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Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services

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children**



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Supported lodgings provide family-based support to young people who cannot live with their own families and who are not yet ready for independent living. In supported lodgings, a young person is provided with a room of their own in a private home. The young person is a member of the household, but is not expected to become a member of the family. At least one adult in the household is trained to provide practical and emotional support to assist a young person in developing the confidence and capability to live an independent adult life. These individuals are referred to as supported lodgings providers, or simply ‘providers’.

Barnardo’s currently operates 18 supported lodgings services across England, Scotland and Wales.¹ Placements are provided for young people leaving care and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The findings of this research illustrate *how* and *why* Barnardo’s supported lodgings services contribute to young people successfully transitioning to independence.

Barnardo’s supported lodgings provision can have a positive, life changing impact on young people with various levels of need, and at various stages of independence. ‘Low need’ and ‘high, complex need’ young people have been successfully accommodated.

The findings illustrate the requirement for, and viability of, supported lodgings as a means to bridge an identified gap in the support provided to young people transitioning to independence. This justifies sustained investment and long-term support for provision. Specifically, the study indicates that supported lodgings can assist in reducing the use of unsatisfactory accommodation – such as unsuitable bed and breakfasts – for care leavers and homeless young people.

However, the findings also demonstrate that supported lodgings do not suit all young people, specifically those who have few boundaries to their behaviour, or who want the freedom and anonymity of other settings. This highlights the importance of ensuring local provision of a range of accommodation options, in order to meet the differing needs, wishes, and aspirations of individual young people. Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that young people with particular support needs, e.g. mental health problems, will not be able to succeed in a supported lodgings placement.

¹ Seven of these services are designed specifically for young people with particularly complex needs. These services were set up in 2014, and do not form a part of this evaluation study.

Methods

The research comprised:

- a familiarisation exercise, including a literature review and documentary analysis of service policies and procedures
- a survey completed by seven service staff from Barnardo's supported lodgings services
- interviews with 11 service staff
- interviews with 14 young people and 20 supported lodgings providers.

The research was designed and undertaken by Barnardo's Evaluation and Impact Team. Fieldwork was conducted in 2014-15.

Main Findings

Attracting, recruiting, vetting, assessing and approving providers

- The main drivers for finding out more about becoming a supported lodgings provider are intrinsic and altruistic, often expressed as 'liking young people' and 'wanting to put something back into the community'.
- Qualities, skills and behaviours that service staff view as vital to ensuring successful placements include: ability to work as part of a team, sticking to professional boundaries, and being able to communicate openly with service staff when things are not going well.
- Key skills that providers and young people consider critical are: being caring, being non-judgemental, being a good listener, being easy-going, and having a sense of humour.
- Most potential providers will not possess all the required skills at the point of recruitment. Possessing the potential to develop the necessary skills through training, supervision and experience of the role is considered the most important factor.
- Barnardo's actively recruits a range of providers with differing ethnic backgrounds, religions, beliefs and sexualities, living in different household set-ups, and in a variety of geographical locations. This helps young people to be placed into environments which can best meet their needs and wishes.
- Potential providers particularly value meeting experienced existing providers in the course of their initial assessment. This offers a valuable opportunity for applicants to gain a realistic picture of what being a provider entails, to explore whether the role is right for them, and to get some awareness of the support and training given.

- Where interaction with young people (service users or ex-service users) is included in the assessment process, their opinions are seen to be extremely useful and influential, and impact on the final assessment decision.
- Providers value hearing from young people about how they benefit from placements, what they think providers should be like, and what they should be able to offer. This gives applicants a good picture of the expectations on both sides, and ultimately helps them in making their decision about whether to proceed to assessment. Involvement of young people also allows service staff to see, first-hand, how well applicants relate to young people.
- All of Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore ways in which young people and experienced providers can best be involved in provider assessments.

Identification, assessment, and referral of young people

- Care leavers tend to find out about Barnardo's supported lodgings services through social work staff. Young people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of it, tend to find out about provision from their local housing department. It is therefore important that social work and housing department staff are aware of Barnardo's provision in their local area, and are knowledgeable about what the provision entails, so they can refer all eligible young people, and can reassure them about the value of considering a placement.
- Many young people – those accessing 'homeless' placements in particular – are initially anxious about the idea of 'living with a stranger'. Other concerns include 'not getting on', 'not knowing anybody', and other household members not understanding them or their situation. Such apprehensions tend to be alleviated when a young person meets a member of Barnardo's staff who describes the provision (what a young person could expect, and what would be expected of the young person), and when a young person meets a potential provider and visits a home they might move into. This highlights the importance of staff and referrers being knowledgeable about the service and being able to reassure young people about its value, making the experience less daunting for a young person.
- The study demonstrates the importance of accurate and complete information – about potential risks, challenging behaviours, triggers for behavioural issues, and young people's life experiences – being collected at referral stage. Incomplete referral information can present serious risks to young people and providers, and was cited as a reason for placement breakdown.

- Incomplete referral information is seen to result from:
 - information not being recorded by a relevant body
 - concerns about data protection and information sharing
 - concerns that services will not accept a referral regarding a particularly challenging young person.
- These findings highlight the importance of good relationships with referrers, who need to know that they can have open and honest discussions regarding a young person's needs.
- Ways to improve the quality of the information could include providing feedback and guidance to referrers on the level of detail required in referral forms, and explaining the purpose of the requested information.
- Young people are very positive about their initial contact with service staff, feeling that they are in control of deciding what areas to work on, that they are listened to, and that the focus of discussions is on understanding their needs and goals. Service staff and providers view this as important in ensuring a young person is committed to a placement.
- A young person's engagement with the service, and their investment in the placement, are integral to its success – they have to make their own decision to take up a placement. For this reason, each young person must be encouraged to be involved in the decision-making processes right from the beginning of their engagement.

Matching and moving-in processes

- The message from service staff is that matching young people and providers needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.
- Good matching is heavily dependent upon a service having a range of providers, and on project workers having good knowledge of:
 - specific household set ups
 - expertise and experience of individual providers
 - varying levels of time and commitment different providers can offer
 - each provider's capacity to offer appropriate opportunities to an individual young person.

- Matching can be more difficult for smaller services and for services working near capacity, as the few vacancies available at any one time are not necessarily the ones required at the point of matching. However, ‘unmatched’ placements can turn out successful too.
- The main factor to consider in the matching and moving-in process is that it proceeds at the young person’s pace. For some young people this needs to be very gradual, whereas for others it can be speeded up.
- During the initial meeting with a provider, young people attach particular value to:
 - receiving a tour of the house, to see where they might be living
 - being introduced to all members of the household, in order to meet everyone they might go on to live with.
- In the main, providers are satisfied with the amount of information they receive at the outset of a placement, which tends to be greater if more serious risks or concerns are identified.
- In a small number of instances, providers feel Barnardo’s has withheld information which they consider has jeopardised provision of appropriate support to a young person, or the safety of other household members. This highlights the importance of staff giving careful consideration to what information they share with providers, and of explaining to providers the extent of the information that can be shared.
- Barnardo’s procedures for facilitating discussions between young people and providers about ground rules are viewed as being very thorough, covering all the crucial aspects of placements which need to be clear from the outset. The process helps prevent problems occurring at a later date, and is vital in ensuring young people and providers do not unknowingly do things which irritate each other. By identifying arrangements for resolving any difficulties or disagreements that might arise in the course of the placement, the process also reassures providers.
- In agreeing house rules, providers note that it is useful to identify some ‘definite rules’ and others that they are prepared to negotiate and compromise on. For young people, the negotiation process is very positive, providing them with a degree of control, allowing them to recognise that their views are respected, and ensuring that they feel included in decisions about their living arrangements. This helps to establish trust between young people and providers early on.
- It is important for ground rules to be reviewed at regular intervals throughout a placement, to ensure they remain appropriate and are adapted as necessary.

Provider training

- On the whole, providers are satisfied with training opportunities offered by Barnardo's, and feel they are equipped to respond to young people's needs.
- Providers view decision-making scenarios as being particularly effective in helping them to feel prepared for situations that might arise in placements. Such scenarios also allow service staff to identify any skills or knowledge a (potential) provider might need to acquire or develop in order to be effective in the role.
- Areas where providers feel additional training – to be given to all providers – would be useful are:
 - awareness of attachment/child development
 - drug, new psychoactive substance ('legal high') and alcohol awareness
 - online safety
 - understanding and dealing with challenging behaviour.
- All providers working with care leavers should be given information on understanding the care system, understanding support available to young people leaving care, and other services available to young people – in particular, emotional support services.
- The decision to take up training opportunities greatly depends on an individual provider's interests and availability, and many say that they struggle to attend training due to other commitments. However, providers are keen to have face-to-face training whenever possible, valuing the opportunity to talk to other providers about their experiences. A solution might be to offer blended (online and face-to-face) learning. Barnardo's recent subscription to Research in Practice (a service providing literature, online courses, and tutorials on subjects such as attachment and behaviour disorders) offers another option. Additionally, Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore possibilities for linking up with training offered by other Barnardo's services (or other agencies) – for example, fostering services, where some of the relevant issues are very similar.
- Barnardo's supported lodgings services should, wherever possible, seek to involve service users – or ex-service users – in provider training, and consider the ways in which they can be involved at the various stages from development through to delivery of training. Because of the experiential nature of their knowledge, young people's views and contributions can help bring about a more complete

understanding of their experiences, which can lead to improvements in service provision. Involvement also offers young people a valuable opportunity to develop new and transferable skills.

- Many of Barnardo's providers have relevant professional expertise, which services should consider drawing on as a resource for providing peer training.

Provider support

- Barnardo's support systems for providers vary between services, but can include:
 - a named contact/support worker
 - supervision meetings and visits
 - out-of-hours support
 - annual reviews
 - peer support mechanisms/experience-sharing events
 - arrangements for respite or time out.
- Overwhelmingly, providers consider the support available to them within office hours as 'exceptional', and are very positive about their relationships with their support worker, viewing them as having extensive knowledge and skills for working with young people, and for supporting providers.
- The consistency of support that providers receive from their Barnardo's worker is an important aspect, as it allows them to feel that they are working in partnership with someone who knows them and the progression of each individual placement.
- Regular, planned supervisions are of vital importance to providers, affording opportunity for planning proactive support, ensuring that any issues are 'nipped in the bud', and allowing them to feel reassured that they are supporting a young person in true partnership with the expertise of Barnardo's.
- Provider supervision meetings should happen regularly. Sustaining these throughout longer-term placements is regarded as critical to encouraging a young person's positive development, and gives reassurance to providers.
- Out-of-hours support provided in-house by Barnardo's is highly rated by providers.

- Barnardo's should explore options for facilitating peer support among providers. There are different options available, and the most appropriate will depend upon local circumstances and desires of providers.
- Respite – or more regular respite – for providers may help support placements and prevent placement breakdowns. In particular, it may help support placements for particularly challenging young people. Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore respite/time out arrangements for providers.

Outcomes young people experience

- Barnardo's supported lodgings placements have successfully helped young people to develop the skills and confidence they need to go on and live independently.
- Placements have resulted in a wide range of benefits for young people, across an array of practical, emotional and social outcome indicators.
- The ways in which young people benefit from supported lodgings placements, and the extent to which they benefit, varies depending on their individual needs.
- Some young people accessing Barnardo's supported lodgings services present low level support needs, while others require high levels of support. The ability of Barnardo's provision to address these varying levels of need highlights the flexibility of services, which is a key strength.
- The approach to sequenced support – which prioritises stability, readiness to change, and a focus on immediate needs, before progressing to longer term outcomes – is made possible by providers and service staff working together as a team, and recognising young people as individuals with differing strengths, needs, and aspirations.
- Outcomes achieved by many young people are practical, including improved cooking, food shopping, and money management skills.
- Progress with practical skills is achieved by young people being helped to learn or develop skills, and having the opportunity to put them into practice in a supportive domestic environment where there is someone to guide and encourage them, and assist them when they face challenges or make mistakes.
- A number of young people also experience improved emotional skills, particularly in terms of increased confidence, self-worth and self-determination, a greater awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and belief in their own ability to succeed.

- Being supported as they learn from the challenges and experiences of their placements helps young people develop greater resilience. In many cases, young people feel their placement has given them more control over their own behaviour and emotions.
- Emotional benefits arise primarily from young people living in a safe and stable environment, and from having someone to talk to, someone who believes in them and encourages them, and someone who is there for them.
- Young people are required to make a small financial contribution to their placement. This process is designed to encourage young people to gain experience of making a regular payment. Not all providers are enforcing this. Barnardo's needs to ensure that providers are aware of the importance of this process, and that they are required to do it, for the benefit of the young people.

Placement endings

- The vast majority of Barnardo's supported lodgings placements end in a planned manner.
- While 'readiness' to move on should be the most important influence on the timing of a young person's move-on, other factors include:
 - young people thinking they are ready to move on when they are not
 - housing markets/housing availability
 - placement funding.
- In the main, providers and service staff feel that most young people have acquired the necessary practical skills for independent living by the end of their placement. There is, however, a degree of concern about whether young people are emotionally prepared to cope with independent living. Apprehensions tend to relate to the young people's limited suitable support networks, and a common concern is that young people – in particular care leavers – will feel isolated and lonely once they move on.
- Some providers reduce the support they give to young people towards the end of a placement, on the basis that this more realistically reflects their impending independence. To ensure that the most effective approach is adopted across the board, Barnardo's needs to clarify whether or not providers should reduce support towards the end of a placement.

Reasons for placement breakdowns

- Generally, providers and service staff feel that little more can be done to prevent placement breakdowns.
- The principal reason providers and staff give for placements breaking down is a young person simply not wanting, or being ready, to change. A significant minority of young people are not ready to live in a domestic environment, and cannot maintain a placement, however much support they receive. This highlights the importance of ensuring access to other appropriate accommodation options which reflect the needs, preferences and aspirations of individual young people.
- Other common reasons identified for placements breaking down are:
 - persistent flouting of placement agreements or house rules
 - displays of challenging behaviour
 - drug or new psychoactive substance ('legal high') use
 - lack of timely, appropriate mental health intervention
 - theft from a provider's home.
- Measures identified as being critical to alleviating breakdowns are:
 - good matches
 - placement preparation
 - provider support
 - restorative practice (bringing young people and providers together in a supervised setting to work through the issues)
 - timely mental health support, where required.
- Many providers keep in touch with young people after they have moved on. This demonstrates the potential for young people to develop a valuable relationship 'for life'.

Success Factors

This evaluation identified a number of factors that are critical to the success of Barnardo's supported lodgings services:

Identification and referral of young people suitable for this form of accommodation

The greatest benefits for young people can only be achieved if the process of identifying and referring them is undertaken by professionals who understand the nature and opportunities of supported lodgings.

Young people's involvement and engagement in a placement

A young person's engagement with the service, and their investment in the placement, are integral to success. Young people must be involved in decision-making processes from the outset.

Good relationships with referrers

A good relationship between Barnardo's and a referrer can help ensure comprehensive referral information. It will also make the referrer more enthusiastic about the service when they introduce it to a young person. They will be able to communicate clearly to a young person what a placement involves, and what the benefits might be, making the experience less daunting and encouraging them to 'give it a go'.

Range of providers

Having a range of providers living in different circumstances, and with different skills and experiences, helps young people to be placed into environments which can best meet their needs.

Good matches

Skilled staff, who know the individual circumstances, skills and experiences of each provider, can make good matches between young people and providers. This in turn can prevent placement breakdowns.

Commitment and dedication of providers and staff

The quality, commitment and dedication of Barnardo's staff and providers ensures that young people and the providers themselves feel fully supported. Providers and staff go 'above and beyond' because they want to do the best they can for young people. This results in young people feeling appreciated and cared for, and wanting to engage, which ultimately contributes to positive outcomes.

Sequenced support

Successful outcomes are achieved by providing sequenced support – prioritising stability, readiness to change, and immediate needs, before moving on to longer term outcomes. Progress occurs when young people are stable, motivated to change, and feel supported or encouraged by providers they trust.

Working with young people as individuals

Young people enter Barnardo's supported lodgings services with a wide variety of needs, requiring different approaches and levels of intensity of support. The success of Barnardo's provision is made possible by providers and service staff who work with young people as individuals with differing strengths, needs and aspirations. It is therefore necessary to ensure that service provision is not overly prescriptive, but is tailored to the needs of each individual young person.

Provider support structures

The high quality of Barnardo's training and proactive support ensures providers feel sufficiently equipped to deal with challenges during placements. This creates a 'no surprises' culture, allowing for issues to be raised and tackled before a crisis ensues, and reducing placement breakdowns.

Trusting relationships between all parties

Sound interpersonal relationships are central to success. A collaborative effort is necessary to ensure a young person is well-supported. This allows open and honest discussions and identification of needs that might otherwise go unidentified and unaddressed.



Improvement within Barnardo's supported lodgings services

The evaluation identified a small number of specific areas where Barnardo's needs to give clarity to providers:

The extent of support providers should give

Should young people be cooking their own meals, for example, or should the providers be demonstrating the processes themselves?

Young people enter Barnardo's supported lodgings services with a wide variety of needs, and different approaches and levels of support are required. Some young people need very little practical and emotional support, while for others, 'baby steps' in simple skills are actually huge advances. It is therefore necessary to ensure that service provision is not overly prescriptive, but tailored to the needs of each young person.

Importance of the young person's financial contribution to the placement

This process is designed to give young people experience of making a regular payment, but not all providers are enforcing it. Barnardo's needs to ensure that providers are aware of the importance of this process, and that they do enforce it, for the benefit of the young people.

