and anti-social; behaviour; money matters; self-injury in young people; understanding attachment. Solihull approach; NEET training; benefits training; motivational interviewing; writing it right; steps training;	No suggestions

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
			assertiveness training; Warner training.	
Mentoring co-ordinator (1)	Qualified social worker with experience in an adult prison setting as a drug and alcohol misuse worker and as a Break transition worker.	Supports the recruitment and training of the volunteer mentors alongside the senior coordinator. Manages caseloads of young people who request to access a volunteer mentor, this involves assessing the suitability for matches. With the support of the senior coordinator, supervises the activity of individual mentors.	Completed same training as Senior mentoring co-ordinator (see above)	No suggestions
Housing workers (3)	Manager in a young person's Foyer. Supported housing & drug and alcohol outreach officer for young people. Assessor in Health Social Care (children & families); support worker in residential setting for children with challenging behaviour.	Provides support to live within the framework of the licence (tenancy) agreement and facilitate skills development to enable young people to sustain a tenancy in the future. Conducts visits to support young people in their properties to ensure they are able to cope with any housing and tenancy-related issues. Provides 3 hours per week of face-	First aid; safeguarding; GDPR; fire safety; anti-social behaviour; motivational interviewing techniques; Solihull approach.	Training in understanding how young people behave. Policies relating to benefits and housing for care leavers. Mental health.

SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)	Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)	Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas	Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work	Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work
		to-face support to each young person on their caseload.		
Senior transition workers (4)	Support worker for young people in a residential home; support worker for children with disabilities; substance misuse support worker. Team leader at residential school for an adult with autism. Youth work; mentoring; senior support worker in residential homes; learning support worker with young people. Support worker for young people in residential home; qualified social worker; substance misuse worker.	Ensures their caseload of SCSC young people are receiving support through the service and accessing 10 hours a week of allocated support. Offers advice to young people as required on accommodation and independent living. A senior transition worker may engage in direct work with young people who are in crisis (e.g. with mental health or involvement in criminal justice system). Collaborating with transition workers with regards to SCSC caseloads and providing line management and supervision to transition workers.	'Break training'.	Housing and benefit support Neuro-linguistic programming techniques Mental health Mentoring Child criminal exploitation Anti-social behaviour.
Transition workers (7)	Special Educational Needs worker for children; support worker for young people with learning and physical disabilities.	Providing emotional and practical support to SCSC young people based on their needs and expressed requirements, which can include helping young people to develop their independent living skills (e.g.	Child exploitation; Signs of Safety; first aid; motivational techniques; working with young people with	Mental health Justice system Signs of Safety



<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
	<p>Qualified social worker, prison and community substance misuse support worker (including care leavers).</p> <p>Support worker in Break’s residential service; Teaching assistant; support worker in a hostel for young people.</p> <p>Senior support worker in residential home for young people.</p> <p>Residential support worker for children and young people with autism; support worker in Break’s residential homes. Diploma in working with young people.</p> <p>Placement experience with young people whilst in university; support worker in elderly care.</p> <p>Senior support worker in residential home for young people.</p>	<p>budgeting, understanding tenancy agreements), to prepare their homes, to access EET opportunities, to keep in touch with family and friends, and accompanying them to meetings. Young people are matched to a transition worker who, as standard practice, provides 7 hours per week of face-to-face support to each young person on their caseload.</p>	<p>sexualised behaviours; supporting young people preparing to leave care; early intervention and management of complex behaviour; Solihull approach.</p>	

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
Break participation lead (1)	Worked in higher education, which included providing pastoral support to young people.	Advocating for young people to be a part of shaping and developing the SCSC through encouraging and support them to have a voice (via the SCSC youth forum) and providing opportunities that they want to engage with.	Early intervention & management of complex behaviour; safeguarding and child protection; child criminal exploitation; Forum Theatre; brain development in adolescence; youth justice system.	At baseline had booked for training in motivational interviewing techniques and management.
Coproduction apprentice	Project young person not surveyed as data included in outcome strand of evaluation.	Supporting the participation lead in embedding the service user perspective in Break's development plans. Works across in all areas of the organisation to support young people to be involved in decision-making, the development of existing services, and the design of new projects. Facilitates and delivers training for Break young people alongside a training and development lead. Organises and	County lines; mental health awareness; sign-a-long; child protection; professional boundaries; steps training; radicalisation and extremism in children's homes; social pedagogy.	N/A

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
		manages events alongside the participation lead, such as the SCSC forum and peer support network events. Contributes to SCSC project group and board meetings, inputting feedback from young people and her own perspectives to inform decision-making on project development.		
Break Emotional Wellbeing Service practitioner (2)	Range of experience working with young people for Break, including working as a transition worker, a Mentoring Co-ordinator (recruiting and supervising volunteers to support young people who access Break's services, including those with disabilities); support worker for children and young people in care, leaving care and young carers. Experience working with vulnerable young people in a variety of	Enhancing emotional wellbeing through one-to-one therapeutic intervention to Break and the SCSC project care leavers going through that period of transition. Sessions are moulded around the young person, depending upon what they feel most comfortable with; for instance, some young people preferring talking therapies, some prefer more sensory activities, some focus upon coping strategies for day-to-day living. Young people receive 12 sessions and the practitioners liaises with	Solihull approach; brain development in adolescence; developing resilience; understanding attachment; child criminal exploitation; staff resilience; digital resilience; transgender awareness.	How to manage ending therapeutic relationships.

<b>SCSC staff job title (including number involved in evaluation across timepoints)</b>	<b>Professional background of staff members (including experience of working with young people)</b>	<b>Main SCSC responsibilities in respective local authority areas</b>	<b>Examples of training received since starting SCSC role that aids direct work</b>	<b>Suggestions for additional training that would aid direct work</b>
	settings including inpatient and community mental health services, substance misuse and those affected by someone else's misuse, young carers, those at risk of or experiencing self-harm behaviours.	SCSC workers on a frequent basis to ensure holistic wraparound support as required.		

## Appendix 4. Evaluation data collection and analysis

### Evaluation data collection

Data collection took place between May 2018 and ended in December 2019. Data was gathered across 3 timepoints:

- baseline - at entry to SCSC
- midpoint - approximately 6 months into the project for young people
- endpoint - final data collection between November and December 2019

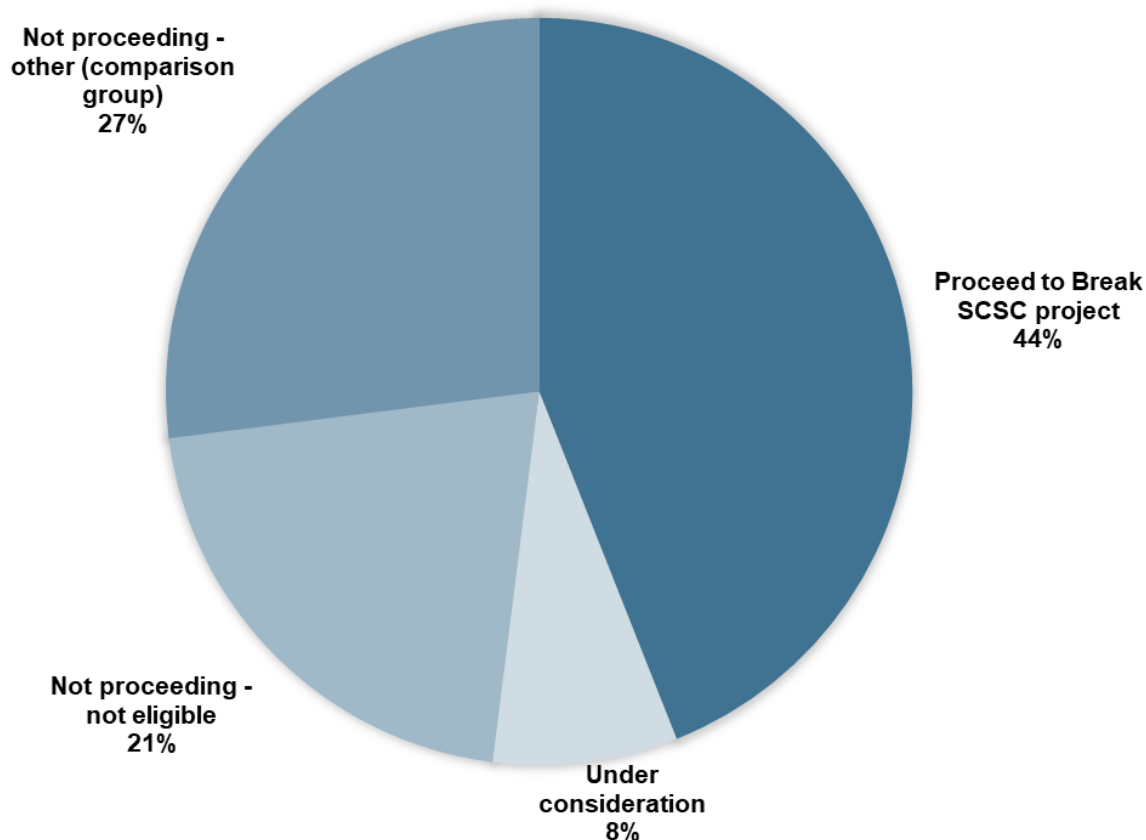
Methods are listed below alongside the numbers of participants:

- structured interviews with senior and local SCSC project management to explore the facilitators and barriers to project implementation and operation and perceived impact of the innovation on young people and staff (5 at baseline, 5 at endpoint)
- structured interviews with SCSC project workers to provide contextual information on the nature of direct work with young people (2 at baseline)
- structured interviews with senior managers from participating LAs to explore the facilitators and barriers to project implementation and operation, the perceived added value and impact of the project within the LA, and sustainability of the model in the respective areas (2 at baseline, 2 at endpoint)
- online survey of SCSC project staff engaging in direct work with young people to explore implementation, project delivery and perceived impact of the innovation (13 responses at baseline, 18 responses at endpoint)
- endpoint online survey of SCSC project housing providers to explore the facilitators and barriers to delivery (3 responses - 75% of selected sample)
- endpoint online survey of personal advisers who were supporting SCSC young people, to explore the impact of the project (1 response - 11% of selected sample)
- SCSC referral and monitoring child level data for 101 referrals at baseline and 33 SCSC entrants at endpoint
- midpoint online survey for a subgroup of SCSC project young people who were in their accommodation to capture progress in outcomes and wellbeing indicators and explore early experiences (9 - 47% responded)
- six focus groups across the evaluation timepoints, involving 23 participants overall
- endpoint semi-structured interviews with a subgroup of 9 SCSC young people conducted by peer researchers to explore views and experiences of the project

- case study interviews with 2 SCSC project young people at endpoint only
- completion of GCI and SWEMWBS for SCSC project young people at 3 timepoints
- local authority administrative data gathered on EET, accommodation and risk outcomes for the comparison group at endpoint (LA1 13, LA2 9)
- online survey of a comparison group of 22 young people at midpoint and endpoint to explore outcomes and wellbeing of those taking different post-care routes. (0 responses at midpoint and 1 (5%) response at endpoint)

## Break SCSC referrals and evaluation sample characteristics

Figure 4 Break SCSC referrals (up to December 2019)



Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database

**Table 4 Characteristics at referral for evaluation sub-groups**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>All referrals (n 101)</b>	<b>Break active group (n 33)</b>	<b>Break follow-up group (n 23)</b>	<b>Comparison group (n 22)</b>
CCC (LA1)	48 (47%)	15 (45%)	11 (48%)	13 (59%)
NCC (LA2)	47 (47%)	18 (55%)	12 (52%)	9 (41%)
PCC (LA3)	6 (6%)	-	-	-
Female	38 (38%)	9 (27%)	8 (35%)	10 (46%)
Male	63 (62%)	24 (73%)	15 (65%)	12 (55%)
Age (mean)	17.2	17.2	17.3	17.3
Age-range	15-24	16-20	16-20	15-19
White British	75 (74%)	32 (97%)	22 (96%)	13 (59%)
Identify residential worker to stay close to	14 (14%)	9 (27%)	7 (30%)	-
Parent or about to become a parent	5 (5%)	1 (3%)	1 (4%)	0
Known drug misuse	33 (33%)	14 (42%)	9 (39%)	5 (23%)
Known offending	23 (23%)	9 (27%)	6 (27%)	2 (9%)
Known physical health problem	20 (20%)	10 (30%)	7 (30%)	3 (14%)
Known mental health problem	40 (40%)	16 (48%)	11 (48%)	6 (27%)
EET	43 (42%)	17 (51%)	12 (52%)	5 (23%)
NEET	36 (36%)	16 (49%)	11 (48%)	6 (27%)
Missing	22 (22%)			11(50%)

Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database

**Table 5 Progress in outcomes over time for SCSC active group**

Characteristics & circumstances		Referral	Move-in	Endpoint
All young people who entered Break SCSC - active Break group (33)	LA1	15 (45%)		
	LA2	18 (55%)		
	Mean age	17.2	17.7	18.7
	EET	17 (52%)	14 (42%)	16 (48%)
	NEET	16 (48%)	19 (58%)	14 (42%)
	Missing			3 (9%)
	Physical health difficulty	10 (30%)	10 (30%)	10 (30%)
	Mental health difficulty	16 (48%)	18 (55%)	17 (52%)
	Self-harm or suicidal thoughts	-	12 (36%)	12 (36%)
	Number of difficulties (mean)	-	2.15	1.81
	Percent with 3 or more	-	39%	30%
	Drug misuse	14 (42%)	17 (52%)	14 (42%)
	Reduced drug misuse at endpoint for those with drug misuse at move-in (17)			7 (41%)
	Involvement in offending	9 (27%)	11 (33%)	4 (12%)
	Anti-social behaviour	-	15 (45%)	6 (18%)
	Bullying or being bullied	-	8 (24%)	16 (48%)
	Parent or about to be a parent	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)
	Accommodation moves by endpoint (mean)			1.55
Range			0-8	

Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database

**Table 6 Outcomes for young people who exited the SCSC project early (9)**

Outcomes areas	SCSC Exit
EET	1 (11%)
NEET	8 (89%)
Goals met by project	3 (33%)
Remain in contact with SCSC	3 (33%)

Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database



Table 7 Characteristics and circumstances for the comparison group

Characteristics & circumstances		Referral	Endpoint
Comparison group (22)	LA1	13 (59%)	
	LA2	9 (41%)	
	Female	10 (45%)	
	Male	12 (55%)	
	Mean age	17.3	
	EET	5 (23%)	4 (18%)
	NEET	6 (27%)	6 (27%)
	Missing	11 (50%)	12 (55%)
	For 10 cases with data:		
	EET		4 (40%)
	NEET		6 (60%)
	Physical health difficulty	3 (14%)	-
	Missing	11 (50%)	
	Mental health difficulty	6 (27%)	-
	Missing	11 (50%)	
	Drug misuse	5 (23%)	-
	Missing	13 (59%)	
Involvement in offending	2 (9%)	-	
Missing	13 (59%)		
Parent or about to be a parent	0	-	
Accommodation moves by endpoint (mean)		1	
Range		0-3	

Source: Local authority data systems

Table 8 Progress in outcomes overtime for the SCSC follow-up group

Characteristics & circumstances		Referral	Move-in	Endpoint
Young people in SCSC for 6 months or more - follow-up group (23)	LA1	11 (48%)		
	LA2	12 (52%)		
	Female	8 (35%)		
	Male	15 (65%)		
	Mean age	17.3	17.8	19.0
	EET	12 (52%)	10 (43%)	13 (57%)
	NEET	11 (48%)	13 (57%)	10 (43%)
	Physical health difficulty	7 (30%)	4 (17%)	7 (30%)
	Mental health difficulty	11 (48%)	12 (52%)	12 (52%)
	Self-harm or suicidal thoughts	-	8 (35%)	10 (43%)
	Number of difficulties (mean)	-	2.09	1.87
	Percentage with 3 or more	-	35%	31%
	Drug misuse	9 (39%)	10 (44%)	11 (48%)
	Reduced drug use at endpoint for those with drug misuse (14)			6 (43%)
	Involvement in offending	6 (26%)	7 (30%)	2 (9%)
	Anti-social behaviour	-	12 (52%)	5 (22%)
	Bullying or being bullied	-	3 (13%)	11 (48%)
	Parent or about to be a parent	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
	Accommodation moves by endpoint (mean)			1.95
Range			(0-8)	

Source: Data from Break SCSC monitoring and referral database. There was an average of 3 months between referral and move-in (range 0–9 months) so move-in point is used as baseline.

## Outcome data (follow-up group)

### The Good Childhood Index (GCI)

The GCI was developed following detailed qualitative and quantitative research with children and young people (The Children’s Society 2017, 2018). It should be noted that this measure has not been validated for use with small samples or specifically to test effectiveness of interventions and services. Several versions of the GCI are available measuring subjective wellbeing in aspects of children’s lives which they say, and analysis shows, are important to them.