Support provided towards the end of placements

Providers require clarity on the approach they should take when preparing a young person for moving on. Some are unclear about whether they should curtail support in the months before move-on, to encourage young people to take more responsibility for themselves, or whether they should continue to provide a high level of support right up until the end of the placement.

Managing expectations of providers

Two providers report having had bad experiences with their first placements. Both have continued to provide the service, one as a result of 'another placement coming along quickly', while the other notes that the encouragement they received from their support worker was why they stayed. Both had been encouraged to reflect on the placement, with service staff providing support and ensuring the providers were helped to feel that they had not 'failed'.

Introduction

This report presents findings from an evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodging services, commissioned and undertaken in-house by Barnardo's Evaluation and Impact team. The overall aim of the research is to explore Barnardo's supported lodgings provision, and, more specifically, to answer the following questions:

- Does Barnardo's support and sustain care leavers, including the most vulnerable care leavers, in safe, appropriate and sustainable accommodation? If so, how?
- Do supported lodgings prepare care leavers effectively for independent living? If so, how?
- What other outcomes are experienced by care leavers in supported lodgings, and how are these outcomes achieved?
- How does Barnardo's enable young people to participate in decision-making processes about their accommodation and futures?
- How does Barnardo's recruit, train and support supported lodging hosts to provide safe and stable placements for care leavers?

Supported lodgings

Supported lodgings provide family-based support to young people who cannot live with their own families and who are not yet ready for independent living. In supported lodgings, a young person has a room of their own in a private home. The young person is a member of the household, but is not expected to become a member of the family. At least one adult in the household (hereafter referred to as a 'provider') is trained to provide practical and emotional support, assisting a young person to develop the confidence and capability to live an independent adult life.

A provider lives full-time in their property, but pursues their own lifestyle (including daily routine, work commitments, and holidays). They are expected to work alongside professional services such as Barnardo's, to provide a safe and supportive home-like environment, and to provide a domestic routine – sometimes including provision of meals. Providers can be families, couples, or single people.

Types of supported lodgings services

Supported lodgings can address any or all of the following objectives:

- help prevent homelessness by providing 'time out' for young people at risk of homelessness due to problems at home, or where a placement is at risk of breaking down

- provide emergency accommodation for young people facing homelessness, for example after parental eviction or placement breakdown
- provide safe, secure, stable and supportive accommodation for young people leaving care, where they can develop their skills as they move towards independence
- enable looked after young people to continue living with their foster carer after they reach the age of 18.

Broadly speaking there are three types of supported lodgings service to respond to the above situations:

- services for young people transitioning from care
- services for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness
- hybrid models which offer placements to both target groups.

These three types of service are organised in similar ways but, as detailed below, there are different expectations of the role of the provider and the expected outcomes for young people.

Services for young people leaving care

Supported lodgings services for young people leaving care are designed to help a young person make a more natural and gradual transition from a care setting to independence. The focus is on provision of practical and emotional support in order to help a young person to develop the confidence and capability to live an independent adult life. A young person is expected to pursue a personal development plan, laying the foundations for independent living. Length of placement varies depending on an individual young person's needs, but in general, young people tend to stay two or three years with their provider.

Services for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness

Within supported lodgings services for young people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness, the focus is on providing a safe place to stay while supporting young people to make decisions about their housing options.

These services are provided in recognition that a supportive domestic environment is often more suitable than other housing options such as foyers, bed and breakfasts, and hostels.

Some young people who access supported lodgings because of homelessness stay for only very short periods of time – from a few nights to a few weeks – while others stay in longer-term placements (either with the same provider, or in a different placement). Sometimes efforts are made, in partnership with other relevant agencies, to resolve a crisis and enable a young person to resume living with their family. At other times the focus can be on developing skills to move on to independent living post-placement.

Hybrid models of service

Hybrid models of service provision accommodate both of the above target groups of young people.

Barnardo's supported lodgings provision

Barnardo's currently operates 18 supported lodgings services across England, Scotland, and Wales. These services have a central 'core', but retain scope to develop to suit local, regional, or national needs and priorities.

Seven of these services are designed for young people with particularly complex needs. These were set up in 2014, and do not, therefore, form a part of this study. There will, however, be value in evaluating these services once they are established, and the learning in this report will help guide implementation of these new services.

Barnardo's role in supported lodgings provision

As a service provider agency of supported lodgings, Barnardo's role is to:

- recruit, vet, develop and maintain a network of providers – including scrutinising and approving both the suitability of the accommodation and that of the provider to work with vulnerable young people in an unsupervised home environment
- undertake an assessment of young people who may be accommodated in a placement – including an assessment of support needs and development of a support plan
- publicise the service (to potential providers, referrers, commissioners and young people)
- encourage, support and deliver skills development and training to providers (including facilitation of experience-sharing events)
- match young people and providers
- introduce young people to providers
- support the young person-provider relationship

- provide accountability to commissioners and funders.

To differing degrees, Barnardo's supported lodgings service staff also:

- deliver support to the young people accommodated in supported lodgings
- provide out-of-hours contact and support for hosts in emergencies.

Research to date on the effectiveness and impact of supported lodgings

Research indicates that supported lodgings are extremely cost-effective in achieving positive outcomes for young people making a successful transition to independent living.

A study ² analysing Supporting People outcomes data for 2007-8 shows that, on most outcome indicators, a significantly higher percentage of young people (aged 16-21) living in supported lodgings achieve positive outcomes than those in other types of supported accommodation.

There is, however, very little research evidence on 'why' and 'how' supported lodgings achieve these positive outcomes. This research study aims to go some way towards filling this void.

Methods

The methods for this evaluation comprised:

- a familiarisation exercise, including a literature review and documentary analysis of policies and procedures within Barnardo's supported lodgings services
- in-depth, semi-structured, telephone interviews with Barnardo's service staff
- in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with young people and providers within four of Barnardo's supported lodgings services.

For full discussion of the research methods, and profiles of the four services that participated in this study, please see Appendix A.

² Supporting People outcomes data 2007-8

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report presents the findings from the research. The focus is on presenting evidence relating to recommendations for effective and appropriate implementation, development and improvement of supported lodgings provision.

The structure of this report is loosely based on the supported lodgings service journey, from attracting providers, through to placement endings.

The next chapter provides an overview of attracting and recruiting potential providers, and Barnardo's processes for vetting, assessment, and approval. Following this, Chapter 3 explores processes for identification and referral of young people, while Chapter 4 presents findings related to matching young people with providers, and moving into placement. This is followed by chapters dealing with the training and support Barnardo's offers to providers. Chapter 7 analyses the outcomes young people achieve, and how these are realised. At the end of the chapter, there are case study examples of how the young people involved in this research came into Barnardo's supported lodgings services, and the key outcomes from their placements. Chapter 8 then explores placement endings and young people moving on. Appendix A provides a full analysis of the research methods, and profiles of the four services that participated in this study.



Attracting, recruiting, vetting, assessing and approving providers

Summary of key findings

Having a diverse mix of providers can make a substantial difference to the quality of matches between young people and providers, and ultimately to young people's experiences and outcomes. Services should thus focus on recruiting a wide range of providers (e.g. in terms of sexuality, ethnic and cultural background, and religion), a mix of household set-ups (e.g. all-male, all-female, single people, and people with varied employment status), and providers living in locations where young people want to live.

Word-of-mouth is considered the most successful method for recruiting providers. Services should therefore encourage providers to distribute marketing materials to their friends and colleagues who they feel would be interested in, and suited to, the role.

As many providers have either initially thought about foster care or have retired from fostering, linking up with fostering teams across Barnardo's, and the new Barnardo's Welcome Centre for fostering enquiries, as well as local authority fostering teams, would be valuable for identifying potential providers.

Central among the qualities, skills and behaviours service staff view as vital to ensuring successful placements include: ability to work as part of a team, sticking to professional boundaries, and being able to communicate openly with service staff when things are not going well. Additionally, the key skills providers themselves and young people consider critical are: being caring, being non-judgemental, being a good listener, being easy-going, and having a sense of humour. However, most potential providers will not possess all the required skills at the point of recruitment. Possessing the potential to develop the above skills through training, supervision and experience of the role is viewed as the most important factor.

Allowing potential providers to meet young people and experienced providers at recruitment stage offers valuable opportunities for applicants to gain a realistic picture of what being a provider entails, to explore whether the role is right for them, and to obtain some awareness of the support and training given. Providers find this process reassuring.

Barnardo's should explore the best ways in which young people – service users or ex-service users – can be involved in assessment of providers.

Considerations in recruiting providers

In attracting potential providers it is necessary to think about what is required of them, in terms of the people they will be dealing with and the intended outcomes of the service. For example, if a particular scheme is designed to accommodate young people with particularly high levels of need, or who display extremely challenging behaviour, it may be preferable to target people who have professional experience of working with these 'groups' of young people.

Barnardo's has a diverse range of providers, reflecting the diversity of the young people to be accommodated (e.g. in terms of sexuality, ethnic and cultural background, and religion). Service staff stress that such a mix can make a substantial difference to the quality of matches they can make, and ultimately to young people's experiences and outcomes.

Other factors that service staff identify as supporting matching are:

- having a range of household types (e.g. young single adults, families with children, older single people, couples, all-male households, all-female households, and mixed households)
- the location of a provider (e.g. within certain areas in which young people are keen to live, near a young-person's place of education or employment, or within reach of positive support networks).

Desirable skills and qualities of providers

Service staff identified qualities they seek in a provider during recruitment and assessment. Central among them are ability and willingness to:

- **work as part of a team** with Barnardo's project workers and leaving care/social workers
- **stick to appropriate and professional boundaries** as laid out in a placement agreement
- **communicate openly** with the team when things are not working.

The following qualities, skills and behaviours of providers are repeatedly identified by young people as being vital to building successful relationships:

- Being **caring** – one of the things that young people value most is feeling that their providers genuinely care about them as individuals.
- Being **non-judgemental** – knowing that they won't be 'judged' enables young people to open up and be honest with providers.

- Being a **good listener** – being prepared to listen without judging or leaping in with suggestions is very highly valued by young people. It demonstrates to them that their provider is genuinely interested in them and respects them, helping to reinforce the idea that their placement is focused on them and their needs.
- Being **easy-going** – the ability to make relaxed, easy conversation with young people, and being able to lighten the mood or make them laugh (and being able to judge when to do this) helps young people to relax, to enjoy spending time with their provider, and to open up to them.
- Having a **sense of humour** – laughter and humour create a sense of connection between young people and providers which helps in developing relationships. Lightening things up puts young people at ease, meaning that they find their providers fun to be around, and enjoy their company.

The above skills are also consistently recognised by providers, who additionally identify:

- **Praising** – offering appropriate praise helps young people recognise their efforts and accomplishments, and is a valuable self-esteem and confidence builder. Providers also feel that appropriate praise allows young people to recognise that their provider really believes in their ability to achieve (and also to handle situations which do not go well).
- Being a **relaxing, calming influence** – this is partly about being easy-going and easy to get on with, so as to provide a comfortable environment which allows young people to relax and grow. It is also about helping young people see problems differently: putting them in perspective and working through how they could be dealt with.
- Having a **positive attitude** – this relates to having a ‘can do’ attitude, staying positive and moving forward through the inevitable ups and downs of supporting a young person on their path to independence.
- **Challenging** – in addition to listening and praising, providers feel it is important to challenge young people about their behaviour, their attitudes towards other people, and their perspective on situations, when appropriate. Providers also feel that young people view this as a sign of honesty.
- Encouraging young people to **think through consequences** – learning to make good decisions makes young people more independent and responsible. Helping them learn to consider situations carefully and weigh up options can also aid young people to understand and take into account others’ views when making decisions.

- **Persistence and patience** – a young person’s transition to independence is not always straightforward and linear. Providers need patience in sticking with young people and continuing to offer support and encouragement when they are not making progress or are suffering setbacks.
- **Quick thinking** – young people’s lives are fast paced. Providers have to be able to ‘think on their feet’, to avoid panic and knee-jerk reactions, and to be able to step back, swiftly analyse and take a considered view of a situation when things are not going right.
- **Negotiation** – negotiation, reasoning and discussion help young people develop these skills themselves.
- **Likes a challenge** – providers note that the role is not always ‘sweetness and light’, and there can be challenging times, so they have to be prepared to tackle the challenges of the role, as well as reaping the rewards.
- **Flexible** – this relates to being able to handle whatever challenges arise, with providers noting the frequent ups and downs and the fast-changing pace of young people’s lives. Providers need to be flexible with time and routines – both for the young person but also for meetings with service staff, etc.
- **Wants to give something back** – providers stress the importance of wanting to help a young person, and providing the time, belief and encouragement to help them to succeed in life.

Service staff and providers alike agreed that most potential providers will not possess all the required skills at the point of recruitment; possessing the potential to develop the required skills through training, supervision, and experience of the role is the most important factor.

Approaches to recruiting providers

Services have limited recruitment budgets but are being very creative. Examples of ways Barnardo’s services have advertised for providers include: articles in newspapers and local magazines; adverts in the Big Issue; interviews on local radio; leaflets or posters in sports centres, church halls, community centres, GP surgeries, libraries, youth centres, shop windows, large businesses, and job centres; notices on local authority, volunteering, or job websites; notices on Gumtree; advertising through local fostering and adoption teams; information on the back of local authority payslips and on car parking tickets, and holding recruitment drives outside supermarkets, at local fairs, and at fostering events.

Service staff report mixed results for these recruitment methods; sometimes a method will work well one year but not at all the following year. Word-of-mouth is considered the most successful recruitment method. However, it takes time to establish this, and services which have only been around for a few years do not quite feel that they are there yet. Additionally, service staff feel that where providers' payments are low, this has a knock-on effect on word-of-mouth recruitment.

Service staff mention the importance of having a Barnardo's 'brand' for supported lodgings services. With this in mind, Barnardo's has recently developed marketing materials which provide consistent imagery, but can be tailored to include information about individual services.

Based on the effectiveness of word-of-mouth support, services should encourage providers to distribute these leaflets among their friends and colleagues who they feel would be suited to the provider role.

People who pick up leaflets or see posters about supported lodgings services need to be able to go online and do more research on what supported lodgings are, and whether the services might be relevant to them. Barnardo's is currently developing a better national online profile of services in order to achieve this.

Motivation to become a provider

Many of the providers who participated in this study became aware of Barnardo's supported lodgings services as a result of advertising and promotional campaigns. Word-of-mouth from friends or family who are providers was also an important source.

The main drivers for finding out more about becoming a provider are intrinsic and altruistic, often expressed as 'liking young people', and wanting to make a difference to their lives. Another key motivation is 'putting something back into the community'.

Income generation is not expressed as a primary motivation.

Many providers either initially thought about foster care or have retired from fostering. Supported lodgings are generally viewed as carrying less responsibility and being less formal than fostering. Others mention the attraction of working with 'older young people' who are more independent than fostering allows for. It would be valuable to link up with fostering teams across Barnardo's and the new Barnardo's Welcome Centre for fostering enquiries, as well as local authority fostering teams.

Assessing, vetting, and approving providers

Barnardo's assessment, vetting, and approval processes are designed to identify providers who can offer safe, secure accommodation and support to young people, and who can assist them in developing the skills and confidence required to go on to live independently.

The assessment and approval process is a key time for service staff and providers to build close working relationships, particularly through assessment visits conducted in a provider's home. While the process gives service staff an opportunity to assess the suitability of a provider, it also lets providers appraise the service. Providers mention that the professionalism and quality of staff interactions at this early stage helped them determine the level of trust and confidence they could have in the service, and ultimately influenced their decision to take on the role.

Barnardo's assessment processes

Barnardo's provider assessment process can be broken down into assessment of three key spheres:

- the provider and their household
- the property
- the wider environment.

Collecting sufficient information in these three areas provides a rounded understanding of the applicant and their circumstances, and helps to ensure that an environment is safe for a young person to live in. Providers and service staff feel that the processes in place ensure services can identify unsuitable candidates.

Barnardo's assessment process is viewed as being in-depth and thorough, but not unduly intrusive. The assessment process is viewed as being not unlike a fostering assessment, although not quite so comprehensive. Providers appreciate the time Barnardo's workers take to speak to their children about what to expect.

Involvement of young people in assessment and approval processes

Some of Barnardo's services include interaction with young people (service users or ex-service users) in the assessment process. Where this is the case, young people's opinions are seen to be extremely useful and influential, and impact on the final assessment decision.

However, some service staff consider it inappropriate to involve young people in assessment, due to the personal and confidential nature of information provided during the process. In other services this is managed by removing potentially sensitive data about applicants from information given to young people.

While allowing service staff to see first-hand how well applicants relate to young people, involving young people in the assessment and approval process also gives applicants a better picture of what is expected of them, and what they can expect. Providers value hearing first-hand from young people about how they benefit from placements, what they think providers should be like, and what they should be able to offer, and this ultimately helps them in making their decision about whether to proceed to assessment.

There is a view among service staff and providers that involving ex-service users is more appropriate than involving young people currently in placement, as they are not ‘in the midst of it’, and are therefore better able to reflect on their experience.

LEARNING POINT:

Barnardo’s should consider ways in which young people can best be involved in assessment of providers, ensuring that it is a valuable experience for both parties.

Involving experienced providers in assessment and approval processes

Arranging for prospective providers to meet experienced providers during the assessment phase offers a valuable opportunity for applicants to: gain a realistic picture of what being a provider entails; explore whether the role is right for them, and obtain some awareness of the support and training given. Providers find this process reassuring.

LEARNING POINT:

All of Barnardo’s services should offer prospective providers the opportunity to meet with experienced providers.

The following quote is a typical reflection of the experience of providers involved in this study.

‘The process was so comprehensive and supportive; it really does help you work out whether you can give it a go. You know, you’re not by the end of it thinking confidently that you can deal with everything, because that would be unrealistic, but you know that you’re in a good position to give it a go and that the support is there, so I did find it a very, very helpful process. And I suppose that’s something to kind of sell to people a bit, you know, how important the process is, and taking the next step.’ - *Provider, Service A*



Identification and referral of young people

Summary of key findings

Care leavers tend to find out about Barnardo's supported lodgings services from their social worker/leaving care worker/throughcare and aftercare worker. Overwhelmingly, the main reason care leavers give for deciding to take up a placement is having the opportunity to learn skills for independent living – such as how to cook and budget – which they tend to report limited experience of within their previous care placements.

Those accessing Barnardo's placements for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, principally move into supported lodgings in order to escape an unsatisfactory home environment.

Young people accessing Barnardo's supported lodgings services have diverse needs. Some young people experience significant social vulnerabilities and require much more support than others. This highlights the importance of ensuring Barnardo's continues to provide placements offering varied intensity of support for young people.

It is crucial that information collected at referral stage is accurate and complete. Understanding past experiences of young people and gathering as much information as possible at the outset of a placement helps ensure a placement is thoroughly prepared, and thus less likely to break down. Incomplete referral information can present serious risks to young people and providers, and is viewed to be a result of: information not being recorded by a relevant body; concerns about data protection and information sharing, and concerns that services will not accept a referral regarding a particularly challenging young person. These findings highlight the importance of good relationships with referrers, to help them to know that they can have open and honest discussions regarding a young person's needs. Providing feedback and guidance to referrers on the level of detail required at referral, and the purpose of the requested information, may help improve the quality of information provided.

Young people are very positive about their initial contact with service staff, feeling they are in control of deciding what areas to work on, that they are listened to, and that the focus of discussions is on understanding their needs and goals. This is important in ensuring a young person is committed to a placement.

Referrals

Within this study, with the exception of a small number of young people who had been recommended by friends or family, referrals tended to have come through social work (for care leavers) and housing departments (for young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness).

LEARNING POINT:

It is therefore important that social work and housing department staff are aware of Barnardo's provision in their local area, and are knowledgeable about what the provision entails, so they can refer all eligible young people, and can reassure them about the value of considering a placement.

At referral stage, Barnardo's undertakes a risk assessment and a comprehensive assessment of each young person's support needs. This encompasses the young person's history and behaviour, their family history, and their experiences with other service providers.

Barnardo's services have developed assessment forms for completion by agencies referring young people. Forms vary by service, but tend to include:

- **reason for referral** (including any relevant family background, personal history, care history, employment or training records relevant to the referral)
- **risk factors** (such as violent/aggressive behaviour, anger management issues, self-injury/suicide attempts, drug/alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour or pending legal issues)
- **support needs** (such as learning disabilities/difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health issues, eating disorders, allergies or medical conditions)
- any **special requirements** (such as religious, spiritual, cultural, dietary or accessibility needs)
- an **assessment of independent living skills**.

It is crucial that information collected at referral stage is accurate and complete. Understanding young people's past experiences and gathering as much information as possible about potential risks, life experiences, challenging behaviours and triggers of behavioural issues at the outset of a placement helps ensure the placement is thoroughly prepared, and thus less likely to break down.

While Barnardo's – with a young person's consent – attempts to gather and analyse all relevant information as a basis for planning a placement,

the referral process relies on other organisations collating and providing information. Inevitably some referrers are better than others at providing referral information – some provide as much information as they can, which is very helpful in terms of making a good match and identifying support priorities, while others tend to be rather brief.

In many instances, lack of information appears to be a result of information not being recorded by a relevant body. Occasionally providers are worried that it is a result of data protection concerns. However, the Data Protection Act does not prevent information sharing where this is 'reasonable and expected' in the interests of the individual concerned.

An additional concern raised was that current accommodation providers (or families) are not always forthcoming about a young person's background and the potential problems that might arise in placement, for fear that a service will not agree to find a placement for a young person.

These findings highlight the importance of good relationships with referrers, and the need to reassure them that they can have open and honest discussions regarding a young person's needs.

LEARNING POINT:

Providing feedback and guidance to referrers on the level of detail required at referral stage, and explaining the purpose of the requested information, may help strengthen information sharing and improve the quality of information provided.

Initial engagement between Barnardo's and a young person

Upon referral to Barnardo's, a project worker will discuss with a young person:

- what supported lodgings are, what they can expect from their placement, and the expectations of them
- whether a supported lodgings placement is the most suitable option available to them
- the areas they would like to improve on while in placement.

Overall, this initial assessment process appears to work well. Young people are very positive about their initial contact with Barnardo's, feeling that they were in control of deciding what areas to work on, that they were listened to, and that the focus of discussions was on understanding their needs and goals.

Reasons young people take up a placement

Overwhelmingly, the main reason care leavers give for deciding to take up a supported lodgings placement is having the opportunity to learn skills for independent living – such as how to cook and budget – which they tend to report limited experience of within their previous care placements.

Those involved in this study who accessed Barnardo's placements for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, mainly moved into supported lodgings in order to escape an unsatisfactory home environment. In some cases, young people were previously living in violent or controlling households, and it appears simply a product of chance that they have not come into the care system. In other cases, young people describe simply wanting to take a natural step towards independence, and getting funding through Supporting People (the government programme for housing support) to reside in a supported lodgings placement up until the age of 18, when they can sign their own tenancy agreement. One young person notes that she could not live at her family home while studying for an apprenticeship, because she would need a much higher paid job in order to offset the impact her income would have on the household's benefits.

What is evident, therefore, is that young people accessing Barnardo's supported lodgings services have a diverse range of needs and support requirements, with some young people experiencing significant social vulnerabilities and requiring much more support than others. That the providers involved in this study appear to have successfully supported young people across a continuum of needs, from 'low level' to 'high level' demonstrates Barnardo's ability to place young people with varying degrees of needs. It also emphasises the importance of ensuring Barnardo's continues to provide placements offering varied intensity of support for young people.

Matching, introductions, and moving in

Summary of key findings

Each young person needs to be assessed and matched on a case-by-case basis. Successful matching is heavily dependent upon a service having a range of providers in different household setups, with different expertise and experience, and varying levels of time and commitment. Successful matching is facilitated by skilled service staff having good knowledge of these aspects.

A young person's engagement with the service and their investment in the placement is integral to its success. The decision to take up a placement needs to be their own. Each young person must be encouraged to be involved in the decision-making processes right from the outset.

The main factor in the matching and moving in process is that it needs to move at the young person's pace. During the initial meeting with a provider, young people attach particular value to receiving a tour of the house, to see where they might be living. They also appreciate meeting all members of the household they might go on to live with.

Barnardo's procedures for facilitating discussions about ground rules between young people and providers are viewed as very thorough, covering all the crucial aspects of placements, which need to be clear from the outset. This process helps prevent problems occurring at a later date, and is vital in ensuring both parties do not unknowingly do things which annoy each other. By identifying arrangements for resolving any disagreements that might arise in the course of the placement, the process also reassures providers.

Agreeing ground rules involves negotiation and compromise. For young people, this process is very positive, allowing them to recognise that their views are respected, and to feel included in decisions about their living arrangements. Providers note that it is useful to identify some 'definite rules' and others that they are prepared to negotiate and compromise on. The negotiation process gives young people a degree of control, and helps to establish trust between parties early on. Ground rules should be reviewed at regular intervals throughout a placement, to ensure they remain appropriate and are adapted as necessary.

Matching young people and providers

Matching processes consider a young person's holistic needs, personal history, behaviour, demography, challenges, past experience, cultural needs, etc. The first step of the matching process is a Barnardo's project worker aiming to match these to a provider's skills, previous experience, and current situation.

For example, some services will look to match a care leaver with a provider who has a professional background in a fostering service, on the basis that they will be well informed on the rights of care leavers, and can therefore advocate on their behalf. Other factors such as a young person being close to their place of study or work, or wanting to live in a household with pets or other young people, are also taken into consideration, as far as possible.

In addition to being heavily dependent upon a service having a range of providers, appropriate matching is also facilitated by project workers having good knowledge of: specific accommodation set ups; the expertise and experience of individual providers; the varying amounts of time and commitment different providers can offer, and each individual provider's capacity to offer appropriate opportunities to an individual young person. However, matching can be more difficult for smaller services and those working near capacity, as the few vacancies available at any one time are not necessarily the ones required at the point of matching, making the process very difficult. However, it should also be noted that 'unmatched' placements can, of course, turn out successful too.

Providing information to young people and providers

Once a service has identified a possible match, providers and young people are given some basic background information about each other, and an initial meeting is arranged.

The amount of information young people are given about a potential provider varies. Some services offer young people written 'provider profiles' giving a little bit of information about a provider, their lifestyle, their home, and their routines (sometimes including photos of the provider). Where possible, a choice of providers might be given.

Prospective providers are also given some information about young people. In one of the four case study services, providers mention occasionally being given 'young people profiles' for which young people themselves have written a basic story about their life experiences.

These are highly valued, with new providers in particular finding it useful to have a young person's perception of themselves, against which to consider suitability of matching.

In the main, providers are satisfied with the amount of information they receive at the outset of a placement, which tends to be greater if more serious risks or concerns are identified. Indeed, many providers say they like to receive quite minimal information, and that they prefer to 'learn organically' about a young person's life, from the young person themselves, as their trust and relationship grows.

However, there can sometimes be gaps in the information provided at referral stage. While these are, in the main, attributed to the reasons outlined above, there have been a small number of instances where providers have felt Barnardo's has withheld information which has jeopardised provision of appropriate support to a young person, and in some cases, the safety of other household members. This highlights the importance of staff giving careful consideration to what information they share, so that providers can give appropriate support, while staff also need to explain to providers the extent of the information Barnardo's can share.

'A girl I've had with me...I knew she was coming with major drug issues. What I didn't know was that she'd been in supported accommodation previously and drug dealers had been turning up at the house demanding money, and I think at one point involving the son of the accommodation provider. I'm not saying I wouldn't have taken her had I known that, but I think I ought to have known that beforehand so I could have taken appropriate measures, because we're obviously very isolated here. I would have liked to have been privy to that information so I'd have been prepared for that eventuality.' - *Provider, Service B*

'I just feel that if they're going to be living with you, they're going to be speaking to you, they're going to maybe have certain behaviours, or certain issues that crop up, or certain triggers, and if you don't know them, how could you best support somebody? As a prime example, my very first placement, I was talking about going on a night out and I just thought I'll just be honest with this young person and say, "I'm going to have a drink so it's up to you if you want to stay elsewhere or if you're happy to [stay here]"...and he was like, "oh this sounds like what my mum used to do'.'
- *Provider, Service A*

‘They told me that [the young person’s] mother had an alcohol issue and that she died as a result of that. I was told that [the young person] was then placed in care. And it was as basic as that. I wasn’t aware of what [the young person’s] life had been like before, and it’s only because I’ve worked with alcoholics that I can only imagine what [the young person’s] life was like before, you know, if her mum was as ill as she was I would imagine the couple of years leading up to her passing would have been really difficult for [the young person]. And [the young person] told me some things...I didn’t know that [the young person] was there when [her mother] passed, for instance. So things like that...I would have liked more information.’

- *Provider, Service A*

Introducing young people and providers

The initial meeting between a young person and a provider usually takes place at the provider’s home. The meeting tends to comprise the young person, their leaving care worker/throughcare and aftercare worker, or social worker, the provider, and a Barnardo’s worker.

This four-way meeting can make the experience less daunting for young people, many of whom express a degree of anxiety about ‘going to live in someone else’s house’. Referrers/social workers can help a young person talk to a provider about what is going on in their life. This can put the young person more at ease and reassure them that the provider is someone they can trust and get along with.

At the initial meeting, discussions focus on household routines, ground rules (such as expectations about what time a young person will be home at night, staying out overnight, having visitors), agreed expectations of each party, a young person’s preferences, and practical arrangements. Where possible, a young person will meet all members of the household. Young people like being given the opportunity to meet the provider (and other household members) before they move in, and make particular mention of receiving a tour of the house, which allows them to see where they might live, and assess how they might feel living there.

A gradual move-in

Following the initial meeting, both parties are given time (usually 24 hours) to decide if they would like to proceed. In some cases this is followed by the young person going for dinner at the provider’s home on their own, an overnight stay, and/or a weekend stay.

These occasions provide further opportunities for both parties to decide whether they feel they can build a sustainable relationship. If this is positive, the placement commences.

In the unlikely event that a provider and young person do not want to proceed, Barnardo's will make alternative offers to a young person, provided alternatives are available.

Barnardo's allows as much time as possible for the process of matching and moving in. However, in emergency situations, tight timescales may mean that the extended process for matching is not feasible. There are also situations in which a limited number of providers are available, and so placement must be determined by availability as opposed to suitability of location, personalities, interests, or expertise of providers.

The main factor in the matching and moving in process is that it needs to move at the young person's pace. For some young people this needs to be very gradual, whereas for others it can be speeded up.

Placement agreements and ground rules

Once a young person and provider agree a move in, a placement agreement (the legal agreement granting the young person permission to occupy the property) is signed, and ground rules (about how the provider, any other members of their household, and the young person have agreed to live together in the property) are agreed. Together, these documents set out the commitments of the provider and the young person, to help ensure that placements are a safe and positive experience for both parties.

A placement agreement sets out the fundamental and non-negotiable obligations of a placement. It affords a young person permission to occupy the property as long as they adhere to certain stipulations, for example staying at the accommodation a minimum number of nights each week, paying the required contribution, not wilfully damaging a provider's property or belongings, and not harming or excessively troubling other members of the household, visitors, or neighbours. The placement agreement also details the main obligations of a provider, for example detailing which rooms and facilities a young person can use, and in which parts of the house they can expect to have their own privacy. The agreement also establishes a provider's responsibility to ensure their accommodation remains a safe environment for a young person to live in. Placement agreement documentation is consistent for placements within a service, but not between different Barnardo's services.

Ground rules are flexible, are negotiated for individual placements, and evolve as placements progress. Ground rules tend to be linked to the

placement agreement in that adherence to them – by both parties – is expressed as a condition of the placement agreement. Repeated breaches of ground rules can therefore result in termination of a placement agreement, and a young person being required to leave their placement.

The process of ensuring both parties understand and agree to the placement agreement and ground rules is facilitated by Barnardo's project workers. The procedure is thorough, covering crucial aspects of placements which need to be clear from the outset. This helps prevent problems occurring at a later date. The process is also vital in ensuring providers and young people don't do things to annoy each other without realising. By identifying arrangements for resolving any difficulties or disagreements that might arise in the course of the placement, the process also reassures providers.

Agreeing ground rules involves negotiation and compromise. Providers and service staff report that, for young people, this process is very positive. The negotiation process also establishes trust between providers and young people early on.

Provider 'top tip'

In agreeing ground rules, identify some 'definite rules' and others which can be negotiated and compromised on. This allows young people to recognise that their views are respected, and to feel included in decisions about their living arrangements.

It is important for rules to be reviewed at regular intervals throughout a placement, to ensure they remain appropriate. In many cases, providers note that rules can be adapted when they feel a young person is ready for more autonomy.

Engaging young people in decision-making processes

Each young person must be encouraged to be involved in the decision-making process right from the beginning of a placement. Indeed, all the young people in this study feel they were involved in decision-making from the outset. Specifically, all feel they were given the opportunity to ask questions, that they made their own decision to take up their placement, and that they could have said 'no' to a placement at any point. Providers and service staff stress the importance of a young person's investment in this process, noting that, in order for a placement to be successful, a young person has to make their own decision to take it up.



Provider training

Summary of key findings

On the whole, providers are satisfied with training opportunities and feel they are equipped to respond to young people's needs. Areas where providers feel additional training would be useful are: awareness of attachment/child development; drugs, new psychoactive substances ('legal highs'), and alcohol awareness; online safety, and understanding and dealing with challenging behaviour.

Critical aspects of guidance/information that Barnardo's should ensure are given to all providers working with care leavers include: understanding of the care system; understanding of support available to young people leaving care, and other services available to young people – in particular, emotional support services.

The decision to take up training opportunities very much depends on an individual provider's interests and availability, and many say they struggle to attend training due to other commitments. However, providers are keen to have face-to-face training whenever possible, valuing the opportunity to talk to other providers about their experiences. A solution might be to offer blended (online and face-to-face) learning. Barnardo's subscription to Research in Practice offers another solution.

All of Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore possibilities for linking up with training offered by other Barnardo's services (e.g. fostering services, where some of the relevant issues are very similar to those experienced by supported lodgings providers).

Decision-making scenarios are particularly effective in helping providers feel prepared for situations that might arise in placements. Such scenarios also allow service staff to judge whether someone is suited to the provider role, and to identify any skills or knowledge they might need to develop or acquire in order to be effective.

Many of Barnardo's providers have relevant professional experience, which services should consider drawing on as a resource for providing peer training.

While providers generally feel sufficiently skilled for the role they are required to perform, investing in providers and making them feel valued is also crucial for their commitment and retention. Up-skilling providers is also essential to being able to offer placements to more vulnerable young people.