Respondents are asked to rate their happiness and satisfaction in 10 domains on a 0 (very unhappy) – 10 (very happy) scale. For this evaluation, a 10 item scale is used for comparison with national data. One overall measure of satisfaction with life as whole is

included and 5 extra items were added to the measure to gather young people's satisfaction in areas relevant to the SCSC group. Baseline data was available for 22 young people, of whom 13 completed a further measure. Distance travelled is explored for the latter group. Ten of these completed both measures at 2 timepoints. This sample is too small to detect statistically significant change; hence findings are largely descriptive of the direction of travel. Baseline scores for 22 young people showed reasonable life satisfaction (mean 59.6 on the 10-item scale). The areas that the group expressed greatest satisfaction with included friendships and feeling safe. Areas they were least happy with included relationships with family and EET.

**Table 9 Young people's happiness at baseline (GCI)**

<b>Life domains</b>	<b>Mean for UK 10-17 year olds*</b>	<b>Mean for SCSC YP (22)</b>	<b>Unhappy UK 10-17 year olds*</b>	<b>Unhappy SCSC YP</b>
Your life as a whole	7.8	5.5	5%	36%
1. Health	8.2	5.9	5%	27%
2. Choice in life	7.4	5.9	8%	18%
3. Family	8.4	4.9	3%	45%
4. Things you have	7.5	6.8	7%	13%
5. Friends	8.0	7.4	4%	14%
6. Appearance	7.3	6.1	10%	27%
7. Future	7.0	5.2	7%	27%
8. Home you live in	8.2	6.1	5%	27%
9. School (college or work)	7.2	5.3	12%	41%
10. Use of time	7.6	6.1	5%	23%
Total score - 10 domains	-	59.6	-	27%
<b>Additional items:</b>				
11. People you live with	-	6.0	-	29%
12. How safe you feel	7.6**	7.1	9%	9%
13. Support from others	-	6.9	-	23%
14. Self confidence	7.0**	6.6	16%	18%
15. Local area	7.2**	5.2	14%	32%
Total score - 15 domains	-	91.1	-	27%

\* Source: The Children's Society 2018 (mean scores for 10–17 year olds in 2018). \*\* Source: Rees et al 2010, mean scores for 10–17 year olds in 2008). A score below the midpoint (5 for individual items, 50 for overall scores on the 10 item scale and 75 on the 15 item scale) is considered an indication of unhappiness. The use of '-' denotes unavailable data.

Life satisfaction for the SCSC group at baseline was lower compared with 10-17 year olds nationally, as shown by GCI mean scores (see Table 9 above for baseline and Table 10 for midpoint and endpoint) (The Children's Society 2017 and 2018, Rees et al 2010). Notable differences at baseline were in how happy young people were with their home

(6.1 compared to 8.2 nationally), health (5.9 compared to 8.2) and how they felt about their future (5.2 compared to 7.0). In relation to happiness with life as a whole, 36% (8) of the SCSC group was unhappy compared to 5% of young people nationally.

At endpoint the areas in which the group scored above the national average was how safe they felt (mean of 8.0 compared with 7.6) and how happy they were with their appearance (8.0 and 7.3).

**Table 10 Young people’s happiness over time (GCI)**

<b>Life domains</b>	<b>SCSC YP (13) Baseline mean</b>	<b>SCSC YP(10) 6-month mean</b>	<b>SCSC YP (10) Endpoint mean</b>	<b>Mean for UK 10-17 year olds</b>
Your life as a whole	5.0	6.0	6.3	7.8
1. Health	5.0	7.0	7.0	8.2
2. Choice in life	5.4	6.0	8.0	7.4
3. Relationship with family	4.2	6.0	6.0	8.4
4. Things you have (own)	6.0	7.3	7.1	7.5
5. Friends	7.0	8.0	6.3	8.0
6. Appearance	5.2	8.0	6.4	7.3
7. Future	4.2	7.0	6.0	7.0
8. Home you live in	6.3	6.4	7.0	8.2
9. EET	5.4	5.0	5.5	7.2
10. Use of time	5.2	6.1	6.0	7.6
Total score - 10-item scale	53.2	65.4	63.2	-
Additional items:				
11. People you live with	6.0	7.0	5.0	-
12. How safe you feel	7.5	8.3	8.0	7.6
13. Support from others	6.5	7.1	8.0	-
14. Self confidence	6.0	6.4	6.0	7.0
15. Local area	5.1	7.0	6.0	7.2
Total score - 15 items	83.2	101.0	95.0	-

Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database

## **The Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)**

The SWEMWBS is a short version of the [Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#), which was developed to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects that aim to improve mental wellbeing. The 7 items in the SWEMWBS were drawn from the 14-item WEMWBS, which measures

both happiness and psychological functioning. The SWEMWBS contains more indicators of the latter. Each item is scored on a 5-point scale from 1 - None of the time to 5 - All of the time. A conversion table is available to transform the raw score for the 7-item scale into a metric score. The metric score for SWEMWBS ranges from 7 low to a high of 35 denoting a positive score.

Studies have indicated that the measures have good validity for measuring mental wellbeing within UK populations. The UK [population norms](#) for both measures are available for use as comparators. These report a mean of 23.6 for the SWEMWBS.

Scores can be divided into high, average and low mental wellbeing using cut points. In UK population samples, the top 15% of scores on SWEMWBS are 28-35 and bottom 15% 7-19. The SWEMWBS website suggests cut points have been calculated in comparison with other mental health measures (PHQ-9 and GAD-7) and that scores of 7 to 17 represent probable depression or anxiety and 18 to 20 suggest possible depression or anxiety (Shah et al in press).

Neither the WEMWBS or SWEMWBS was designed to measure mental wellbeing at an individual level, however, research with adults suggests that they can detect clinically meaningful change (Collins et al 2012, Maheswaran et al 2012). Different statistical approaches give different results with regard to minimally important levels of change, however, a minimum of 1 point and maximum of 3 points can be applied to SWEMWBS.

**Table 11 Mental wellbeing scores for the SCSC group at baseline**

<b>SWEMWBS</b>	<b>None of the time</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>All the time</b>	<b>Baseline mean for SCSC YP</b>
Feeling optimistic about the future	15%	15%	45%	15%	10%	2.90
Feeling useful	11%	5%	63%	10%	11%	3.05
Feeling relaxed	20%	35%	20%	20%	5%	2.55
Dealing with problems well	11%	16%	47%	16%	10%	3.00
Thinking clearly	16%	21%	37%	21%	5%	2.79
Feeling closer to other people	15%	10%	50%	20%	5%	2.90
Make up own mind about things	10%	5%	40%	20%	25%	3.45
<b>Overall mean</b>						<b>20.20</b>