Formal training opportunities

Services appear to be very resourceful and creative about providing training and development opportunities to providers. Most Barnardo's services offer providers a course of generic **mandatory training** upon approval as a provider. This includes Barnardo's safeguarding, equality and diversity, and health and safety training. Additionally, services may also run one to two-day **introductory training** sessions covering issues such as: why children are in care; reasons for homelessness; how to support young people to develop independent living skills; care leavers' needs in comparison to providers' children; what it is like to have young people in the house; attachment issues, and different scenarios that might occur during placement. Once a provider is approved, training tends to be offered on an *ad hoc* basis, for instance, when an issue arises in placement or when a specific training need is identified during supervision or review sessions.

Topics services have covered in ad hoc training sessions have included: self-harm; eating disorders; substance misuse; autism; sexual exploitation, and emotional intelligence.

In addition to formal training, there are some elements of guidance/information that providers consider particularly helpful in supporting care leavers, in terms of gaining a broad understanding of what a young person might have experienced in a care setting. These include:

- **Understanding of the care system** – the different types of care young people come from (e.g. foster, kinship, residential, etc.).
- **Understanding of support available to young people leaving care** – specifically the role of personal advisors, pathway planners, and throughcare and aftercare workers, and what kind of support young people will be receiving from these workers.
- **Other services available to young people** – specifically, providers are interested in services which might provide young people with emotional support.

LEARNING POINT: Additional training topics, which providers feel should be mandatory for all providers, include:

- awareness of attachment/child development
- drugs, new psychoactive substances (NPS) and alcohol awareness
- understanding and dealing with challenging behaviour.

Identifying training needs

Barnardo's supported lodgings services offer many opportunities for identifying providers' training needs – for example, through one-to-one supervisions, annual reviews, provider forums, and through informal discussions between service staff and providers. Providers feel that Barnardo's implements specific training on new developments as they arise, and that if a provider identifies an unmet training need, for example by picking up on an issue they are unfamiliar with during a placement (e.g. self-harm), then Barnardo's services are usually able to arrange something. All providers involved in this research feel they can ask if they need to know more about a particular issue.

Training methods

Whether training is facilitated by internal or external sources depends primarily on budgets, demand, and whether the topic is an area of Barnardo's expertise. Where a topic is not within Barnardo's proficiency, an external expert will be sought. Some services try to offer opportunities for providers to attend training run by local authorities, fostering teams, or other third sector organisations. However, the decision to take up these opportunities very much depends on an individual provider's interests and availability.

Services might also run their own informal training evenings, sometimes as part of a provider support group. This may involve an external speaker coming to talk about an issue, or a project worker designing their own training on an issue. In some cases providers may just be signposted to some resources to do their own reading around an issue.

Many of Barnardo's providers have relevant professional experience, for example in fostering, drug misuse, or housing agencies.

LEARNING POINT:

Services should consider drawing on providers as a resource for providing peer training.

Providers report decision-making scenarios as being particularly effective in helping them prepare for situations that might arise in placements, encouraging them to imagine the choices and consequences they might face.

Such scenarios allow service staff to identify qualities of potential providers, and to assess how they might deal with a specific situation and how they might arrive at conclusions. The approach also provides opportunity to judge whether they are suitable for the role, and to identify any skills they need to develop or any knowledge they need to acquire in order to be effective.

Accessing training

The most common reason providers give for not being able to access training is lack of availability due to other commitments. Distance required to travel to access training poses a particular problem for providers in more remote and rural areas. Lack of available training opportunities is not seen as an issue.

A solution to these obstacles might be to change the method of training used, from more traditional face-to-face approaches to online learning courses. However, providers are keen to receive face-to-face training whenever possible; not only do they feel they are more likely to engage with topics, but they value the opportunity to talk to other providers about their experiences. There is a view that learning how other providers manage challenges can reinforce confidence to deal with an issue should it arise in placement.

Another solution could be to give providers logins to Research in Practice, a service Barnardo's has recently subscribed to, which provides literature, online courses and tutorials on subjects such as attachment and behaviour disorders. This would allow providers access to topics they would like further information on, from their own home, at a time suitable to them.

Barnardo's needs to strike a careful balance between offering sufficient training, and placing demands on providers' time. It is important that services seek ongoing feedback from providers, to be clear on what training they require, and their preferred ways of receiving it.

Providers and service staff comment that there is always a core of attendees at training sessions, and that the challenge lies in encouraging providers who would not normally attend. Providers note that on many occasions training sessions are arranged but turn-out is very low. This highlights the importance of ensuring that delivery is as flexible as possible.

Barnardo's is currently in the process of pooling and sharing training resources, in order to put together core training for providers to ensure best practice in supported lodgings.

LEARNING POINT:

All of Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore opportunities for linking up with training offered by other Barnardo's services (e.g. fostering services, where some of the relevant issues are very similar to those providers experience).

Quality of training

Overall, providers view training opportunities very positively. Training is generally seen as being relevant, up-to-date, and well-delivered. Criticisms – made by only a small number of providers – include overreliance on PowerPoint presentations, and topics not being covered in sufficient depth. The issue of insufficient depth is more commonly raised by providers with professional backgrounds in the topics covered. Providers newer to the role are less likely to identify this as an issue.

Gaps in training

The most prominent ‘gap’ in training concerns **new psychoactive substances** (NPSs or ‘legal highs’). Providers tend to be unfamiliar with the topic, and want to be mindful of effects of use, what they should look out for, and the NPSs available to young people. Another priority is **online safety**, and more specifically **safe use of social media**. Again, this is an area providers tend to feel less familiar with.

While most providers who took part in this research feel that current training is sufficient, it would be valuable for Barnardo’s to review the training provision offered by the new specialist services, where placements may be more challenging. It is also important to keep in mind that investing in providers and making them feel valued is crucial for their commitment and retention.

Involvement of young people in provider training

While none of the interviewees in this research mention young people being involved in training processes, some of Barnardo’s supported lodgings services do involve young people in provider training.

Because of the experiential nature of their knowledge, young people’s views and contributions can help to bring about a more complete understanding of their experiences, which can lead to improvements in service provision. Involvement also offers young people a valuable opportunity to develop new and transferable skills.

LEARNING POINT:

It is important that all of Barnardo’s supported lodgings services, wherever possible, seek to involve service users – or ex-service users – in provider training, and consider the ways in which they can be involved at the various stages from development through to delivery of training.

Provider support

Summary of key findings

The support available to providers within office hours is considered 'exceptional'. Providers are very positive about their relationships with their Barnardo's workers, viewing them as having extensive knowledge and skills for working with young people, and supporting providers in their roles.

The consistency of support that providers receive from their Barnardo's worker is important, as it allows them to feel that they are working in partnership with someone who knows them and the progression of each individual placement.

Regular, planned supervisions are vital to providers, affording opportunities to plan proactive support, ensuring that any issues are 'nipped in the bud', and allowing them to feel that they are supporting a young person in true partnership with the expertise of Barnardo's. Services should ensure supervision meetings happen regularly. Sustaining these throughout longer-term placements is critical to continual positive development.

Out-of-hours support provided in-house by Barnardo's is highly rated by providers. Local authority Emergency Duty Teams (EDTs), on the other hand, are primarily viewed as a reporting mechanism, and providers are doubtful as to whether EDTs could provide adequate support in an emergency.

Barnardo's should explore options for peer support among providers, to help them develop peer support networks. There are different options, and the most appropriate will depend upon local circumstance and desires of providers.

Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore respite/time out arrangements for providers. Respite – or more regular respite – for providers may help support placements and prevent breakdowns. It may also help services to offer placements for particularly challenging young people.

Barnardo's support systems for providers vary between services, but include:

- a named contact/support worker
- supervision meetings and visits
- out-of-hours support
- annual reviews
- peer support mechanisms/experience-sharing events
- arrangements for respite/time out.

A named contact/support worker

Providers have a named contact (support/project worker) at their service, who is available within office hours. Providers speak very positively about their relationships with their workers, viewing them as having extensive knowledge and all the required skills, and considering the support available to be 'exceptional'.

The consistency of support that providers receive from Barnardo's is an important aspect. Many providers have had the same support worker throughout their engagement with Barnardo's, right from their initial assessment. Providers value this consistency, and it results in them feeling that they are working in partnership with someone who knows them and has an understanding of the placement and how it is progressing.

When providers contact Barnardo's with a problem or concern, they are always able to speak to someone who can provide expert advice and reassurance in a timely manner.

In the main, providers have confidence that service staff are 'right behind them', both in terms of pro-active, ongoing support and advice, and with emergency back-up if required. Service staff frequently go 'above and beyond', with some providers reporting the reassurance they feel from having their support worker's mobile number, which could be used in an out-of-hours emergency.

'[I get support] as much as I want it, so if I really wanted to see my support worker, I'd ring him up and he would be there very quickly. It started off quite frequently, maybe two or three times a week at the beginning, or maybe even more, and phone calls, and it's tailed down so now it's probably once every three weeks, once every month, face-to-face. But discussions, whenever I want them, there's always someone on the phone. I find it really helpful, I find it not

too much and not too little. I have no complaints there in any shape or form...I find if I speak to my support worker and say I'm not sure if I've dealt with something right, I can discuss it, and I feel that I'm getting advice back from a real expert in the field.' - *Provider, Service A*

'Fantastic support. So I really mean that they are good at that. So, I know my worker is at the end of the phone, or like email which I actually quite like, just a quick email.' - *Provider, Service A*

'Working with Barnardo's is great. You're always well supported. You're always riding pillion, the staff are always there for you, with you.' - *Provider, Service D*

While the primary focus of a supported lodgings placement is on ensuring young people develop independent living skills, Barnardo's role is primarily to support providers, so they in turn can support young people. However, a small number of service staff and providers feel that young people in placements may receive less assistance from their social workers, as they are deemed to be less at risk, and that there may be an assumption that Barnardo's will pick up some of the work with the young person.

In some of Barnardo's services, a young person and a provider are allocated the same support worker, while in other services the young person and provider have different support workers. Services where a young person and a provider have the same support worker should have procedures in place for bringing in separate support if any conflict arises.

Supervision meetings and visits

Frequency of planned supervisions varies between services, and between individual placements, with meetings being increased or decreased as required.

In the first weeks of placement, there tend to be weekly face-to-face supervisions between Barnardo's and providers, supplemented by daily telephone calls. This eases off as a young person settles into placement, with supervisions reduced to every 4-8 weeks, plus quarterly or bi-annual placement review meetings involving the whole team, and weekly or fortnightly telephone calls.

Supervision meetings and visits are of vital importance to providers, affording opportunities to plan proactive support, and ensuring that

any issues are ‘nipped in the bud’. Such contact reassures providers, and allows them to feel that they are supporting a young person in true partnership with the expertise of Barnardo’s. Supervisions allow providers to feel that they always have the back-up of professional staff who are up-to-speed with in-placement issues.

Some providers report that supervision meetings do not happen as frequently as they are meant to. Allowing supervisions to slip can result in reactive, rather than proactive support, which providers feel can hamper their ability to deal with issues and focus on developing life skills.

Providers mention that insufficient supervision tends to happen in longer-term placements where ‘things are seen as going well’, so service staff let the placement proceed on the understanding that a provider will get in touch if there are any problems. However, there are examples of placements progressing well, but then encountering problems. Reflecting on these cases, providers feel a lack of meetings contributed.

[It’s important to have regular supervisions, even when things seem to be going well]...things move at such a fast pace with these young people. As I said to my supervisor the other day, it’s like Jeremy Kyle and a soap opera all rolled up into one and speeded up double time.’

- *Provider, Service B*

Providers emphasise the importance of continually reassessing the needs, activities and goals of placements, in order to encourage continual positive development.

It is important that services ensure supervision meetings happen regularly. It may be worthwhile for support workers to schedule the next meeting with a provider at the current meeting, to ensure there is a date in the diary.

Out-of-hours support

Generally, if issues arise out-of-hours, providers feel they can deal with the problem themselves and wait until service staff are available the following day/ after a weekend for any additional support or reassurance they might need.

In some Barnardo’s services, out-of-hours support is officially provided by the local authority Emergency Duty Team. In other services, out-of-hours support is provided by Barnardo’s as part of the leaving care service provided for the local authority. These different set-ups result in contrasting views of the out-of-hours support available.

Providers who have accessed Barnardo's in-house out-of-hours service speak very highly of the support given. As with the support provided within working hours, staff are available, knowledgeable, and often have some knowledge of the history of a placement, along with an awareness of how it is progressing.

'On Call I've used and I find that they're really supportive, they know the young people. So even if I've not met them or they've maybe not met my young person, they seem to have a background of very roughly what's been going on, and even fairly up to date information, so when you're phoning they go "oh right, yeah I know about this" and are able to support you.' - *Provider, Service A*

'[Out-of-hours is] really helpful, just to check that you're acting appropriately and you're doing the right things. [I phoned out-of-hours and] it was really good not to do that kneejerk reaction...If I hadn't been able to get through, I don't think I would have been able to be so calm and sit and talk through all the options and make a proper decision about what to do, because you kind of just think I've got to make sure that girl's safe, what is really going on? And I don't know if that story is true and you think well let's just get the girl safe and then work it out, but this way we were able to properly talk...So we got it sorted, and you knew as well that the right authorities knew what was going on, so there was nobody left vulnerable, so that was really helpful.'

- *Provider, Service A*

Emergency Duty Teams, on the other hand, are not primarily viewed as a support mechanism, but rather as a reporting mechanism which providers will contact if a young person goes missing from placement out-of-hours.

In general when a provider contacts the Emergency Duty Team an operator will take the details and inform the provider to report the missing young person to the police. Providers do not feel confident that Emergency Duty Teams would be able to assist, reassure or advise in emergency situations.

'All [EDT] are interested in is, you know, give us a police number and thank you for telling us kind of thing. There's no interest or support.'

- *Provider, Service B*

Annual reviews

Barnardo's undertakes annual reviews with providers. These include health and safety checks of the home, and a review of ongoing support and training needs. Providers value annual reviews as a means to reflect on progress over the previous year.

Peer support mechanisms

Some of Barnardo's services facilitate peer support mechanisms offering practical, emotional and social support to providers. Providers' views on peer support are mixed. On the whole, however, providers think peer support is a useful option to have in case they need it. The opportunity to make contact with other providers, to discuss issues and receive informal support can also help with retention of providers.

Despite feeling that Barnardo's staff provide a good knowledgeable support mechanism, there is a view that sharing experiences and practice with other providers offers another dimension to this – of course, having a young person living in your home presents very different challenges to working with a young person in a service setting. Peer support can reassure providers that others are 'in the same boat'.

'The other good thing about the forum is when you're having discussions with other [providers] about how they're doing, and you discuss what they've done, you learn a lot from them, when they have different sorts of problems that you've not had yet, so it's quite interesting to see how they've done it.' - *Provider, Service A*

One of the services involved in this study co-ordinates a forum for providers. In addition to being involved in discussions about service design, and sometimes bringing in external speakers, this forum offers opportunity for providers to get together. In other services, these opportunities tend to be limited to brief catch ups at training sessions.

There are mixed views on the provider forum. Attendance is expected, but some providers feel they have no need to go, while others find it tricky to fit around their work commitments. While some providers feel they have benefited from the informal peer support available at the provider forum, others report less positive experiences, comparing the discussions between providers to a bereavement support group.

A few providers observe that they come away depressed, rather than feeling they have learned from or been supported by other providers. Additionally, providers and service staff alike explain that there will always be a core of attendees at organised support sessions, and that the challenge lies in encouraging providers who wouldn't normally attend.

Informal buddy systems have developed at some services, with providers making friends with each other during training sessions, and exchanging telephone numbers. Some providers have called each other for advice or support. This is felt to be more useful than group sessions, as it negates the requirement for all providers to be available at the same time, and provides an option for support outside working hours. One provider notes how valuable this was when they were struggling with a challenging episode over the festive period when service staff were unavailable.

'I had a series of issues over the Christmas period and of course, at that time – it's no criticism on the service – the only people I could contact were the Emergency Duty Team, who were really disinterested. I phoned another provider who I knew had been a provider for many years, and she was amazingly helpful, just talking through things, and she'd been in that situation many times before and she was very reassuring and very supportive' - *Provider, Service B*

A buddy system is seen to be particularly good for new providers, who can gain valuable advice and reassurance from experienced providers.

A couple of providers report having arranged – or tried to arrange – informal social meet-ups for providers. These have been somewhat unsuccessful, as they were arranged at short notice, and again relied on providers being available at the same time.

Providers and service staff alike agree that providers need some help from services to get peer support mechanisms established. There are different options services could explore, and the most appropriate will depend upon local circumstance and the desires of providers.

Arrangements for respite/time out

Some of Barnardo's supported lodgings services can offer respite care for providers. Providers and service staff feel that respite – or more regular respite – would help support placements and prevent breakdowns. Service staff also felt greater availability of respite would help them to offer placements for more vulnerable young people.

While providers can take time out between placements if they wish, they do not tend to receive a retainer payment or income over this period.

Although providers view the role as demanding, only one provider mentioned the lack of holiday allowance. Barnardo's knows from research within our fostering services that foster carers who experience challenging placements value short break provision, saying that it allows them to 'recharge their batteries', and that they feel it helps prevent placement breakdowns.

LEARNING POINT:

Barnardo's supported lodgings services should explore respite/time out arrangements for providers.

This is particularly pertinent for the new specialist services, where placements may be more demanding on providers.

Outcomes young people experience

Summary of key findings

Young people benefit from supported lodgings placements in different ways and to various extents depending on their individual needs. While some young people need very little support, others require relatively high levels.

The ability of Barnardo's supported lodgings services to address varying levels of need highlights both the flexibility of services – which is a key strength of Barnardo's provision – and also the importance of having a range of providers with different skills, experiences, and time commitments.

The approach to sequenced support, which prioritises stability, readiness to change, and a focus on immediate needs, before progressing to longer term outcomes, is made possible by providers and practitioners working together as a team, treating young people as individuals with various strengths, needs, and aspirations.

The way the young people in our study talk about their changed perceptions of themselves and outlooks on their lives serves to demonstrate the important role of supported lodgings.

Many young people cite practical outcomes: improved cooking and food shopping skills, or improved money management skills. A number of young people have also experienced improved emotional skills, specifically in terms of improved confidence and self-worth, self-determination, increased awareness of their own strengths/weaknesses, and belief in their own ability to succeed. Placements help young people develop greater resilience, and in many cases they feel more in control of their behaviour and emotions.

Emotional benefits arise primarily from living in a safe and stable environment, and having someone to talk to, someone who believes in them, and someone who encourages them. Young people have someone there to support them when they face challenges or make mistakes, helping them to relax, to open up, and to learn and share experiences in the company of positive role models who they can relate to.



Table 1 provides an overview of the types of outcomes young people achieve. The remainder of this section then focuses on how these are achieved.

Providers feel that all young people who have stayed in a supported lodgings placement – even for a very short length of time – have benefited from it in some way. Indeed, all the young people involved in this study are also of the view that they have benefited from their placement. However, the ways in which they have benefited, and the extent of these benefits, varies.

While the benefits of the various aspects of supported lodgings placements are discussed separately, it is important to bear in mind that they are all interlinked, and their combined influence is greater than the sum of individual benefits.

Practical outcomes

Overwhelmingly, the main reason care leavers give for taking up a supported lodgings placement is the opportunity to learn independent living skills. Many have little or no previous experience of skills such as food shopping, cooking, cleaning, or budgeting. Their ultimate aim is to learn and increase their confidence in such skills, in order to move on to a place of their own, and be able to maintain it.

Young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, are more inclined to view their placement as providing ‘a roof over their head’ while they plan their next steps. In contrast to care leavers, ‘homeless’ young people tend to have more experience of some of the skills required for independent living, before coming into placement. However, all report having enhanced existing skills, or learned new skills as a result of their placement.

Household skills

Learning ‘household skills’ such as cooking, food shopping, money management and cleaning are key to successful independent living, and thus a key focus of a supported lodgings placement.

All young people involved in this research felt that their placement had enhanced their ‘household skills’.

Food knowledge and cooking skills

Supported lodgings placements can improve young people’s knowledge and attitudes around food and cooking. Providers describe a range of activities and approaches to encourage young people to learn or develop their knowledge and skills. Providers recount helping young people to:

Table 1: Benefits young people in Barnardo’s supported lodgings services experience

Practical - Develop practical life skills needed to manage lives and live independently
Food shopping
Cooking
Cleaning
Laundry
Money management
Gatekeeping skills
Understanding of housing options, tenancy rights and obligations
Emotional - Develop emotional skills needed to manage lives and live independently
Improved emotional wellbeing
Improvement in confidence
Improved feelings of self-worth/self-esteem/perception of self/self-confidence
More in control of behaviour and emotions/improved behaviour
Greater resilience/self-reliance (capacity to cope successfully with everyday challenges)
Feeling happier
Feeling less stressed
Improved social skills, leading to a better understanding of/improved (interpersonal) relationships
Improved self-determination – awareness of own strengths/weaknesses, belief in own ability to succeed, ability to set goals and make choices
Improved self-advocacy/increased assertiveness
Able to make more informed (independent) decisions – making the ‘right’ choices – ability to solve own problems and make decisions
Improved communication skills – ability to express ideas and feelings
Improved physical and mental health
Reduced drug and alcohol use
Reconnection with family
Improved informal support network – having someone they can trust, who cares and listens, and takes an interest in their life, who can support them as they move to independence, and allows them to make their way in the world feeling cared for
Employment and educational outcomes
Better educational engagement and achievement
Gain encouragement to develop a good career
Developing ambitions/raised hopes and aspirations for future career path
Support to source/access volunteering opportunities/work placements/employment through provider networks
Other
Improved housing situation – in safe and secure accommodation
Learn parenting tips/skills

- plan and prepare meals
- cook from scratch
- make shopping lists
- improve nutritional knowledge, e.g. to understand the nutritional value of foods by reading food labels
- understand health and safety and food hygiene
- understand healthy eating, healthier options, and affordable healthy options
- generate interest in new foods.

Some providers have sourced information booklets, or recipe booklets, for young people. Others have shared discussions about the nutritional aspects of a particular recipe, price comparisons between bought and homemade meals (explaining that pre-packed food is usually more expensive), and the sugar content of processed foods or menu options. They have talked about how to cook and eat well on a budget, shopping behaviours (comparing price per millilitre, rather than the price of two different items per se), the different retailers from which products can be purchased, and knowing where to go for best value on individual items.

Providers often report having more difficulty engaging young people with cooking. This is seen to be because young people tend to view eating as something that 'has to be done', and prefer to spend their time doing other things like 'hanging out' with friends. They thus allegedly spend as little time as possible preparing meals, complacently settling for something not considered nutritious.

‘They can’t be bothered...She would happily just pour water in a Pot Noodle.’ - *Provider, Service D*

‘I mean he’s good at cooking so it’s one of these sort of scenarios where I keep thinking building up these skills are important. But it wasn’t that he didn’t have them, it was that he chose not to use them really.’ - *Provider, Service A*

Nonetheless, providers try to encourage young people to take at least some role in making meals, in the hope that they will learn skills and gain confidence in this area.

Young people feel they have learned cooking skills, and provide examples of their improved nutritional knowledge and attitudes to food and cooking, even if they have not necessarily changed their behaviour to demonstrate this on a daily basis. Indeed, while in placement, young people know they can rely on someone ensuring that they eat a cooked meal each day. When they move on, it may be the first experience they have of being self-sufficient in preparing meals for themselves.

[My provider] taught me cooking properly, in a real world situation I wouldn't have a cat in hell's chance of cooking – but now I know how to cook, I'm a very good cook when it comes to it, if I want to cook something, I will cook it.'
- *Young person, Service B*

'We've done some cooking. I didn't really know how to cook before I came here. So I've learned how to cook since I've come here. I've tried a lot of new food as well...If I was on my own I could cook a nice meal.' - *Young person, Service B*

Given that the vast majority of interviews with young people took place while they were still in placement, it is not possible to say for certain how they manage with cooking their own meals once they move on. However, both young people and providers tend to feel there is certainly the potential for this to happen. Some young people have obviously learned cooking skills, even if cooking is not something they particularly engage with in placement. Indeed, it does appear that providers are succeeding – the two interviewees who had moved on from their placements described how they had translated the meal preparation skills that they had learned into positive behaviour changes after moving on.

With young people's reluctance to engage in mind, it is perhaps more important that providers focus on ensuring young people have the capacity to prepare a healthy meal on a budget, than it is for them to insist young people actually do so in placement.

'Yes, they all watch and they all try, you know they've always watched how I cook or what I do. And you know, they'll sit in the kitchen, and they'll [chat] away, "What are you doing?", "Why are you doing this?" They've always been interested in that, they just don't actually like the physical bit of cooking. They'll sit and do the vegetables or whatever, no problem.' - *Provider, Service D*

‘Yeah definitely, when I have to do that I can [prepare a meal for myself], when I’ve got someone who’s there I tend to get a little bit lazy to be honest!’ - *Young person, Service D*

‘They can cook for themselves, it’s entirely up to them but normally they say “will you cook?”’ - *Provider, Service D*

‘They’d just heat up sausages...he hasn’t been doing lots of his cooking from scratch, which I know he can do!’
- *Provider, Service A*

An area of confusion among providers is the best approach to adopt with meal preparation as a young person nears moving-on. Some providers are of the view that they should continue providing full support to a young person right up until they move out, whereas others feel they should be tailing off support, encouraging young people to become more self-sufficient in preparation for life after their placement.

In addition to the value gained from learning to prepare meals for themselves, providers have observed young people taking a lot of enjoyment from seeing what they can achieve – an outcome which is likely to also contribute to increased self-esteem.

One service involved in this study had organised a six-week course with volunteers coming in to the service to teach young people about different food groups, preparing meals on a budget, etc. The feedback from young people was very positive, and many young people described having increased nutritional knowledge as a result of their attendance.

It may prove worthwhile for Barnardo’s supported lodgings services to explore possibilities to arrange additional support with cooking skills/food knowledge through other Barnardo’s services, or from other agencies.

Changes in eating habits

A number of young people report positive changes in their eating habits, describing how they have started eating more nutritious foods, or mentioning consuming a wider range of foods than they had previously.

Of course, eating more healthily might also improve the psycho-social health and well-being of young people, at the same time as improving practical skills for independence.

Provider ‘top tips’

- Engage young people in cooking with dishes such as soups and curries, to demonstrate the ease with which these dishes can be prepared.
- To make the learning of food skills less abstract and more practical and ‘real’, link learning of cooking skills in with other activities such as: budgeting/the costs of purchasing the ingredients, washing the dishes, tidying up after cooking, bulk buying, using a shopping list, supermarket deals, and other practical tips.

In one of the services involved in this study, in contrast to the other three services, young people are required to buy and cook their own food. This is designed to encourage young people to be more self-reliant. Providers can find this challenging as they cannot sit down to eat with their family and not ensure that the young person has something. They find it difficult not to give food to a young person who has none, or is not eating nutritiously. Often, providers resort to sharing the food shopping and cooking with young people, feeling that this arrangement is a more appropriate balance between encouraging self-reliance and ensuring a young person feels part of the household.

‘From the beginning, [my support worker] has always said to me, although she’s here she won’t be eating, and I said ‘I can’t make a meal and sit down with [my daughter] to dinner and not put a plate out for [young person].’ I can’t, so the way we organise it is that I’ll cook dinner, in all honesty, about 4 nights, 5 nights a week, and the girls will take a night each; they’ll buy the ingredients and they’ll cook it.’ - *Provider, Service A*

Money management skills

Service staff and providers work together to encourage young people to improve their money management skills, such as budgeting, saving, and getting value for money. On the whole, young people report having learned things about money management. Which messages have particularly resonated vary between young people. For some, the idea of a shopping list or budget sheet was something they had not previously considered.

Many have taken on board money saving tips such as buying in bulk, using a shopping list, and not buying ‘treats’ for themselves every time they are in a shop. Some have started to save money (often with a view to using it to buy items required for moving into their own place), while a few have described a fundamental shift in their approach to budgeting.

Young people’s financial contribution to their placement

One way in which Barnardo’s supported lodgings services encourage young people to improve their money management skills is by requiring them to pay a small sum of money directly to their provider. This amount is to help cover the costs of non-support services which are not included in rent payments.

The contribution is usually funded by a young person’s wages (if they are in employment), jobseekers allowance, or housing benefit. In some cases, weekly payments are reduced if a young person is undertaking an apprenticeship and requires their income for travel expenses.

Young people and providers tend to view this arrangement as a useful exercise in money management. Despite reflecting on how unrealistic the small sum would be for a young person to pay in their own accommodation, providers generally understand it as a useful way of encouraging young people to start taking responsibility, and view it as helping to improve financial capabilities. Many report that this is the first experience the young people have of making a regular payment.

However, there are instances of providers not strictly enforcing this arrangement. They are not reliant on the money themselves, and do not like to take the money from a young person, or do not see the value in insisting young people pay it.

Some providers who do not like taking this money from young people have set up a process by which they take the money from young people as instructed, put it away as savings, and give it back to the young person when they are preparing to move on from their placement, in order for them to buy items for their new home. Some providers note that they are unsure about whether they should be doing this.

With these findings in mind, the importance of the young person’s financial contribution should be impressed upon all providers, and Barnardo’s should clarify with providers what they can and cannot do with the young people’s contribution.

Emotional development

In addition to the practical life skills young people learn in supported lodgings placements, the placements contribute to a range of emotional and developmental outcomes (see table 1).

These benefits arise primarily from young people having someone to talk to, someone who believes in them, someone who encourages them, and someone who is there for them when they face challenges or make mistakes. This helps young people to relax, open up, learn, and share experiences in the company of positive role models who they can relate to.

Young people welcome the challenge of living more independently and gaining more control over their lives. Care leavers often contrast this with the institutionalised environment and restrictions imposed on them while living in care.

The supported lodgings environment contributes to enhancement of young people's confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem, with both young people and providers mentioning this as a factor in making young people more grown-up and self-reliant.

Increased confidence

Almost all young people report feeling more confident than they did pre-placement. This comprises both general self-confidence, and confidence in relation to specific aspects of their lives, including:

- confidence in day-to-day tasks such as using public transport
- confidence about achieving educationally
- confidence in meeting other people
- confidence to talk in a group setting
- confidence to speak up for themselves and be more assertive.

Overwhelmingly, young people and providers attribute this to the safe, secure and friendly environment offered in a supported lodgings placement. Young people specifically mention having 'someone to turn to' or 'someone who understands'. Feeling secure and cared for, and having consistency and structure to their days, affords a young person the opportunity to 'come out their shell'. Indeed, providers note that young people often become less anxious as a placement progresses, and that, over time, they generally require less support.

'I'm more confident with meeting new people. College tutors or whatever. Just from sort of coming here, moving in, and then getting on with them really well. It boosts your confidence up about speaking to other people or whatever.'
- *Young person, Service B*

'I'm starting to get my confidence back. Because like I'll get the bus on my own, it's only like a ten minute bus ride down the road, but it's just, the main thing is like going on a bus on a long journey on my own, I haven't got the confidence to do that yet.'
- *Young person, Service B*

'I'm like more confident in like saying my own opinion and like trying different things.'
- *Young person, Service B*

'Before I came here I used to just bottle things in and not talk to anybody, I was this quiet person, but basically since I've come here I've come out myself more, because I can talk to [my provider] and she understands me.'
- *Young person, Service B*

'She's still quite a shy girl, but at the beginning she would come in and we would be dragging conversation from her, you know, it was really difficult. For her it was really difficult...So when I think of her when she was first here, she would go out and she would maybe come home and she would go "hi" and we would have to do the conversation. Whereas last night, she came hurtling in the door, put herself down here and said "oh, I've been stupid again..." so she was chatting away.'
- *Provider, Service A*

'The young person we had who had been in a couple of foster homes, he misbehaved, so he'd been moved on. I think he appreciated the stability that we gave him. Because even though he did play up as well, we always said to him, "we're not going to throw you out, whatever you do, we won't throw you out because you've been here and you need some stability", and I think he appreciated that and it gave him some confidence, and subsequently his behaviour got better.'
- *Provider, Service B*

One provider notes that the rules on physical boundaries might have to be broken in order to provide emotionally for young people:

‘The time that [young person] came in here, when she had been to a house with these two young girls that she thought had been her friends. They stole her money, her perfume, they threatened her, she was all scratched...You know, they’d actually physically harmed her. When she came through that door she just ran at me and put her arms out...I wasn’t going to push her away. These kind of rules are silly, it’s nonsense, I understand why they’re there, but if I’d said “oh, you know, we can’t cuddle, you know, I do feel for you, but”, you know, I think you’re just making that person just feel really different...I couldn’t have done that job as well if I hadn’t been there emotionally for her.’ - *Provider, Service A*

Feelings of self-worth/improved self-esteem

Placements help foster feelings of self-worth/self-esteem in young people. Sometimes the benefits are realised through particular techniques and strategies that providers adopt with individual young people, or tasks they encourage them to do, while on other occasions, it is attributable to the fact that a young person feels appreciated, and has someone who they feel able to talk to about their feelings.

Young people frequently describe how they have come to recognise that they are respected, as a result of the help and support they are provided with, by being told they are appreciated, by having someone who understands them, and by feeling they have someone they can sit down and be open and honest with.

‘It has been a good place to stay and get my life back on track. You get so much support, you feel much more appreciated, you feel you’re worth something and can find a way out of your situation.’ - *Young person, Service C*

In improving a young person’s self-esteem, providers highlight the importance of not focusing on weaknesses, or on mistakes young people make, and of continually providing positive encouragement.

Young people reflect on how their placement has changed their perception of themselves, and what they can achieve and expect in life.

As one young person reports, their placement encouraged them to be more optimistic about themselves, allowing them to ‘walk tall and be proud’:

‘When I first moved in, I just didn’t care. I’d find the nearest person to fight with if I could, and that was just because of low confidence but I’ve walked out of this place head high with bags of confidence, so I could walk into a job now and say “look there’s my qualifications, hire me. I’m there. I’ve got a good reputation, I’m never late, always on time, I’m good with other employees.” When I first moved here I’d never be able to say that, I’d shy away from it, I’d stay in my room, play my [games console] and stay out the way.’

- *Young person, Service B*

‘My entire perception of life has changed, now that I’m here. So the environment that I’m in is calm and serene. You can talk to anybody here and not be afraid to do so.’

- *Young person, Service D*

Providers encourage young people to challenge and change negative beliefs they hold about themselves, to recognise the positive aspects of their personality, and to change what they think about their abilities and their expectations for the future.