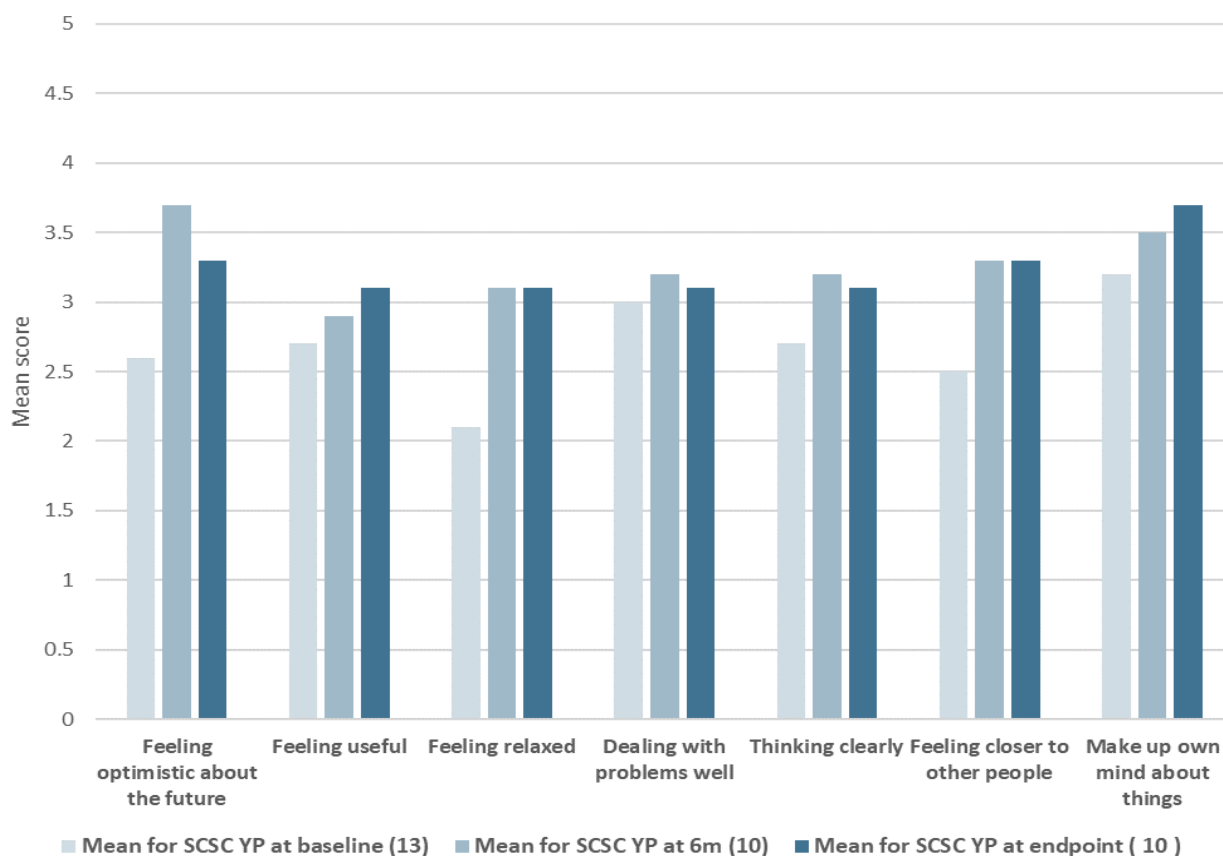
Source: SWEMWBS measures completed by 20 SCSC young people

**Table 12 Mean scores for mental wellbeing over time (SWEMWBS)**

<b>SWEMWBS</b>	<b>Mean for SCSC YP at baseline (13)</b>	<b>Mean for SCSC YP at 6-month (10)</b>	<b>Mean for SCSC YP at endpoint (10)</b>
Missing cases	0	3	3
Feeling optimistic about the future	2.60	3.70	3.30
Feeling useful	2.70	2.90	3.10
Feeling relaxed	2.10	3.10	3.10
Dealing with problems well	3.00	3.20	3.10
Thinking clearly	2.70	3.20	3.10
Feeling closer to other people	2.50	3.30	3.30
Make up own mind about things	3.20	3.50	3.70
<b>Total mean score</b>	<b>18.80</b>	<b>22.90</b>	<b>22.70</b>

Source: SWEMWBS measures completed by SCSC young people

**Figure 5 Mental health scores over time (SWEMWBS)**



Source: SWEMWBS measures completed by SCSC young people

## Life Skills

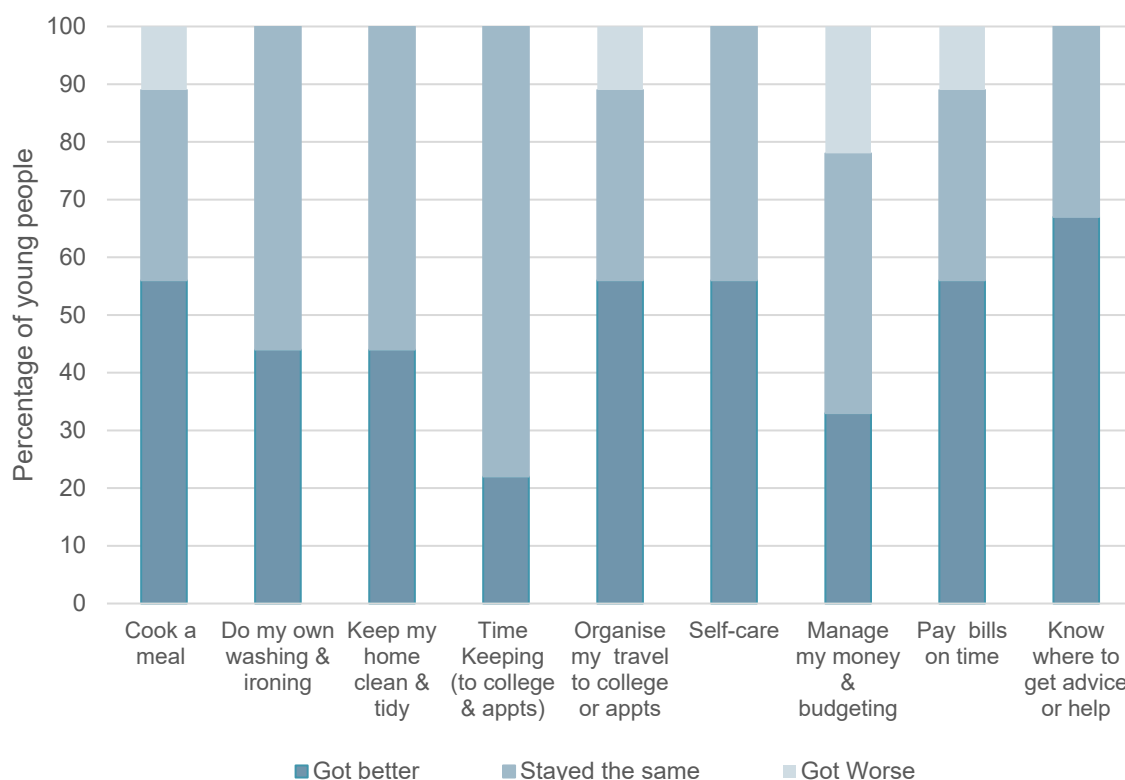
**Table 13 Improvement in life skills competence over time**

	Baseline	Endpoint	Change
Number of young people	23	20	
Missing	0	3	
Mean	38.48	46.30	7.20
Range	15-68	19-72	-13-27

Source: Break SCSC referral and monitoring database

Reflections on whether their skills development had got better, worse or stayed the same since moving into their SCSC property were gathered from 9 young people who took part in follow-up interviews with peer researchers. These skills were identified as most important during a focus group with the peer research interviewers who helped develop the interview schedule. The duration in the project ranged between 6 and 20 months (average of 13 months). As shown in Figure 6, although many young people felt there had been little overall change, there was nevertheless some improvement in all areas, with knowing where to get advice and help (67%) being the most improved. The areas in which young people were most likely to have deteriorated was managing money (22%).

**Figure 6 Young people's views on progress in life skills**



Source: Follow-up interviews with SCSC young people

## Appendix 5. Cost analysis

The cost analysis is discussed in chapter 7.

The key points (presented in Table 2 in chapter 7) are that:

- indicative 1 year savings associated with the pre and post-intervention data in relation to the cost of delivering Break's SCSC project range from £70,356 in a low attribution scenario to £140,710 in a high attribution scenario
- by contrast, the total placement cost savings account for the vast majority of the total indicative 1 year savings (£1,614,736). These do not vary according to the different attribution scenarios because they are already based on the assumption that the Break SCSC project is responsible for the full accommodation saving
- the indicative 1 year savings generated by Break, therefore, are estimated at between £1,685,092 and £1,755,446

The accompanying tables are presented below:

**Table 14 Proxy savings for pre and post-intervention outcomes**

<b>Category of cost saving</b>	<b>Proxy change (per young person)</b>	<b>Proxy saving (per young person for one year)</b>	<b>Source</b>
A positive change in education, employment or training status	The young person has not become NEET	£10,466	Average annual cost to the exchequer of a NEET young person. Based on Youth Unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford (ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment, 2012) and adjusted for inflation.



Category of cost saving	Proxy change (per young person)	Proxy saving (per young person for one year)	Source
Reduction in drug taking	The young person reduces or stops their substance misuse and does not require a treatment programme	£3,994	Average annual savings resulting from reductions in drug-related offending and health and social care costs as a result of delivery of a structured, effective treatment programme. Based on Estimating the crime reduction benefits of drug treatment and recovery (National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse, 2012) and adjusted for inflation.
Reduction in criminal activity (unrelated to drug taking or sexualised behaviour)	The young person has not offended. An average of 2 prevented offences has been assumed	£4,144	Average cost per incident of crime (across all types of crime). Based on The Economic and Social Costs of Crime, Second Edition (Heeks et al 2018) and adjusted for inflation.
Reduction in anti-social behaviour	The young person has not been involved in anti-social behaviour. One fewer episode of anti-social behaviour have been assumed	£701	Cost of dealing with an anti-social behaviour incident Based on The Economic and Social Costs of Anti-Social Behaviour: a review' (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2003) and adjusted for inflation
Reduction in sexualised behaviour	One sexualised behaviour-related offence has been avoided	£13,082	Average cost of a court event for sexual offences, NAO Analysis, based on CIPFA, Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board Data, 2011 (and adjusted for inflation).
Improvement in physical health	The young person visits their GP less frequently. Three fewer	£67	Average cost of a GP appointment.

Category of cost saving	Proxy change (per young person)	Proxy saving (per young person for one year)	Source
	appointments have been assumed		Based on Unit Costs of Health & Social Care 2018 (Curtis, 2018) and adjusted for inflation and 15-minute minimum consultations, continuity of care through 'micro-teams', and an end to isolated working: this is the future of general practice (Royal College of General Practitioners, 2019).
Improvement in mental health	The young person does not require a mental health treatment programme	£2,303	Average annual cost of service provision for people suffering from mental health disorders. Based on Paying the Price: the cost of mental health care in England to 2026 (King's Fund, 2008) and adjusted for inflation.
Savings to CAMHS	Where a young person has mental health issues and has been supported by the project's Emotional Wellbeing Service, it is assumed that they would otherwise have been supported by CAMHS.	£5,255	Average cost per case of a young person supported by a CAMHS multi-disciplinary team. Based on Unit Costs of Health & Social Care 2018 (Curtis, 2017) and adjusted for inflation.
Reduction in self-harm	The young person self-harms less regularly. It is assumed that one unplanned hospital admission is avoided	£1,664	Average cost of a non-elective hospital admission. Based on Reference Cost Collection: National Schedule of Reference Costs - Year 2017-18 - NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts

Category of cost saving	Proxy change (per young person)	Proxy saving (per young person for one year)	Source
Reduction in homelessness episodes	The young person has not experienced an episode of homelessness	£2,909	Average one-off and ongoing costs associated with statutory homelessness (includes cost of temporary accommodation). Based on Research briefing: Immediate costs to government of loss of home (Shelter, 2012) and adjusted for inflation.
Reduction in evictions	The young person is not evicted	£7,770	Average fiscal cost of a complex eviction. Based on Research briefing: Immediate costs to government of loss of home (Shelter, 2012) and adjusted for inflation.

**Table 15 Proxy savings for accommodation settings**

Category of cost saving	Proxy change (per young person)	Proxy saving (per young person)	Source
Residential care cost savings for the local authority	Due to Break Staying Close, a young person moves out of local authority residential care 6 months sooner than they would otherwise have done	£127,374	Average cost of a 6 month placement in local residential care home for children. Based on Unit Costs of Health & Social Care 2018 (Curtis, 2018).
Residential care cost savings for the local authority	Due to Break Staying Close, a young person moves out of a Break (pre-Staying Close) residential care property 6 months sooner than they would otherwise have done	£127,374	Average cost of a 6 month placement in local residential care home for children. Based on Unit Costs of Health & Social Care 2018 (Curtis, 2018).

Foster care	Due to Break Staying Close, a young person does not remain in foster care (it is assumed they would otherwise have been in foster care for at least 12 months)	£35,620	Average annual cost of local authority foster care. Based on Unit Costs of Health & Social Care 2018 (Curtis, 2018).
Semi-independent living cost savings for the local authority	Due to Break Staying Close, a young person does not enter local authority-funded semi-independent living (in line with the bullet points above, 6 and 12-month savings are shown in the cell opposite)	£5,394 (6 months) £10,788 (12 months)	Average cost of semi-independent/semi-supported living (includes arrangement cost). Based on The costs of not caring: supporting English care leavers into independence (Barnardo's, 2014) and adjusted for inflation.

**Table 166 2 and 3 year indicative savings**

	<b>Low Attribution (33%)</b>	<b>Medium Attribution (50%)</b>	<b>High Attribution (66%)</b>
Two-year indicative savings	£1,839,907	£1,955,904	£2,065,078
Three-year indicative savings	£1,989,304	£2,182,264	£2,363,873

## Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

Baseline and endpoint SWEMWBS scores are available for 13 of the 33 young people supported by Break's SCSC project. As shown in Table 17:

- the total scores for 8 young people were higher at endpoint than at baseline, indicating an improvement in wellbeing (these young people have their endpoint scores shaded amber in the table);
- total scores had reduced for 5 young people, indicating a fall in wellbeing (light blue shaded cells)

**Table 177 Baseline and endpoint SWEMWBS results**

Young person	Baseline score	Endpoint score
YP1	17	19
YP2	14	35
YP3	19	22
YP4	18	17
YP5	16	22
YP6	22	20
YP7	15	19
YP8	24	25
YP9	20	22
YP10	19	17
YP11	19	20
YP12	20	18
YP13	22	21

Recent work by [HACT and Simerica](#) allows values to be attached to movements on the SWEMWBS scale. Note that these are not fiscal savings, and as such are not included within the cost saving analysis section of this report, but rather represent the additional money the average individual would need to improve their wellbeing, which is the same amount as the improvement in their SWEMWBS score. This is referred to as social impact.

Across the 8 young people whose scores were higher at endpoint than at baseline, the combined social impact is £59,688. However, some of this (£14,100) is offset by the 5 young people with negative changes, reducing the social impact to £45,588. When

HACT's recommended deadweight of 27% is factored in, the net social impact becomes £33,279.

## Appendix 6. Qualitative data and key themes

A thematic analysis was carried out across the implementation and outcome components of the evaluation. A more detailed overview of the findings than those presented in the body of the report, are provided here.

### A. Implementation evaluation

#### Having freedom to adopt and adapt

Through Innovation Programme resources, Break were able to adopt and adapt the Staying Close model by enhancing and extending their 'lifelong offer' for young people leaving their residential service, allowing for the consolidation discrete aspects of the existing service into a targeted support package under 1 unique Staying Close project and multi-faceted associated programme of support. As such, management highlighted that receipt of the funding prompted "whole service transformation" across its residential service.

The Break Charity's openness to new ideas and reputation for implementing new initiatives alongside the resources offered through the Innovation Programme provided the foundations for innovation and the SCSC project as delivered:

"[Our] value base is very much about learning; [there is] always something that we're changing and trying to make better and improve. [We] want to see it as business as usual, running this project. Actually, business as usual is still being innovative, [but] bringing in new ideas." (Break senior manager)

DfE funding and the support of a DfE coach allowed Break to continue to innovate within a safety net to offset any risks that might arise in piloting a new project and adapting it to organisation requirements and local circumstances.

#### Multi-agency collaboration

The implementation findings highlighted examples of strengthened multi-agency collaboration, which provided the necessary foundations for implementing an innovation project:

"It's been a real opportunity for Break to be a bit more outward looking, bit more collaborative. To learn from others and for us to share our learning with other people." (Break senior manager).

## The local authorities (LAs)

Both LAs saw the SCSC project as having a place within their offer to residential care leavers and were seeing evidence of improved outcomes. One LA lead commented that there was a market for the SCSC offer but saw it more as an offer of best practice than innovation. The SCSC project instilled strengthened collaboration with LA partners, particularly as Break had been able to bring relevant stakeholders around the table to consult on the project. Break SCSC managers noted a more consistent level of participation in project board meetings from the LAs, despite managerial turnover or restructuring in each LA. A senior manager highlighted the importance of maintaining presence and being transparent on progress to sustain relationships with partner LAs, particularly as “people buy into people who they trust.”

An example of continued buy-in was offered by 1 LA through a senior manager’s expressed commitment to embed the Staying Close approach in its service offer “it’s been a positive introduction; it’s one of a number of options that we would want”. While 1 LA had bought into the principle of the SCSC project early on, there were issues arising from leadership change in another LA that resulted in difficulties securing a consistent lead contact that was able to provide the required presence and time commitment to strategic development. The turnover in leadership led to reduced momentum during the implementation period, as Break senior managers needed to forge new relationships and work backwards to “resell the story” and “start from scratch” to secure buy-in. However, the situation was overcome due to Break acting as the lead organisation in project delivery, providing consistency during changes in LA staff and working with the LA to understand its needs.

SCSC project managers highlighted that frequent and transparent communication with LA social work teams and frontline workers was also essential to project delivery, from the point of referral of each young person through to support planning. Collaborative working at this level was particularly important when the SCSC team needed to risk assess and make decisions about referrals that might be contrary to the expectations or requests of social workers or vice versa, as one LA lead explained:

“I would expect my team to be fully supportive and, in some respects, challenging - and it goes the other way. [To ultimately] better manage timescales and transitions plans for young people.”