‘She said that her dad and any of her family aren’t really chatty people, and she felt that she never used the right words. I think she felt she had to talk a certain way, and I said to her, “you have to be yourself, because people will see through you anyway if you’re not. We like you, and you like me, for being myself, and this is how I talk, even at work when I’m dealing with clients”...I think I was really just trying to say “you have to be you because you’re a nice person.”’ - *Provider, Service A*

Enhanced social networks

The lives of care leavers are often characterised by disruption – including changes to care placements or accommodation – which results in support networks with friends, families and communities being non-existent, limited or damaged. Building a support network can therefore be difficult.

A strong theme to emerge from the research is how conscious providers are of trying to help care leavers develop and sustain positive social networks. Barnardo's staff also consider this, as far as possible, when they are placing a young person – for example by trying to identify a placement in a community a young person is familiar with, or which is close to their family or peers (if appropriate).

Encouraging young people to build appropriate and positive relationships, and to associate less with young people who criticise them, drag them down or use them, helps improve self-worth/self-esteem. Spending time around positive and supportive people helps young people to improve self-image and confidence. Providers frequently report introducing other family members and friends to a young person, providing them with more opportunities to engage in positive relationships.

'I think that the most important thing that [the young person] has found is a nice group of male role models, and hopefully female role models. He likes all my friends. They've all been great with him. My family have been great with him. I'm not trying to change him because I know that's not the right way to do it but I just like him to see there's another way, that's the best I can do.'

- *Provider, Service A*

Improvement in communication and social skills

Providers mention young people who have made significant improvements in their level of communication and abilities to interact socially. There are many reasons why providers and young people feel a supported lodgings placement has contributed to an improvement in communication and social skills. These include young people interacting with providers and their networks, and providers encouraging young people to engage in other activities (church, community youth clubs, etc.). Providers tailor learning to suit individual young people. Some providers have designed fun activities or resources to encourage engagement.

'I did get some packs together that I've made, of other skills for them...one girl in particular didn't have a lot of social skills, didn't know how to dress appropriately, she had quite complex needs so we did a lot of sort of, [learning] based around games on what to wear in certain situations, that kind of thing. Again, it was learning but we did it in fun ways for her.'

We had magazines and comics, you know, we'd do little quizzes with prizes at the end, so we also did a little hygiene quiz for a couple of them, and then there was a gift at the end.' - *Provider, Service B*

Fostering a sense of self-accomplishment

Providers highlight the importance of urging young people to do things to the best of their ability, to take pride in what they do, and to do their best to achieve their goals. Providers describe helping young people identify something they are good at, or at least enjoy, and encouraging them to pursue this.

'She was the only one staying here at the time and again I put a load of time into her and really tried to encourage the positive things. She loved art so I bought her a big canvas so that she could be creative, but the drug use, well particularly the legal high use, got in the way.'
- *Provider, Service B*

Encouraging achievement

Providers have encouraged young people to get jobs or volunteering roles, to join local clubs or classes (e.g. self-defence), to learn new skills, or to identify and concentrate on new hobbies. Encouraging a young person to achieve something like this provides them with a chance to build their confidence.

More in control of behaviour and emotions

Many young people feel that their placement has helped them to better manage their own behaviour and emotions, and to deal with problems more constructively.

A number of comments were made about young people 'realising' that being aggressive towards people or property gets them nowhere, and that they have learned to channel aggression in more appropriate ways.

'She used to get very, very aggressive, not towards me but she'd break things and slam doors so again I could say "just go and calm down"...gradually she realised it wasn't getting her anywhere so that calmed down quite a lot, so that was good.' - *Provider, Service B*

Improvements in management of behaviour and emotions were often attributed to 'having someone to talk to'.

'My anger and behaviour is better. Because I can sit down and speak to [my provider] about things. I can sit down and speak to people that will help me out...'
- *Young person, Service B*

'I'm probably a bit better at dealing with my emotions, from always having someone to talk to. Moving in here has meant I've had good support.' - *Young person, Service D*

For others, the independence and freedom afforded by their placement has contributed to improved behaviour.

'I feel more chilled out compared to what I was in foster care, because it's such a chilled place, there's not that many set rules, they're all fair things.' - *Young person, Service B*

'And the girl we've had last, she was really badly behaved when she came to us, she couldn't be in the family because she was too difficult, so we had her for an emergency period but she calmed down very quickly when she was here, because I think she had a lot more space being a bit more semi-independent and her behaviour gradually over the year got better and better, and we got her into college and she's improved a lot.' - *Young person, Service B*

In some cases providers have encouraged young people to adopt strategies to manage emotional and behavioural issues more appropriately. The following quote from a young man is an example of a strategy he learned from his provider, and, having moved on, continues to use:

'The first ever conflict me and [my provider] ever had, he spun round and went "right go and have a fag, go and walk round the block come back and apologise and we'll start again", and I got used to doing that. If I knew I was going to get angry, I'd walk out. I've learned not to slam the doors 'cos it ends badly for me with [my provider] shouting..'

I'd walk off, go and have a fag, walk back, sort it out, and talk to him like an adult. I think I've got a massive grip on my anger and my emotions like that I don't let it get the best of me hardly any more.' - *Young person, Service B*

Several young people mention having learned that shying away from problems will not help them. Again, a stable and supportive environment provides encouragement in this respect.

'I ignored problems before. I've realised I can't ignore them now, I'm aware of situations and problems. Before I felt I wasn't really bothered, I'd bury it. I know I can confide in [my provider] here.' - *Young person, Service D*

Young people say that had they not taken up their placement, they would not have experienced these improvements.

'If I wasn't here I'd probably still be in care. I think I would still have my anger and behaviour issues and things like that.'
- *Young person, Service B*

Decreased stress

A number of young people report that their supported lodgings placement has provided them with a less stressful environment than their previous accommodation.

'I feel a lot less stressed. Before I was tensed up because I used to get shouted at all the time back at home, in a family situation back at mine, I used to get shouted at all the time, and abused and everything but I don't get that anymore so like my stress levels have come right down.'
- *Young person, Service B*

For some young people, their placement has afforded them the opportunity, for the first time in their life, to live in a stable and supportive atmosphere that has allowed them to relax, reflect, learn and develop. Many young people appreciate the time their placement has afforded to them to consider their life options, and to make a gradual move towards independence, knowing that if they made

mistakes or if things went wrong, they would be given the support other young people would expect from their family.

Encouraging engagement with other services

A key element of some placements is supporting young people to engage with other services. This is often achieved through partnership working between providers and service staff.

There are several aspects to this work, depending on individual circumstances:

- ensuring attendance at appointments (by physically taking young people there, reminding them about appointments, and helping them set up ways of tracking appointments)
- advocacy work on the young person's behalf
- modelling behaviour in dealings with services, and helping young people to develop their confidence, communication and self-presentation skills, enabling them to access services independently (e.g. colleges, banks, prospective employers)
- giving advice or talking through strategies before meetings, and reflecting on how things went afterwards
- being there for support
- helping a young person identify other services that might be helpful to them.

Sometimes providers simply have to signpost young people to services including: healthcare, accommodation, education/employment, financial services (including benefits), Citizens Advice, sport and leisure services, and mental health services (including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)).

Sometimes providers have invoked the knowledge and support of Barnardo's staff in referring young people to these services.

'One young lady, I felt that she'd got some emotional problems that hadn't really been noted before, because until you actually live with someone, you know...I just said "I think she needs to see someone" and Barnardo's got her a mental health worker. So that was quite useful. Although maybe I can't help with a certain problem, you know, I can highlight it and then somebody else can talk to them. And I've done that 2 or 3 times with various young people.' - *Provider, Service B*

'I've mentioned to her social worker today about perhaps I think there's [people in Barnardo's] that deal with education and training and I've suggested it would probably be a good idea – because her course is just three days a week – to find her just a voluntary placement maybe one day a week at a nursery, where she can get first-hand experience, which will be fantastic for her cv later on, it'll give her experience and possibly a foot in the door for a proper position later on, who knows, but I do think she needs some practical experience now.' - *Provider, Service B*

Some providers have used their professional knowledge to help link young people to other services they are aware of through their work role. The findings from this study highlight that while providers should not be expected to be able to meet all the possible needs of young people, they should be attuned to potential needs and warning signs, and should be aware of a wide range of professional and specific help if they need to suggest it.

Educational benefits

A clear theme to emerge from the research is the commitment providers put in to encouraging young people to engage and achieve in education and employment opportunities. Through encouragement from their providers (often in partnership with the young person's social worker and/or Barnardo's service staff), young people give accounts of their raised educational aspirations, and their increased engagement with education, employment and training (EET). Providers describe how they encourage young people to think about what they want to do with their life.

Many young people have not thought like this before, and a number of them make particular reference to realising they have a range of choices and opportunities, or that choosing a different career path is still an option for them.

Providers and their networks are a common source of advice on learning opportunities and careers. The stability of their housing situation gives young people time to reflect on this, while their positive relationships with providers – who believe in them – allow them to consider and talk through their options.

Many providers recount examples of instances where they have indeed gone 'above and beyond' the expected role, tailoring support to the needs of individual young people:

‘Sometimes after dinner we’ll do a little exercise, sometimes it’s more fun than others. Like we did one last week, naming baby animals. I gave them the names of about 15 different animals and they had to write down the names of the offspring. Anything which will stimulate a bit of thought. And [the young person] actually quite enjoys that. It’s quite competitive so, that spurs him along a little bit. I might do a spelling test, I’ll just throw something in the mix sort of...’ - *Provider, Service B*

Longer-term outcomes

The outcomes reported here took place in a limited timeframe of engagement with services; long-term changes will take more time to materialise – and measure.

Of course, the key aim of supported lodgings is to equip young people to live independently, and to maintain their own tenancies in the longer term. For this outcome to be explored, Barnardo’s would need to put in place follow-up processes so that ex-service users could be contacted several months and years after the end of their placement, to see whether they had indeed achieved successful independent living. In addition to exploring whether service users had gone on to fulfil this potential, longer-term follow-up could also explore whether there were particular aspects a young person had found it harder to manage after their move-on – and whether there was anything else that could have been done during their time in placement to better prepare them.

CASE STUDIES

Presented in this section are case studies of young people involved in this research, which show why young people come into Barnardo's supported lodgings services, and the difference their placement can make to them.

There are five case studies of care leavers, followed by nine case studies of those staying in Barnardo's placements for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



Leaving care placements

The five case studies below are of young people involved in this research, who had taken up supported lodgings placements for care leavers.

Young person 1:

Female, 21 years old, moved on from placement

This young woman had been in care and had moved into a supported lodgings placement as a stepping stone to living independently. She had stayed in her supported lodgings placement for nearly two years, and at the time of interview she had successfully maintained her own tenancy for a little over a year. This young woman appreciated having somewhere to stay and also the support her provider had given her in various areas of her life. However, she felt that she did not get on particularly well with her provider, and that this had resulted in her spending a lot of her second year of placement ‘in her room’, which had a negative impact on her confidence. This young woman commented that she got on quite well with her provider’s partner, and shared some hobbies with him – their mutual fondness for gardening being a key example. Together, this young woman and her provider’s partner had dug a vegetable plot in the provider’s garden. Her provider’s partner would show this to all the visitors to the house, and mentioned the young woman had helped make it. She was proud to receive this recognition, and appreciated the way her provider’s partner had made her feel welcomed and valued. While she did not feel her placement had gone particularly well – largely because she and her provider had ‘clashing personalities’, she was very appreciative of being offered a placement, as it gave her somewhere safe and secure to stay while she practised her skills for independent living. This young woman felt that with a little more training her provider could be a ‘good provider’, but felt that she lacked an understanding of how to relate to a young care leaver, and the needs they would have.

Young person 2:

Male, 16 years old

This young person had been in placement for around six months when he was interviewed. He had previously lived at his family home, but this was not a suitable place for him to stay. His social worker had told him about supported lodgings. He said he thought he would be in a hostel if he had not taken up the placement. Having always lived at home with his parents, he felt that at the time of taking up his placement he was not prepared

practically for living alone, due to limited previous experience of shopping, budgeting, buying food, etc., which was all taken care of for him when he lived at home. Having had some exposure to these aspects of independent living in his supported lodgings placement, he is now more confident that he could look after himself and maintain his own tenancy.

While in placement the young person was suspended from his college course. His providers supported him through this period, by being there for him to talk to, trying to help him get re-enrolled, and helping him to identify alternative training options to pursue. His providers also gave him assistance with application forms and his CV.

This young man mentioned that when he lived at home he was 'quite an angry child', and that, as a result of him having people to discuss things with, and help him think options through, he feels more relaxed about life, and is less angry. Since having someone to help him explore different housing and job options, he feels more positive about his future.

This young man appreciates knowing that if he has a problem he can speak to his providers about it, and that they will talk it through with him, and cheer him up. He commented that 'it helps a lot' knowing there is someone he can go to 'with any problems at all'.

At the time of interview, local authority funding for the placement was coming to an end. He felt ready to move on and was anxious but excited about taking the next step. His providers felt that he had gained sufficient practical skills to live independently, but worried that he would miss the company and emotional support the placement gave him.

Barnardo's are advocating for him to move into semi-supported accommodation as a stepping stone to his own tenancy. The young person likes the idea of moving into semi-supported accommodation. However, as a back-up plan, should this accommodation not become available, he has registered on the council housing list, and his providers are helping him explore the different options open to him, and providing him with valuable information on the different areas of town.

Young person 3:

Male, 24 years old, moved on from placement

This care leaver came into Barnardo's supported lodgings after several foster placement breakdowns. His social worker had told him about the opportunity. He felt if he had not taken up the placement he would most likely have been sleeping rough. He described how his life had been completely turned around.

This young person had a history of aggressive behaviour which he struggled to control. However, his provider had taught him a strategy to deal with this, which he still employs effectively, over a year after moving on from his placement. He feels he now hardly ever allows his emotions to get the better of him.

The young person valued the joint encouragement from his leaving care worker and his provider in encouraging him to gain qualifications which have allowed him to get on in the world of work. He felt that without the encouragement from his provider to get up each morning, he would not have achieved this.

While he was in placement, upon turning 18, this young man got himself into serious debt and was declared bankrupt. The support and advice his provider gave him was invaluable. He has learned the seriousness of managing his money, and has not been in serious debt since. He described learning budgeting skills as a result of his provider sending him to the supermarket with a set amount of money to buy food for each week. Alongside this, his provider had taught him money-saving tips such as buying in bulk, and how to identify 'a good deal'.

This young man commented that he used to be shy and keep himself to himself, but that he now feels more confident, outgoing, and proud of himself, stating that he was 'going somewhere in life'. He valued the support and freedom offered by his supported lodgings placement, and contrasted this to the rules and regulations of being in care.

This young person said that he was not prepared for living independently when he first moved into his placement. His provider supported his transition to his own tenancy, advising him on the different options available to him, and which agencies he should contact. This young man has now maintained his tenancy for nearly two years, and frequently returns to visit his provider, who he refers to as a 'father figure'.

Young person 4:

Female, 19 years old

This care leaver came into Barnardo's supported lodgings after moving around several foster placements for over five years.

Although initially scared about the idea of living in 'a stranger's home', she now appreciates the stability her placement provides.

She described how she previously had no experience of life skills such as food shopping, cooking, cleaning or ironing, but was now able to do all of

these things on her own and felt able to look after herself. She also noted she had tried new foods.

Her provider was giving her assistance across many areas of her life, including reading together in the evening to assist with her dyslexia, emotional support as she began seeing her father for the first time in many years, and helping her identify a career option she would like to pursue. Her provider was going 'above and beyond' by designing games and quizzes to play in the evening, as fun ways to learn.

This young person felt that by being able to discuss problems with her provider, and feeling that her provider understands her, she is now less likely to bottle things up, and has become more confident.

This young woman appreciated the joint working between her provider and Barnardo's to signpost her to a careers advisor and a mental health worker. She felt she was less stressed, less anxious, slept better, and reported experiencing fewer nightmares as a result of the support she has received.

A few months before completing her college course, she felt she wanted to change career. Her provider encouraged her to complete the year in order to gain a qualification, and therefore have something to show for all the work she had put in. She appreciates the support and advice that her provider has given her about her career options, allowing her to see that career paths are open to her, and now feels she has direction.

Young person 5:

Male, 16 years old

This young person moved into placement from foster care. He appreciated the non-institutionalised environment of his supported lodgings placement, feeling it had helped him to 'grow up'. He appreciated 'having someone to talk to' and had great respect for his provider, who he had bonded with, and felt able to speak to about 'anything'.

He felt his provider genuinely cared about him as an individual, in contrast to his time in care where he said he was simply treated as a 'case' with a 'file'.

He felt the relationship with his provider had improved his confidence and self-esteem and had helped him to tackle his behaviour and anger issues. He felt these would still be an issue if he had been in a foster placement.

The support and encouragement he received from his provider had allowed him to focus on his educational attainment and was helping him to do better at college. His provider had attended college meetings with him and had helped him buy the equipment required for his course.

Homelessness placements

Young person 6:

Female, 17 years old

This young woman had been in placement for only a few weeks at the time of interview. She had previously been living with her mother and stepfather, and reported this environment to have been violent and aggressive. It appeared to be a product of chance that this young person had not entered the care system. While she reported being initially concerned about moving in with people she did not know, she was also excited about escaping her unsatisfactory home environment. She reported quickly feeling 'safe' when she took up her placement, and was looking forward to learning how to cook and look after her own health needs so she could move on to live independently. In the short time she had been in placement, the support she had received had made her feel more confident, both in general and in relation to specific day-to-day tasks such as using public transport on her own.

Young person 7:

Male, 16 years old

This young person had come into placement from his family home, where it was felt inappropriate for him to continue living as his parents could not best meet his needs. This young person had a mild learning difficulty and appreciated the friendly environment his placement offered him, and the support his providers gave him with all areas of his life, from education through to developing key practical skills.

Young person 8:

Female, 17 years old

This young woman had been in placement for only a few months at the time of interview. She had come from a very dysfunctional and controlling family, was extremely shy, and had very damaged social skills. Her provider was working hard to encourage her to develop her social skills –



she would encourage the young person to say 'hello' when she came home, would engage her in conversation about her day, and encourage her to watch TV with the other members of the household in the evenings. However, the young person was too shy to go into the living room of her own accord when the other household members were watching TV, so the provider adopted a strategy to help – if the young person wanted to join the others in the living room she would hang a string of beads on the outside of her bedroom door handle. The provider would look out for this, and when she saw it, would call the young person down to the living room. As a result of this, the young person had on a few occasions started joining the others in the living room.

The young person described herself as a shy person but felt that her short time in placement had already allowed her to come out of her shell more, and that her confidence had improved in many ways. At the time of interview, the young woman had, for the first time ever, recently put her hand up in college to answer a question posed to the class. The young woman described how the suitable home environment her placement offered her had also helped her to achieve better at college, because she was less stressed and better able to focus in class.

Young person 9:

Male, 17 years old

This young man had been in placement for less than six months at the time of interview. He had entered one of Barnardo's placements for 'homeless' young people, from sofa surfing after moving out of living with his father. He had seen a poster about the Barnardo's supported lodgings service in his college and went along to the service base to find out more. He said he had chosen to move out of his father's home so he could have his own freedom. He ideally wanted his own one-bed flat, but was unable to get one because he was under 18 years old so could not legally sign a tenancy. He felt his placement had been helpful to him, because his provider and service staff had helped him to understand official forms and letters – support he felt he would not have received otherwise. He felt that, as a result of his short placement, he had learned sufficient practical skills to maintain his own tenancy and was keen to move on. To encourage him to develop his skills for living independently, his provider had worked together with service staff to help him learn how to budget, and he had started saving money.

As part of his responsibilities in being provided with a supported lodgings placement, this young man had participated in a healthy lifestyles project delivered at the service base by a voluntary group.

At this programme, he had learned about exercise, activity and food, and specifically about cooking and nutrition. At the time of interview he had just completed 'moving-on' forms and was preparing to spend the final few weeks of his placement buying and preparing all his own meals so that he could put what he had learned into practice before moving on.

Young person 10:

Male, 17 years old

This young man had been in placement for around one month at the time of interview. He was referred to Barnardo's supported lodgings service by his college worker. He had previously lived with an extended family member who could no longer afford for him to stay. This young man had wanted to move into his own place, and viewed supported lodgings as a stepping stone on the way to this, where he could learn to be more independent, before applying for his own tenancy upon turning 18 years old. He reported being given a range of options about where he could stay, including a foyer or an emergency bed and breakfast, but he did not like the sound of either of these options, and felt he would not have 'moved on as good if it weren't for supported lodgings'. He reported feeling 'nervous' when he was first told about the service, and viewed it as 'a little bit of a big step', but thought it sounded 'appealing'. He overcame his nervousness when he was shown his potential placement, and met the providers who he felt were very welcoming. The young man and his provider had some common interests, which had resulted in them having 'chats' and developing a good relationship.

This young person buys his own food, cooks his own dinners, and does his own cleaning, washing clothes, and ironing. He feels he is well prepared practically for moving on. At the time of interview he was participating in a healthy lifestyles project which had developed his knowledge about healthy eating and budgeting. He had found the course 'interesting' as it had allowed him to learn how to cook, and also increased his knowledge about healthy eating. He described how he had learned about the different food groups and how to have a relatively cheap but balanced diet, and described how he does his weekly food shopping and tries to save a bit of his money 'just in case the food runs out' or if he wants to buy some additional snacks. The healthy lifestyle project was not something he thought he would otherwise have participated in, but reported finding it very useful and enjoyable.

Young person11:

Male, 17 years old

This young man had moved into an emergency placement as a result of wanting to remove himself from an unsatisfactory home environment with very controlling parents. At the time of interview, he was hoping to move from his emergency placement into a longer-term supported lodgings placement. The service had been recommended to this young man by a family member who had previous experience of it. Upon hearing about Barnardo's, he thought it was 'too good to be true that there was such an organisation'. Before visiting his potential providers, the young man reported feeling 'nervous' and 'worried' about 'what the people are going to be like', 'that people aren't going to like me', that 'they aren't going to understand how I feel', and that 'they're not going to be understanding'. However, he realised he had 'assumed completely wrongly' when he met his providers, who were 'really, really nice people', and 'know how to make you feel comfortable'.

This young man appreciated the 'calmness', 'friendliness' and 'serenity' the placement afforded him, commenting that it was 'a different world' to his previous home environment which he described as 'verbally aggressive, violent, and very, very angry'. He also appreciated having 'someone to talk to' and 'to get support from', which he did not experience at home. Since taking up his placement, he has felt less stressed and more relaxed, and able to be himself, attributing this to being able to 'talk to anybody [in placement], and not be afraid to do so'. This young man stated that he is now more positive about his future and that his 'entire perception of life has changed'. He said that the shared passions between him and his provider have allowed them to 'connect'. This young man viewed the longer-term placement he hoped to move into as an opportunity to develop the skills needed for day-to-day life, and felt that if he had not been offered a supported lodgings placement, it would have taken him longer to achieve the necessary skills for independent living. Specifically, he noted that he was looking forward to learning budgeting skills as he has no previous experience of this. This young man stated that 'I'm here and I'm loving it', and that he would tell someone else in a situation similar to his own that 'there are opportunities out there, and this is definitely one to go for...it's great...I'd say "come here".'

Young person 12:

Female, 19 years old

This young woman was referred to Barnardo's supported lodgings service when she had presented as homeless at her local housing department. She had previously lived independently with her boyfriend but when their relationship ended she could not afford to live in the accommodation on her own. Prior to living with her boyfriend she had lived in her family home. This young woman was currently undertaking an apprenticeship. She said she was unable to move back in with her mother when her relationship broke up because of the negative impact her apprenticeship income would have on the household benefits – the money she was earning would have brought the household income above the maximum threshold for housing benefit, but the loss in housing benefit would not have been made up for by the apprenticeship wage. Between splitting up with her boyfriend and moving into placement she had spent a period of time sofa surfing with friends. This had led her to stay up late at night, and had also resulted in her losing belongings as she moved from one place to the next, not being able to take everything with her each time. This young woman appreciated the stability her placement gave her, noting that it allowed her to concentrate on her employment, and take time to decide on her career path knowing that she would have 'food in [her] belly, heat around [her], and a roof over [her] head'. This security has given her something to build on without the pressures of worrying about accommodation. The young woman had some concerns about 'moving in with a stranger', and was initially 'nervous' and 'anxious', but these concerns were quickly alleviated when she first met her provider. Since being in placement, she has particularly appreciated the support both her provider and service staff have given her, making specific reference to being able to discuss problems and receive advice on her career options. This young woman has fully engaged with her provider's social network, which has presented her with new opportunities such as attending church and undertaking volunteering opportunities.

Young person 13:

Male, 18 years old

This young person accessed one of Barnardo's 'homeless' placements when his mother and father moved out of the area he grew up in, to a house in an area where he did not want to live, and to a home that was too small for him to live in with them.

This young man was planning to go to university, and appreciated the support he received from the service staff in putting together his university application. His support worker also managed to source funding to allow him to attend a university open day. This young man felt he was practically prepared for living independently, and specifically mentioned that as well as enjoying having somewhere nice to stay while he waited to move to university, he appreciated the support he received from his provider in identifying good offers and value in supermarkets.

Young person 14:

Male, 24 years old

After losing both his parents, this young man's life spiralled out of control – he had problems with alcohol and ignored household bills, resulting in him losing the family home. He experienced mental health difficulties, and when being discharged from a related hospital stay, he required 'an address', so he was referred to Barnardo's supported lodgings service. Although he initially had some concerns about moving into someone else's home, he was happy to have been offered somewhere to stay, feeling that otherwise his life would have deteriorated still further. He was reassured that it was a good decision when he first met his provider. He felt that if he not been offered the placement he would have continued to try and cover up his problems, and would not have received the help he needed.

This young man viewed his placement as somewhere to get his life 'back on track'. He appreciated the support he received from his provider and support worker, and noted it had made him realise that 'someone cared' about him. He felt his placement helped him to build his confidence, and that his provider and support worker had facilitated him getting a volunteering placement, which he viewed as an important step. He now felt able to 'go somewhere in life'. He said that his placement had been 'a lifesaver' and that he was not sure what he would have done otherwise, feeling that his life would have got even worse. He felt he was not ready to live on his own but that in time his placement would help prepare him for successful independent living.



Placement endings

Summary of key findings

Some providers reduce support to young people towards the end of a placement, on the basis that this more realistically reflects what independence will entail post-move-on. Barnardo's should clarify whether or not providers should taper support towards the end of a placement, to ensure that the most effective approach is adopted across the board.

Providers and service staff work together to prevent placements breaking down, and the majority of placements end in a planned manner.

While 'readiness' to move on should be the most important influence on the timing of a move-on, other factors can influence this. These might include young people thinking they are ready to move on when they are not, housing markets or availability, and placement funding.

In the main, it is felt that the majority of young people are practically prepared for independent living by the end of their placement. There is, however, a degree of concern about their emotional readiness.

The most common reasons providers and service staff give for placements breaking down are: a young person not being fully invested in their placement; flouting of placement agreement or house rules; displays of challenging behaviour; drug or new psychoactive substance ('legal high') use, and theft from a provider's home. The main reason is felt to be a young person simply not wanting to change, or not being ready to change – a significant minority of young people are not ready to live in a domestic environment, and cannot maintain a placement, regardless of how much support they receive. This highlights the importance of ensuring access to other suitable accommodation – which reflects needs, preferences and aspirations of individual young people.

It should not be assumed that young people with particular support needs (mental health problems, for example) will not be able to manage in a supported lodgings placement, and it is important that referrers understand this.

In the main, it is felt that little more can be done to prevent placement breakdowns.

Measures that providers and staff identify as being critical to alleviating placement breakdowns are: good matches; preparation of placement; supporting providers; restorative practice, and timely mental health support.

Many providers keep in touch with young people after they have moved on. This demonstrates that placements have the potential for a young person to develop a valuable relationship 'for life'.

Ideally, a young person will move on from a supported lodgings placement, in a planned manner, to a positive destination, and only when they are ready to do so. While providers report that the vast majority of placements end in a planned manner, there are instances of unplanned endings. This section discusses placements that end in a planned manner, before going on to explore placement breakdowns and unplanned endings.

Moving-on support young people receive from Barnardo's

Barnardo's supported lodgings staff tend to have good working relationships with social workers, housing associations and local authority housing departments, and give them advance warning that a young person will be leaving supported lodgings and will need somewhere to live.

Service staff may write letters of support on behalf of a young person, giving evidence of the independent living skills they have attained. They may attend property viewings with them, or may advocate for them to be placed in safe, appropriate and sustainable accommodation or to be given floating support. In some cases, Barnardo's works with other charities who deliver supported accommodation and/or floating support services. Floating support workers from other charities may be brought in to conduct preparatory work with a young person up to six months before they move on, in order to smooth the transition.

Moving-on support young people receive from providers

Moving-on support described by providers includes direct discussions about what is involved in independent living; helping young people conduct online searches for potential properties to move on to; advising them on the different areas in which they might want to live; helping them apply to local authority council housing lists; informing them about local suppliers like housing associations; attending property viewings; helping them pack up their belongings, and helping them physically make the move to their next place by driving them to it and helping unpack belongings and set up their home. Providers also describe instances where they have helped advocate for young people to move on to safe, appropriate and sustainable accommodation.

Reducing support as move-on approaches

One approach to preparation described by providers is to reduce practical support given to a young person, and to encourage them to be more self-reliant. This is done on the basis that it more realistically replicates what independent living will entail. Other providers continue to provide the same level of support until the end of the placement.

There appears to be some confusion among providers as to which approach they should adopt. Barnardo's should clarify whether or not providers should reduce the support given to a young person towards the end of their placement, to ensure that the most effective approach is adopted across the board.

Readiness to move on

While 'readiness' (self-sufficiency, independent living skills, etc.) should be the most important influence on the timing of a move-on, providers and service staff have identified other factors which have an impact on this, specifically:

- young people thinking they are ready to move on when they are not
- housing availability and markets
- availability of placement funding.

Providers define 'readiness' to move on in terms of both practical and emotional readiness.

Practical readiness

Generally, providers feel that young people are suitably prepared for the practical requirements of independent living by the time they move on. However, there is some concern that, despite the effort providers have put into encouraging young people to be aware of the financial realities of independent living, young people are not necessarily sufficiently prepared in this respect. Indeed, many young people have limited previous experience of paying household bills, and little understanding of the real costs associated with food shopping, gas and electricity bills, and council tax, etc. A number of providers have expressed concern that young people are overwhelmed by the reality of this.

Emotional readiness

Providers tend to be more concerned about young people coping with the emotional requirements of independent living.

A common concern is that young people – in particular, care leavers – will feel isolated and lonely post-move-on, taking into account their limited support networks. A knock-on concern is young people returning to undesirable living arrangements, such as moving back to unhealthy situations with family or partners. A common worry among providers is that they are not sure what sort of support, if any, young people will receive post-placement.

Young people thinking they are ready to move on when they are not

Providers express concerns about young people thinking they are ready to move on when they are not. Sometimes, however, young people are keen to move on. Preparing to live independently is of course a central reason young people give for choosing to take up a supported lodgings placement in the first place, and it is only natural for them to feel they would like to make this next move in their life. Both providers and service staff feel that in some cases, nothing will convince a young person otherwise.

Housing availability and markets

Some providers say that housing markets and local authority housing application processes make it necessary for young people to move on. In the more urban-based services in particular, providers and service staff both mention that if a young person is on the housing list and is offered a property, they have to 'jump at it'. Such are the pressures of housing markets, there is a view that it may be months, or even years, before a young person gets another opportunity. This is exacerbated in local authority areas where housing for care leavers might be prioritised only for a certain period of time after they leave care.

A number of providers express concern that these circumstances push young people to decide to move out of a placement, when even just another few months of preparation and learning would make a substantial difference to their ability to successfully live independently.

Placement funding

Sometimes, the funding for a young person to stay in a supported lodgings placement might only be guaranteed for a set time (e.g. one year), and a young person will have to move on for this reason. In other cases, young people can only be funded to stay in a placement up to a certain age (e.g. 21 or 25). This results in moving on being a result of physical age, rather than being tailored to individual needs or circumstances, or practical or emotional readiness.

Where young people move on to

Young people move on to a range of destinations. Positive destinations include:

- rented accommodation
- supported/semi-independent accommodation

- living with family/girlfriend/boyfriend
- university accommodation.

Less positive destinations include hostels and foyers. However, providers feel that young people who move on to these destinations do so primarily because their placement has broken down, and they have exhausted all other options. This tends to be seen as resulting from a young person not being ready to live in a home environment, or having been unable or unmotivated to make their supported lodgings placement work. This highlights the importance of providing accommodation pathways in which a range of options are available, so that a young person can stay in accommodation most suited to their needs.

Some young people move to their family home after their supported lodgings placement. For 'homeless' young people, family relationships can be repaired by having the benefit of some time out of the family home, or through formal support, and this is viewed as an appropriate and beneficial step. However, concerns are expressed, in particular, about care leavers moving back to inappropriate family environments, as a result of insufficient appropriate move-on accommodation being available to them.

Reasons for placement breakdowns

The most common reasons providers and service staff give for placements breaking down are:

- a young person not being fully invested in their placement
- flouting of placement agreement or house rules
- displays of challenging behaviour
- drug or 'legal high' use
- theft from a provider's home.

In other cases, there may just be a clash of personalities between a provider and a young person. Furthermore, it is often not one big thing that causes a breakdown, but a continual list of small things that do not change or improve. Providers sometimes feel they have 'done their best' and that a young person would be better living elsewhere.

It should be borne in mind that in many cases providers and young people have been able to move beyond such incidents and continue with a placement.

In exploring reasons for placements breaking down, it is worth noting that Barnardo's services, in close working relationships with providers,

have supported a range of young people in supported lodgings. It should thus not be assumed that young people with particular needs, e.g. mental health problems, will not be able to manage in a supported lodgings placement – and it is important that referrers understand this.

A young person not being fully invested in their placement

Many placement breakdowns are viewed as being linked to a young person not being fully invested in their placement. Indeed, in line with other research, this study has found that supported lodgings do not suit every young person. There are some young people who are not willing to engage with supported lodgings, or for whom it is not a suitable environment. For example, young people who have few boundaries to their behaviour, who are unable to regulate their behaviour to accommodate house rules, or who prefer the freedom and anonymity of other settings. While the focus of this study is on supported lodgings, this reinforces the necessity of ensuring there are suitable alternative safe and secure housing options for these young people.

Flouting of placement agreements or ground rules

Repeated flouting of the placement agreement or house rules can lead to a placement breakdown. The most common reason providers cite is a young person not staying at the property a sufficient number of nights per week. This can impact on eligibility to receive benefits such as housing benefit, which contribute to placement funding. Providers tend to note that if a young person is not staying at the accommodation for a sufficient number of nights each week then it can be offered to someone who does require it every night. It can be Barnardo's decision to move these young people on from their placement.