There was also some acknowledgement of the impact of the SCSC project on the direct work of LA staff. One LA manager noted that direct support from transition and housing workers with housing issues, appointments and weekly support for SCSC young people had freed up the time of leaving care personal advisers (PAs). There was also an indication that PAs and SCSC workers were working jointly with young people to ensure a consistent and streamlined approach. A PA of 1 SCSC young person noted that the “current transitions worker has been excellent.”



An LA lead underlined that an area of development was closer working around disruptions, such as when a young person was at risk of existing, or due to exit, the SCSC project. They suggested this contingency planning would aid learning around how such situations can be handled in future. Going forward, 1 LA lead also suggested that there could be closer collaboration between the SCSC LAs to share learning about the project and understand the common challenges. They saw the SCSC project board as an opportunity to facilitate “collaboration between the authorities, can we collaborate a bit more and identify some synergies?”

### **The housing providers**

“The management of the properties by Break is outstanding and ensures that as owners of properties we receive no adverse feedback from the surrounding neighbours and communities.” (Housing Provider).

For a project based around a housing offer for young people leaving residential care, the ease of delivery of the project centred on productive relationships with housing providers. There was a range of housing providers involved in the delivery of the SCSC project. Relationships were established and agreements were made between each provider and Break, who took on responsibility for the allocation and management of tenancies and mitigating against any risks associated with the support needs of the young people (such as risk of eviction). Break also delivered independent living skills training to staff to enable them to fully support young people to manage the responsibilities of their tenancies. The offer of these additional benefits (supporting young people to live independently, avoiding tenancy breakdown and being the first point of contact for tenants) helped the project to harness supportive links with housing providers. This was enhanced by having a member of the SCSC management team who had experience of working in the housing sector and was familiar with the policies.

The housing providers reported an improved understanding of the high support needs and housing-related difficulties that care-experienced young people may have after leaving care. Each provider noted the SCSC project’s success in supporting young people to manage their tenancies and settle into their homes. One stated, “as a housing officer, having to have no involvement with a tenancy is usually a sign of how successful it has been.”

### **Other support agencies**

SCSC project managers noted that during early implementation, the focus is on setting the foundation for the project to operate, but beyond that it becomes more important to identify project delivery needs and which organisations can help fill any gaps in the project offer as issues emerge. For example, the SCSC team forged links with organisations that support young people with substance misuse and complex mental health concerns.

The SCSC project also aimed to strengthen links with the police to develop project support for those young people that had been identified to be at risk of exploitation or criminality. The local SCSC managers consulted with police to collate intelligence to ascertain the suitability of local areas for project young people. The informal contacts with the police also fed into workforce development on key issues, to help reduce existing or new risks (for example, training and knowledge sharing on child criminal exploitation).

Other collaborative links have been established during project operation. For instance, a senior manager explained that the SCSC EET lead had “tapped into the regional networks that exist and created a network of possibilities around young people”, by forging links with organisations to secure opportunities for work experience, work development and apprenticeships. This led to links with education and training providers and organisations like the Prince's Trust to broaden opportunities for young people to meet EET goals. The project had therefore increased its ability to support young people navigating EET opportunities and services.

## **Balancing referrals, care planning and housing availability**

### **Timescales**

A SCSC local manager highlighted the overriding challenge in his role is the pressure exerted due to timescales, from referral of young people by social care teams to the securing housing in a time period that marries to care planning processes:

“What I find particularly new to my own skill set is the housing aspect; identifying the need for future housing and working with the housing timeframe versus the social care timeframe, which are totally different planets. [We] sit in the middle trying to bring those two timeframes together.” (SCSC local manager).

In addition to the pressures SCSC management acknowledge, the LA lead noted that the project has been “unable to meet shorter periods where referrals need to be addressed within a month or so”. Whilst SCSC project managers recognised that social work teams were under such time pressures to ensure effective care planning and accommodate a young person leaving care, they highlighted that they often hold unrealistic expectations for the SCSC project to provide houses swiftly (particularly for unforeseen referrals). Such situations required open communication and planning with the social work teams and restating the ethos and parameters of the project in terms of the target group of young people and the need for effective forward planning for those coming into the project. The SCSC team was keen to establish the SCSC offer as one geared towards helping young people to experience a planned step-down from residential care as part of an “ongoing journey” not a remedial or crisis post-care accommodation option. LA leads agreed that longer lead in times might be needed to ensure that young people had a planned move. One noted that some young people might need an intermediate step down prior to going into the SCSC project.

The scenarios described above highlight a tension between the need to have sufficient time to deliver a young person-led service, a service that meets safeguarding standards and that lays the foundations for positive impact, and a need to be responsive and focused on crisis prevention. One SCSC manager highlighted the impact of this on some SCSC young people, who had found themselves in SCSC housing that was not ideal (for example, not in the preferred area or as well equipped) due to the SCSC team having to house them so quickly after referral to prevent crises such as entering unsuitable accommodation or homelessness. The LA managers expressed understanding of the challenges of gaining a quick turnaround of referrals and the SCSC project's capacity to respond and mitigate against issues associated with housing availability.

An LA Lead suggested that social work practitioners should not directly refer but that the LA lead on the SCSC board, with commissioning responsibility, becomes the "conduit for referral" in future so that timescales are better managed and the matching process is tightened. They also noted that this depended on the SCSC project having sufficient properties to match the flow of referrals. In practice, the whole process from identifying a suitable property, awaiting sign-off of legal documents and decoration of the property, to a young person moving in could take 6 months. Once some housing providers were assured that the properties were being maintained and young people had settled in without significant issues, other properties were found for the project. It is hoped that this process will speed up as housing providers gain a firmer idea of what is required and suitable. Others had already lined up several houses. An added barrier is that LAs need to emphasise local connections because of national policy impetus, which limits the availability of properties for young people who are unable to identify local connections.

### **Suitable referrals and evolved referral management**

The SCSC staff noted that a referred young person must be at a stage where they can cope with a lower level of staff contact to that which they were accustomed to in residential care, and live relatively independently in their SCSC property. The SCSC managers advised that further development of the SCSC offer will entail closer alignment of referral planning with the individual circumstance and needs of the young person. This might avoid a scenario where social work teams were considering their referrals based on trying to make the young person fit the SCSC project criteria to find a solution to immediate accommodation needs. The SCSC LA leads each emphasised a requirement for a "robust pathway", achievable through frequent discussions on referrals, so each team reaches an understanding on the referrals coming through and which can be progressed.

The process of managing referrals has evolved during the project's operation, in response to the needs of the referred young people. The SCSC team operated a personalised approach to the referral process by meeting potential young people rather than making an assessment solely from relevant paperwork (as was the approach early into the project). Therefore, the SCSC team gains a valuable understanding of young

people's circumstances and motivations based on "what's personal to them, rather than the view of the social worker six months ago or something." (SCSC manager).

Referral management has also evolved to include young people who have lived in residential placements but, for example, find themselves out of authority, in youth offending institutes or are considered to have an elevated needs profile or be of high risk. Break was able to extend the project's reach in offering support to young people identified by the 2 LAs as the most complex cases that have come through their care services in recent years, due to their experiences of multiple placement breakdowns.

## **Ensuring a consistent and sustained service**

### **Geographical spread**

A challenge mentioned by Break managers was handling the operational consistency of the SCSC service between and within the geographically spread LAs, where local contextual differences and issues existed. The need for improved consistency emerged after it was recognised that the service was more effective in one LA. Increased consultation and joint working became essential for sustainable operation:

"[The] county teams have kind of gone their separate ways at times. [We are aiming] to make sure it's not a postcode lottery; you get the same service." (Break senior manager).

However, there was an acknowledged need when working with different LAs to caution against promoting a "one size fits all" approach, as the 2 LAs were sizeable and had different service priorities. Break introduced opportunities for joint meetings and forums through which the various teams came together to ensure they were working cohesively according to the aims and parameters of the project and to share knowledge across the project sites. The Break SCSC managers suggested the creation of a handbook, co-produced by the whole team and drawing on learnings so far, to provide guidance for local teams and other stakeholders to implement a SCSC project according to a tested framework.