Behavioural challenges

In some cases, young people have higher support needs than a placement or provider can meet. In these instances, it is often the case that services – and therefore providers – have not been fully aware of the young person's needs at the beginning of a placement.

Drug/new psychoactive substance (NPS) use

Providers report breakdowns resulting from a young person's use of illegal drugs or NPSs, in turn resulting in them presenting challenging behaviours. This can put others in the household at risk, and can result in young people being unable to comply with the rules of a placement. Examples include young people not engaging with employment or education, refusal to comply with ground rules, failing to turn up

to scheduled meetings, putting others in the household at risk by attempting to cook at 3am, inappropriate acquaintances visiting the home, and offending behaviour related to use.

Providers report instances of some young people being ‘carted off by the police, never to be heard from again’.

Verbal or physical aggression, or violent behaviour

Providers report placements breaking down due to verbal or physical aggression (to people and/or property) or violent behaviour. Most commonly, they feel this is related to mental health issues (which are often seen not to have been sufficiently diagnosed or addressed by relevant agencies), or drug/NPS use.

Theft from a provider’s home

Providers find it particularly difficult to live with someone who they feel they cannot trust. Examples of items stolen from providers’ homes have ranged from money (either a provider’s money or change from a charity collection box), to electrical or personal items (often thought to have been sold for money for drugs). In many cases, providers report giving a young person numerous chances, and sometimes young people have simply left a placement when challenged about theft.

Preventing placement breakdowns

Providers and service staff work together to prevent placements breaking down. In the main, providers feel that there is little more either they or Barnardo’s can do in this respect.

Providers and service staff feel that the main reason placements break down is a young person simply not wanting to change, or not being ready to change. Realistically, among this population, there is always likely to be a significant minority of young people who are not ready to live in a home environment, and cannot maintain a placement, regardless of how much support they receive. There is therefore a limit to what supported lodgings services, or any other service, can do, and there will always be some young people whose placements cannot be maintained.

There are, however, measures that providers and service staff identify as being critical to alleviating placement breakdowns:

Good matches – Matching young people and placements needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, taking into account their support needs, and, as far as possible, the circumstances, skills, and expertise of providers.

Preparation of placement – Placements are less likely to break down if there is thorough preparation at the outset. This includes obtaining as much information as possible about a young person, potential risks, and challenging behaviours. This highlights the importance of referrers and Barnardo's being able to share 'the right information at the right time'.

Supporting providers – Appropriate support is vital to preventing breakdowns. Providers mention the importance of the flexible support Barnardo's provides, such as increasing the number of catch-up phone calls and supervisions, or providing additional training or respite. Lack of support, including regular supervisory and catch-up meetings, can contribute to issues being dealt with reactively rather than proactively, allowing issues to escalate, and placements to break down.

Restorative practice – Providers and service staff mention that restorative practices can be useful in bringing young people and providers together to work through and review a placement agreement, to see how an issue might be resolved to avoid a placement breaking down.

Mental health support – Some young people in Barnardo's supported lodgings services display high levels of need and challenging behaviours. Providers feel that more timely responses from mental health services would help prevent breakdowns – they say that young people often experience significant delays in receiving diagnoses and appropriate support, and that in the interim, a placement can reach crisis point and break down.

Support post move-on

In the main, providers are unaware of what kinds of support a young person might be eligible for, or receive, after moving on from placement. While this means that they are unable to comment on this aspect, there is a degree of concern that many young people will not receive necessary support, particularly emotional support.

If a placement ends on good terms, providers will often reassure a young person that they can always get back in touch if they want any practical advice or emotional support. This gives young people a strong message that they are still cared for. Some providers report still being in touch with young people who stayed with them many years ago. This demonstrates that placements have the potential for a young person to develop a valuable relationship 'for life'.

Appendix A – methods

This chapter details the methods used to evaluate Barnardo's supported lodgings services. This comprised:

- a familiarisation exercise, including a literature review and documentary analysis of policies and procedures within Barnardo's supported lodgings services
- in-depth, semi structured telephone interviews with Barnardo's service staff
- in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with young people and providers within four of Barnardo's supported lodgings services.

The research was designed and undertaken by an evaluation officer from Barnardo's Evaluation and Impact team.

Ethical approval

Approval for the research was received from Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee (BREC).

Phase one: familiarisation exercise

At the outset of the research, a desk-based review was conducted. This comprised collating data on Barnardo's supported lodgings provision, a review of relevant research, and a review of the policies and procedures of Barnardo's longer-established services.

The findings were used to design the evaluation framework for the study. The outputs from this phase were an evaluation plan and topic guides for discussions with service staff, young people, and providers.

Phase two: interviews with Barnardo's service staff

The second phase of the evaluation involved semi-structured, in-depth telephone interviews with Barnardo's staff at eleven of Barnardo's twelve longer-established supported lodgings services.

Interviews explored a range of areas of practice, including:

- recruitment and assessment of providers
- processes for matching young people and providers
- training and support of providers
- work undertaken with young people to increase independent living skills.

Interviews were undertaken from May to June 2014.

Phase three: interviews with young people and providers in four services

The third phase of this study comprised interviews with young people and providers in four of Barnardo's supported lodgings services.

Selection of services

The four services were selected in order to provide a sample of services working in different settings, with a diverse range of young people, and offering a variety of placements. Two services operate in England, one in Scotland, and one in Wales³

Table A1 (over) provides a profile of the four services, summarising some of the key characteristics.

³ At the time of this study, Barnardo's does not operate any supported lodgings services in Northern Ireland

Table A1: Key characteristics of the four Barnardo’s supported lodgings services involved in this study

	Service A	Service B	Service C	Service D
Location	Scotland	England (East)	England (North West)	Wales
Urban/rural classification	Predominantly urban	Rural/coastal	Predominantly urban	Predominantly urban
Context	Supported lodgings service is funded as part of the local authority leaving care service, looked after children and homeless 16/17-year-olds	Supported lodgings service is funded as part of the local authority leaving care service, looked after children and homeless 16/17-year-olds	Supported lodgings service is delivered in conjunction with Supporting People partnership. Service separately operates a Nightstop scheme for young people	Supported lodgings service is part of Youth Homelessness service, which is part of Supporting People services. Service also operates emergency bed placements. Service operates alongside Young Person’s Advisor service
Focus of scheme	Young people leaving care	Young people leaving care, looked after children, and 16/17-year-old homeless young people	Homeless, or at risk of homelessness young people	Homeless, or at risk of homelessness young people, or young people leaving care
Scale of scheme	7 providers offering 8 placements	18 providers (and 2 currently inactive) offering 36 placements	7 providers offering 9 placements	8 providers offering 15 placements and 1 emergency bed

	Service A	Service B	Service C	Service D
Breakdown of providers' circumstances	3 providers living alone, 4 providers co-habiting; 2 providers with own children in household; 6 providers working, 1 provider retired	3 providers living alone, 15 providers co-habiting, the 2 inactive placements are single female providers; 8 providers with children aged 16+ in household, 2 providers with children aged under 10 in household, and 9 providers with no children in household; 17 providers working, 1 provider retired	4 providers living alone, 3 providers co-habiting; 2 providers with own children in household; 5 providers working, 1 provider retired	4 providers living alone, 4 providers co-habiting; 3 providers with own children in household; 6 providers working, 2 providers retired
Expectations of providers	Providers do not provide food or cook meals; Providers expected to regularly attend Carer Forums scheduled every 6-8 weeks (covering service updates, peer support; and training opportunities) Providers play an active role in reviewing and considering service development	Providers offer young people a range of support in preparation for a move to independence. The level and type of support is outlined in Support Needs questionnaire and Pathway Plan. Providers attend regular training delivered by Barnardo's and the local authority. Providers have monthly supervision. All food is provided to young people	Providers buy food and may cook for young people (unless young people desire otherwise); Service has a group Facebook account for active providers and training events where informal peer support can be gained	One provider provides food and will cook some meals e.g. evening meal for the young person (unless the young person desires otherwise). Other seven providers do not provide food or cook meals; Service does not facilitate formal peer support for providers
Out-of-hours provision	Barnardo's provides out-of-hours contact and support for providers in emergencies	Local authority Emergency Duty Team provide out-of-hours support to providers. Providers have contact numbers for other providers, to phone for informal advice	Barnardo's provides Management 24/7 on-call service for providers	Local authority Emergency Duty Team provide contact for providers in emergencies

	Service A	Service B	Service C	Service D
Young people's contribution to placement (payment to provider)	Barnardo's provides out-of-hours contact and support for providers in emergencies	£30 per week contribution to utilities/food	£7 for bills (no food), or £20 food and bills	In the one placement where food is bought, the young person contributes £20 per week. In the other 7 placements, young people do not contribute
Criteria for placement	Priority is given to young people leaving care although other Social Work referrals can be considered	Referrals from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children (LAC) team (Sec 20/Sec 31 CA'89) • Troubled Families programme (16/17 homeless for 4 week assessment) • Family Assessment Support Team (FAST) team • Young people in need of accommodation prior to being transferred to LAC team 	Young people aged 16-25. There are no blanket bans for the scheme as each referral is risk assessed for suitability depending on which providers are available at the time	Young people should be in, or ready to enter, education, employment or training
Provider supervision	Providers are given regular support and home visits throughout the placement, with more intense/regular support and, if required, training at the beginning of the placement. There are regular 6-weekly placement reviews, and providers are each subject to an annual review by approvals panel	Providers are given formal supervision on a monthly basis while a young person is in placement. Barnardo's supported lodgings worker offers informal supervision at placement agreement/ LAC reviews/Pathway Planning and unannounced visits. Barnardo's supported lodgings worker is available for telephone advice or negotiated additional visits in order to meet the needs of individual placements	Formal supervision is offered every 6-8 weeks when a young person is in placement. Informal supervision, i.e. support phone calls/ visits takes place as and when necessary	Formal monthly supervision for new providers. Then every three months. Providers have weekly contact with their supervising support worker

	Service A	Service B	Service C	Service D
Young people supervision	Workers establish a relationship with the young person through the initial service introduction, induction and matching meetings and thereafter meet them at least 6 weekly during placement review and the 6 monthly TCAC Pathways review meetings, ending with an exit interview when yp moves on	Barnardo's supported lodgings worker is involved in meetings with providers and has informal contact with young person in placement. Weekly placement reviews for 16/17-year-old young people placed by Troubled Families programme. LAC/care leaver placements are reviewed 1 month after placement, and if significant change in circumstances (e.g. prior to 18th birthday, ready for move-on accommodation, etc.)	Young people receive regular support meetings with their allocated worker.	

Interviews with young people and providers

Across each of the four supported lodgings services, face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with:

- 12 young people currently staying in a supported lodgings placement
- two young people who had moved on from placements
- 20⁴ providers who offer placements to young people.

Table A2 provides a breakdown of these interviews by service.

Table A2: breakdown of interviews by service

	Young people	Providers
Service A	2	5
Service B	5	5
Service C	3	5
Service D	4	5
Total	14	20

The interviews with young people tended to last around 30-40 minutes. Interviews explored:

- matching and introduction processes
- in-placement support from Barnardo's and providers
- placement outcomes.

The interviews with providers lasted 45-90 minutes. Interviews explored:

- assessment and approval processes
- matching and introduction processes
- support and training provided by Barnardo's
- support provided to young people
- changes seen in young people in placement.

⁴ One of the 20 interviews was with a couple who jointly provide the lodging placement

Profile of young people

The young people who participated in the interviews included individuals with a range of needs and experiences. Some had previously been looked after, while others had come into the service after becoming homeless, and had previously lived in their family home or independently, never having been in care.

Some young people experienced poor mental and emotional health, to varying degrees of severity. Some had learning difficulties, and many suffered from challenging behavioural problems. A number of young people were engaged in employment, education, volunteering or training, while others lacked purposeful activities such as these. They displayed varying degrees of social skills and ability to solve everyday problems independently. Their lives had featured chaos and uncertainty, isolation, bereavement, substance misuse, challenging social relations such as lack of positive support from family or friends, and family breakdown. Their ages ranged from 16 to 24. The length of time young people had been in placement ranged from just a few weeks to over three years.

Profile of providers

Providers involved in the research lived in a range of circumstances, including living in rural and urban settings, and living in single and married/cohabiting households. Some provided placements to only one young person at a time, while others offered placements to between two and four young people at any one time. Some also had their own children living in the household. Some providers offered emergency (Nightstop/Crashpad) beds in addition to providing longer-term supported lodgings placements. Some providers were in employment, others were retired.

The 20 providers interviewed for this study estimated that together they had provided a total of around 275 placements,⁵ with combined experience of over 90 years in a provider role. The length of time that research participants had been approved providers ranged from 7 months to over 15 years. Some providers had supported only one young person, while one provider – who had been in the role for over 15 years – estimated they had supported over 100 young people.

⁵ This includes Nightstop/Crashpad/emergency placements as well as longer-term supported lodgings placements

Recruitment of young people

Services were asked to identify a list of potential young people for interview, only excluding young people who it would be inappropriate to invite to interview at the time of the fieldwork (for instance, a young person going through a particularly difficult time with their mental wellbeing). Services were also asked to identify young people who had moved on from placement, and who might be willing to participate. In the event, two young people who had moved on a little over a year previously were involved in the research – both had previously been in care.

Services distributed an information sheet to potential participants, on behalf of the evaluator, and were also asked to explain orally to young people the purpose of the research and what participation would involve. A consent form and reply paid envelope was included with the information sheet, and young people were asked to return their signed consent form directly to the evaluator, indicating whether or not they wished to take part in the research.

The final selection was made by the evaluator in conjunction with service staff, in order to provide a cross-section of young people using the service, with regards to sex, age, ethnic background, vulnerability and placement ‘type’ (e.g. young people staying in a home providing placements for more than one young person, and young people staying in homes offering a placement for only one young person at a time).

Interviews with young people tended to take place in-home, with a small number of interviews taking place at a service, and one interview with a young person taking place at a service away day. With the permission of participants, interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. All young people were thanked for their time with a £15 Love to Shop voucher.

Fieldwork took place from December 2014 to March 2015.

Recruitment of providers

Recruitment of providers was undertaken in a manner akin to the recruitment of young people; services were asked to distribute information sheets to providers, and providers were asked to opt in or out of the research by returning a form to the evaluator.

In conjunction with service staff, the evaluator selected a range of providers in different circumstances, and with varying lengths of experience (from providers who had only recently completed the approval process and had been providing a placement for a matter of weeks, to providers who had over 15 years of experience).

Approach to analysis

Audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed. The evaluator then identified the main themes and implications.

Analysis was based on a three-stage questioning approach, based on the Framework method of qualitative analysis, exploring:

- What have we got? – What did young people, service staff, and providers tell us during the research, and what have we learned from the analysis of data?
- What does it mean? – What are the messages to emerge from the discussions and how do these messages fit together into a ‘bigger picture’?
- What does it mean for Barnardo’s supported lodgings services? – What implications and recommendations arise?

This process culminated in the identification of themes and sub-themes. Transcripts were then systematically analysed for key points. This method ensured that analysis and reporting of the data was rigorous, balanced and accurate, and that the key messages were brought out. It was also flexible enough to allow for links and connections across different pieces of data to be made, and for moments of interpretive insight and inspiration to be recorded.

Interpretation of qualitative findings

Qualitative research does not aim to produce a quantifiable or generalised summary of the prevalence of views or experiences, but to develop a deeper understanding of the range of issues and themes relating to the subject being explored. The assumption is that issues and themes raised by the research participants are likely to be prevalent within the wider population (i.e. across Barnardo’s supported lodgings services).

The qualitative components of this evaluation therefore involved fewer people than quantitative research generally includes, but explored their views and experiences in much more depth. Such insight often reveals a more nuanced and informed set of considerations, which in the case of this evaluation proved useful for informing Barnardo’s supported lodgings provision across the UK.

Although the extent to which the findings from the study apply to Barnardo’s supported lodgings services across the UK cannot be quantified, the value of adopting a qualitative approach is in identifying the range of different issues, and the ways in which these can impact on services.

Limitations of the research

The findings of this research, while strongly indicative of a range of positive outcomes in relation to factors associated with the target groups of young people, have a number of limitations.

First, it should be borne in mind that the scope of the evaluation was limited to exploring the views and experiences of service staff, young people, and providers. Exploring the views and experiences of other identified stakeholders – such as referring partners or commissioners – was outside the scope of this work.

Second, the qualitative work with young people and providers focused on only four of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. The advantages of adopting this focused approach for this evaluation greatly outweigh the disadvantages of the approach. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that approaches and issues apparent in other Barnardo's supported lodgings services might not have emerged in the course of the review.

The sample of young people (n=14) and providers (n=20) interviewed for this study is relatively small, and while it has provided strong qualitative feedback about Barnardo's supported lodgings services, it does not claim to be a statistically representative sample of the whole population of clients serviced by Barnardo's supported lodgings services. This limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised.

Interviews were primarily conducted with young people currently living in supported lodgings placements (only two young people had moved on from their placements). Difficulties of contact meant that it was not feasible to include young people who had been referred but who had decided not to proceed with the referral, or those whose placements had broken down and who had exited placements in an unplanned manner. Further research with these groups would provide additional evidence about the changes which would be required to improve young people's chances of a successful transition to stable accommodation and independent living.

Similarly, all providers were currently registered to provide supported lodgings placements. Providers who chose not to proceed with their application, or who no longer provide a service, were not within the scope for this work. Further research with these groups would shed more light on the challenges providers face, and factors influencing decisions to stop providing the service.



Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services

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