### **Staff turnover**

The SCSC project was significantly affected by a turnover of its SCSC transition workers. This issue was compounded early on, as the project had drawn in an existing team from the Break Charity's 'Moving On' service, however, it became apparent that they were not able to fully adapt to the new project and to the level of presenting needs of the new referrals who were often older and more complex than those leaving Break's in-house provision. Staff turnover was not eased by difficulties in recruitment and retention of a full SCSC team of workers. The SCSC transition workers were on modest salaries considering the emotional impact of their roles, the level of responsibility they held for the young people, and the uncertainty of project continuation due to time-limited funding.

These factors did not help promote stability within the workforce or recruitment to fill staffing gaps. The turnover of staff was a challenge to the SCSC project's early ability to provide a consistent service to young people, particularly one built on the importance of relationships between young people and staff.

Despite the initial issues, the team was in place by April 2019 and was engaging in Break's workforce development procedures, receiving training across a range of skills, including the Solihull approach (Douglas 2010) (see Table 2, appendix 3). Furthermore, LA managers commented on the impact of the SCSC team on the work of local authority leaving care workers (PAs). It was felt that SCSC workers' direct work with young people (whether weekly support, taking them to appointments or addressing housing issues) was enabling PAs to refocus their work with the SCSC young people and free up time to work with other young people "Break staff have been visiting young people more regularly and supporting as a PA would. Consequently [PAs] can spread their time across their caseload more effectively." (LA manager).

### **Recognised need to increase SCSC staff capacity**

In reflecting on how best to help young people (particularly those with high needs) to engage in the project and connect with their direct workers, SCSC managers commented that therapeutically-informed approaches could be incorporated:

"Transition workers generally hold the relationship and the relationship is paramount to young people accessing that support. I would like our transition workers to be doing more of the emotional wellbeing support." (SCSC local manager).

The use of trauma-informed practice to underpin the direct work with young people was considered a way of strengthening the quality of relationship between the young person and transition worker. The SCSC managers were keen for transition workers to be the conduit for the enhancement of emotional wellbeing and to resource this activity by bringing in clinical and therapeutic practitioners for the direct workers to learn from, to promote a "wide skill set in the service."

Some SCSC staff raised a pressing need for enhanced specialist training and in-house knowledge-sharing regarding the "complexity and degree of presenting mental health issues in the cohort" and on the behavioural concerns that transition and housing workers encountered (such as aggression and avoidant behaviour when a young person becomes overwhelmed). Additionally, SCSC workers collectively emphasised that therapeutically-informed work can only be actualised by increasing capacity in the team. A higher ratio of SCSC staff to young people would significantly increase scope to build the close, trusting relationships needed for impactful support.

## Putting 'Staying Close' into practice

It was recognised that the identified connections might not result from relationships formed within the young person's final residential home. Moreover, it might not always be possible for a young person to access that support or maintain the relationship with those residential workers as they wish, due to competing demands on the practitioner. The introduction of the SCSC transition worker role aimed to help all project young people to develop another consistent relationship that could protect an existing relationship with a former worker and ensure the young person had access to another supportive individual. Transition workers commented that young people tended to "gravitate back to family" and therefore support was also needed to help them navigate this.

Break is currently introducing 'stay connected' workers, based on a family group conference model, to test whether the approach can build young people's social networks and connections with family; test how the SCSC model might support young people with disabilities who are transitioning from Break specialist homes; and assess the feasibility of introducing an outreach offer that does not include accommodation, but offers access to peer networks and life skills development support. SCSC staff cautioned that too many different staff could prove "overwhelming for young people" and dilute the opportunities to form one consistent source of professional support.

## Adapting the approach to maintain involvement of young people

There were varying levels of engagement with young people. Here, the team acknowledged that the legacy of young people's experiences and relationships before and during care was likely to have had an accumulative effect on the nature of their engagement in the project, particularly in being open to forming relationships:

"Some [young] people don't want to engage on the things which I suppose statistically make something like this work. We are trying to support them with their health, education or work, mental wellbeing; sometimes people are not ready for that engagement, people are sometimes just so closed off." (SCSC local manager).

In such a scenario, SCSC managers recognised that some young people had little "motivation to be in a relationship with us and really they just want to access the housing part" of the project. There were discussions across the SCSC team about how best to encourage the longer-term engagement of young people so that they were able to fully benefit from the direct work and the SCSC project generally. A SCSC co-production apprentice was recruited to encourage and motivate project young people to take part in co-production activities, highlight the benefits of participation to the cohort, and to facilitate young people's participation and involvement in other areas of Break's work.

The SCSC project also maintained the service offer for those young people who were not immediately receptive to what the project offered. Those who disengaged had the option to return to the project or only access discrete components until their life circumstances

were such that they were able to engage more fully. Whilst this flexible approach was time and staff intensive, Break saw the “ebb and flow with our support around individual young people” as central to a needs-led approach and one that allows young people some ownership in their decisions, choices and involvement in the SCSC service.

## **B. Young people’s voices**

### **Methods summary**

The participation of Break SCSC young people was central to the evaluation. Young people had the opportunity to participate either through co-developing evaluation materials, contributing perspective on their progress in the project via focus groups and contributing to the final report through reflecting on their experiences during interviews and surveys. One SCSC young person successfully applied to become a peer researcher and received training in peer interviewing techniques.

### **Findings**

Data was gathered from 9 young people during a midpoint survey and from 23 focus group participants. Ten young people were interviewed at endpoint (1 opted not to include their data in the report). Their perspectives about experiences of the SCSC project and their views on the support package are outlined here.

#### **Young People’s Knowledge of SCSC**

Some young people did not have clear information or a full understanding of the SCSC project. Only 2 of those interviewed knew what the SCSC principle was.

“I don’t really know how I’d explain it. Is it kind of like – what it’s supposed to be, from my side is you’re supposed to stay close to your children’s home, or someone that you want to.”

#### **Reasons for joining**

Five of the young people interviewed came into the SCSC project from Break residential homes. Two of these were able to enter the project through maintaining a relationship with previous Break workers, as 1 described:

“I got back in touch with my transition worker after leaving residential and basically asked - well, I spoke to her and wasn't having a great time. She mentioned Staying Close and I could move into the project.”

Reasons for entering the project included wanting to be closer to family and to have the opportunity to learn skills for independence One young person who had previously lived

in a Break residential home, wanted to maintain the level of support they were accustomed to from Break:

“I know how good Break is, when I was in a care home with Break the support and that was just unreal.”

“Initially it was because I wanted to be closer to family so I was living all the way near [south] at the time. I wanted to originally go to LA1 but I couldn't and ....then I've been moved to LA2 recently.”

“I guess to learn more skills and hopefully help progress through getting my own place and learning how to connect people. Even connecting with people when you move away from them, it's like trying to find people to stay connected to as well.”

Some young people felt that they “didn't have a choice” due to their insecure accommodation circumstances, which left them with no other option but to join the project.

### **Staying close and staying connected in practice**

Seven of the young people interviewed had not been able to live in the location they had chosen, although some had managed to stay connected. Four had wanted to remain close to parents, siblings and other family members.

“I'd like to move to LA, see my family because my family live [there].”

“Well, they say home is where the heart is, but my heart isn't in this house. Because I want to be closer to specific people.”

Three young people expressed a desire to maintain a relationship with their former residential workers or young people they had lived with, however, they stated there were often dilemmas and barriers to Staying Close or connected after leaving care.

“I wanted to be in LA2, because that's where my life is now [but] I also wanted to stay close to my proper members of staff from my home, because I was very close to them.”

“I saw them once because they're busy, they've got a residential home in [other area], you see. It's a little bit hard for them to come down all the time and I struggle with long journeys.”

“[I] tried to, but I think [staff] basically just moved on from me and the other young people that was from there. They kind of went, shut them out, because they were always getting new people in.”



“Well, I haven't been back to the [home] in a while, because most of the kids that I lived with have now moved. So I don't want to just go there, I might see the staff, so I see if I can arrange to see them outside of the home [go] round to tea, or going out in the city to have a coffee.”

### **Accommodation journeys before SCSC**

Young people in Break had experienced a range of accommodation and a degree of accommodation instability prior to the SCSC project. Only 2 interviewees had moved straight from their residential placement to their SCSC accommodation, others had lived in hostels and semi-independent options:

“I left the children's home when I was 16 and lived in 7 or 8 hostels before coming to Break.”

“Then I've been in youth hostels and semi-independence. I left the Break care home and went into the youth hostel, and I move around a lot.”

“Well, I was technically in semi-independent living similar to this before 18. The latest children's home I was in, that was when I was 14, 15 so years ago.”

### **Readiness for independent living and skills development**

The young people were asked to reflect on whether they felt ready to move into independent living. Six of the interview group stated they were not ready for and that they lacked an element of choice in when they left due to the legal leaving care age being set at 18.

Information was collected at baseline and endpoint on a range of life skills via the young people's transition workers as described in chapter 5. Five young people who were interviewed were identified as consistently improving their scores and offered some insight into what had helped. There was some recognition that the reality of independent living had been harder than expected:

[I thought] “well I've got most of the skills, but then when I actually was on my own, I just realised that I didn't have most of the skills that I thought I had. Some of it was a bit missing.”

“I felt like I was ready. Yes, and soon after I moved up, I realised, shit, I'm not ready for this.... I wasn't ready.”

Young people told us that their confidence had improved since entering the SCSC project as they saw their general skills improve. They also stated that they had improved their social relationships by taking part in peer learning opportunities with their housemates

and other project young people. Areas of improvements included cooking a meal, food shopping and cleaning.

“I used to mainly eat like ready meals but I have learnt to cook loads now with [transition worker].”

“The Break project has helped me a lot but I know there’s lots of things still to learn but it’s getting there, it’s great.”

### **SCSC house-shares**

For some young people, the house-shares provided a friendship group, however, there was clear evidence that some young people were facing challenges in their SCSC homes. Some told us about tensions and aggressive behaviour in the house-shares where some young people stated they had not always felt comfortable:

“my housemates... were basically always arguing and there was a lot of things going on and they basically got me involved in it.”

There were also comments about problem drug use by some housemates.

When discussing the difference in support between living in residential care and their Break SCSC home, some young people highlighted the difficulties. Some missed having staff support on-site, and others felt that their house-shares felt like a residential unit because of the décor or rules. This highlighted the challenges for the SCSC project in getting the right balance to meet young people’s needs.

“The support was essentially there 24/7, they put staff round all the time. Now I have zero adults around me. The only adult in the house right now is me.”

“The only difference is, you haven't got staff there 24/7. It still feels very children homey. You have to answer to them all the time.”

“It feels like an institute. It's just not my space.”

For some young people having to share their living space was identified as a challenge as the matching of housemates did not always work. For some, the usual house share issues of keeping common spaces was evident as 1 young person noted “my housemate doesn't clean. There was rubbish over the floor.”

### **Support from the SCSC project**

Young people’s perceptions around the benefits of the support provided through the SCSC project tended to align to the quality of the relationship with their allocated transition worker, which was measured by the length of time of the relationship or the number of changes in transition worker a young person had experienced.

Only 1 of the young people interviewed had the same transition worker throughout, with others each having between 2 and 4 since entering the SCSC project. The level of change in worker was highlighted as a concerning experience for young people leaving care, as they had often struggled to maintain relationships. Some appeared resigned to this, as one young person commented, "I'm used to it I've been in these sorts of places before, so I'm used to having people change all the time and stuff."

Several young people were positive about their relationships with workers and the support they had received (see case studies).

"They're really helpful people that would help you learn a lot more skills, and a lot more."

"I didn't know what to do because I didn't know how to keep myself or nothing, but [worker] helped me with cooking lessons and things like that and now I'm on a roll."

"If I've got any qualms at the house and I need someone to come over, there's always someone on standby."

One young person felt that the support they had received through the SCSC project had helped them to avoid getting into trouble with the police:

"The main thing is [SCSC] helped me keep out of prison 100 percent, I reckon if I'd gone anywhere else I'd have been in prison."

There was an indication that enabling autonomy and providing support was a tricky balance for Break SCSC and their young people to negotiate. A small number of young people wanted more support, either as things began to deteriorate:

"They wait until it gets to a crisis, then they give us support when we're at the point where there's almost no return."

Or alternatively, if things were seemingly going well:

"They're very inconsistent. They forget about you when you go into full-time employment."

Other young people felt that transition and housing workers were too present and felt that they wanted more time on their own or that the tenancy agreements prevented them from exercising their independence skills or making the house their own:

"We're not even allowed to put a nail in the wall or hang pictures up on the wall. Maintenance have got to do everything."

A minority of young people were generally unhappy with their support and the houseshare.

### **Engagement and participation**

SCSC project young people were invited to take part in a range of participation events. This allowed them to meet other SCSC young people and feed into the development of the SCSC project. Young people commented that the introduction of an EET officer had made a difference to the development of EET opportunities. They felt that this role extended into supporting them with general life skills such as cooking and filling out application forms as well as understanding EET opportunities.

### **Advice for young people leaving residential care.**

Interviewees were asked what advice they would give to young people leaving care and thinking of entering the SCSC project. Participants gave a range of advice:

“Don't rush everything, don't try and become independent all at once then try to move out in 6 months. Stay as long as you can, learn as much as you can.”

“If you came into Break just behave and then you'll be able to possibly get a flat out of it in the future and I'd explain to them it's not that bad; it's pretty easy. I'd explain that Break are more lenient than other providers as well.”

“Listen to your transition worker. Every bit of help that you get, that's going to help you a lot and it's going to get you on your way a fair bit. I tell you it will get you on your feet. From when I started the Break SCSC team, I couldn't do nothing. I couldn't even cook pasta for God's sake. Now me and [transition worker] are cooking roast dinners and stuff like that.”

Some felt that they did not have a positive transition into the SCSC project. One explained that there were issues with their accommodation when they first moved in:

“I would say to double check the flat, if it's basic speak to your worker, coz when I first moved in, checked everything, there wasn't hardly anything in it so it made it a lot harder to make meals, but now it's progressing.”

### **Young people's recommendations**

Young people need clear information about the SCSC project and support available to them. Generally, the SCSC project was empowering young people to have more control and decision making in the project and their transition to independence. The support package offered to young people allowed more choice, however, some young people noted that they were unable to move to their chosen area and some young people struggled with their housemates. Finding houses in the right areas depend on wider

factors, however, the SCSC project could improve the matching process for housemates and allow young people to meet their future housemates prior to moving in. There was a recognition amongst some young people that the need to house some young people quickly had led to compressed timescales for getting houses ready and some were not fully decorated or equipped when young people first moved in:

“They had to get it ready and everything, They had to get the keys and everything, I moved in the day after they got the keys for it. Obviously, that tells that they were in a real rush for us to get a house.”

Young people also suggested the introduction of housemate agreements within each house (alongside the Break SCSC house rules) to allow young people more ownership within the home. Young people also wanted to introduce a young person friendly tenancy agreement to enable a better understanding of what a tenancy means and what they need to adhere to.

## C. Case studies

Two case studies were carried out to gain a fuller understanding of young people’s experience of the Break SCSC project.

Tyler’s care journey included several foster care and residential unit placements. At the point of preparing to leave residential care for independent living, they were told about the Break SCSC project by their social worker. Having initially been “terrified to leave care”, Tyler said that entering the SCSC project “was the best thing I ever did”. Tyler was not able to stay geographically close to their chosen people, however the project provided help with travel expenses to enable the relationships to continue. Tyler was supported by a transition worker, housing worker, participation team and a peer mentor from the SCSC project. Tyler told the interviewer that the support received from the project was “amazing” and that they felt “overwhelmed with how amazing the support is”. Alongside this support, Tyler commented that living with other young people in the same situation was a positive, “I really like my housemates, we’re all really supportive of each other”. When asked what the SCSC project had meant to them, Tyler said “they’ve changed me as a person for the better, I’m not completely detached but I have my independence, all young people who have been through the care system deserve this”.

Abs moved into Break’s SCSC project from their residential unit because they were unable to move to their original choice of accommodation. They had also been unable to live near to the people they had wanted to stay connected to, however, they had just received news that contact would begin soon. Abs had lived in the SCSC project house for 5 months at the time of interview. Although previously living with housemates in the property, they were at the time living alone due to issues within their house-share. Abs

spoke of the positive relationships they had with project staff and services, including the participation team and their transition worker. They spoke highly about the support that the transition worker had provided around life skills development, including advice with budgeting and cooking. They stated that their transition worker was really “supportive, like she comes and cooks and has dinner with me”. Abs spoke about some difficulties they had initially had with accessing support in times of need, which highlighted a need for improved out-of-hours response, “they [Break] have an on-call service but that isn’t great”. When asked how they were feeling about their transition from care to independent living, they said “I haven’t really left care as such yet. I am getting all the independence and support I can [from Break] at the moment”. Abs’ advice to young people thinking of entering the SCSC project was “just try and keep your head high and reach your goals no matter how hard it can be.”

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