

Move On Up Evaluation

Final report

June 2020

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About Commonweal Housing

Established in 2006, Commonweal Housing is an independent award-winning charity working to investigate, pilot and champion housing-based solutions to social injustice. By using charitable resources Commonweal provides experts and partner organisations the opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and justice. Commonweal Housing has worked with partners such as Housing for Women, Praxis Community Projects, Thames Reach, St Mungo's and Stonewall Housing.

www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/

About Quaker Social Action

Quaker Social Action is an independent UK charity working with people on low incomes to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives. Projects and services include crisis support for those unable to afford funerals or furniture, courses that empower people to manage their money and improve resilience, and the UK's first dedicated supported housing project for young carers.

www.quakersocialaction.org.uk

Foreword

Housing solutions to social injustice is what Commonweal uses its charitable resources to help find. We are not just about housing solutions to homelessness or housing solutions to a housing crisis. Housing is not just about having a roof over your head. We recognise that having access to the right housing (and where appropriate the right support) at the right time in people's lives can have a tremendous positive effect enabling people to better address other issues that may be going on hampering them in other ways – whether that's recovering from substance misuse, tackling a mental or physical health issue, leaving the care system, or simply taking those first difficult steps on a transition to adulthood.

These don't always manifest themselves as a housing crisis or homelessness (some sadly do) but Commonweal recognises that addressing someone's housing needs (or ambitions) means removing one layer of concern or stress that can give them a better chance to focus on other demons, problems or situations they may face.

When our friends at Quaker Social Action (QSA) first approached us with the idea that they wanted to test a housing model to support young adult carers, it didn't take too long before we understood how this group of young people were a classic 'Commonweal cohort': overlooked, undervalued and not adequately served by mainstream policies and support. They were facing a systemic injustice.

For too long, the housing needs of young adult carers have been overlooked. Many of these young people have a home – but that home comes with a caring responsibility which may be stifling their ability to reach their own potential and independence. Too often support only comes once they have reached crisis point and ended up homeless.

This evaluation of the Move On Up project tells the story of a forgotten need – one where housing and social injustice meet, creating a blind spot for both carers' services and housing organisations. At the same time, housing policy does not highlight young adult carers as a particularly at-risk group, and the Government's Carers' Action Plan – published two years ago now – fails to mention housing.

With upwards of 314,000 young adult carers aged 16-24 in England and Wales as of the 2011 census, it's clear that the need for all kinds of support, including housing, is greater than ever. A range of housing and carers' services across the country could benefit from the findings of this evaluation - and set out to meet the housing needs of young adult carers in their locality. Commonweal is delighted to share our expertise and experience from this project with anyone who is interested in doing so.

Move On Up has shown that setting out to specifically address the housing needs of young adult carers can have a hugely positive impact. Now we need national and local Government – as well as voluntary and statutory services - to come together, making sure no young adult carer falls through the gaps in support.

The Move On Up project is unique amongst Commonweal's current palette of projects. Firstly, success is not necessarily a one-way only linear direction. We recognised early on that success was as much about a sense of independence and agency for the young people. If they chose to use that by returning to the family home and resume or step up their

caring role – that is their choice having considered other options. However, should they choose to leave the project and find independent housing, ending or significantly reducing their caring role – unlike other projects this may lead to an increase in public expenditure potentially as social services have to step in and undertake that responsibility. The state has to recognise the true value of the significant unpaid family caring these young people undertake - as they always should have been doing.

Generally, success for Commonweal projects means a saving to the state – people not returning to prison, reduced homelessness, reduced call on emergency health services and the like. Success is not as simple for Move On Up which is why I think this project is so important for Commonweal and for all those involved. It is a real housing solution to an ignored or unrecognised social injustice. We are grateful to QSA for bringing this to our attention.

Ashley Horsey

Chief Executive Officer

Commonweal Housing

June 2020

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1. Introduction

Move On Up is a housing and support project for young adult carers which is being delivered by Quaker Social Action (QSA) in partnership with Commonweal Housing. Young adult carers are young people aged 16-25 who provide unpaid care to someone, usually within their family, on a regular basis. Move On Up is testing whether a shared housing pathway, alongside empathetic and specialist support, is effective in securing a range of positive outcomes for carers aged 18-25, and the project's potential for replication elsewhere. It represents an important opportunity to address the disadvantage that young adult carers typically face by testing out an entirely new delivery model, supported by a rigorous evaluation designed to explore potential for replication and scale within the current national policy and practice context.

This report presents the final findings of the evaluation of Move On Up, commissioned by Commonweal Housing and carried out by Learning and Work Institute. The Move On Up project will run for seven years, from 2017 to 2024. The evaluation covered the first three years of delivery, from March 2017 to March 2020. This is the final report of the evaluation and brings together the findings of all five waves of data collection carried out over its three-year period. It will be of interest to policy makers, practitioners and key stakeholders in the housing and health and social care sectors.

1.1 Policy context

Young adult carers' needs have become increasingly recognised in policy and by service providers in recent years. Legislation¹ introduced in 2015 placed the needs of unpaid carers on a more equal footing with the people they care for. Whole-family assessment of need and young people's right to a 'transition assessment' means that local authorities now have a responsibility to ensure that young adult carers have choices and the right to a 'life of their own' outside of caring.

Yet despite the recent increased focus on young adult carers and the impact that caring has on various aspects of their lives, the links between caring and housing instability amongst young people has, until now, been overlooked in research and policy. In June 2018, the Department of Health and Social Care launched a new Carers Action Plan², setting out a cross-government programme of work to support carers in England over the next two years. The plan includes a full section on young carers and young adult carers, focussing on how to improve the identification of young (adult) carers, their education outcomes and access to support services. The plan also commits to improve the support for young adult carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16 and 24, enabling them to establish a life of their own outside of caring. However, within this broad set of commitments, young adult carers' housing needs are not explicitly recognised or discussed.

While there is no data on the number of young adult carers experiencing homelessness, research suggests that this group of young people are highly likely to experience factors which increase the risk of homelessness.

¹ The Care Act (2014) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf

The youth homelessness charity, Centrepont, reports that one in ten of young people using its services identify a major cause of their homelessness as breakdown of a relationship in the family home³. Young adult carers are more likely than their peers to experience high tension and breakdowns in family relationships, due to practical and emotional pressures and their subsequent restrictions on young people's ability to make transitions into adulthood⁴. Young adult carers also tend to come from lower income households and feel socially isolated⁵. It is likely that they will not have the resources or the social relationships with peers needed to make a positive move out of the family home. As a result, they are at heightened risk of becoming homeless or in insecure living arrangements, such as sleeping on friends' floors and/or in abusive or intolerable situations.

This risk is exacerbated by the UK's housing crisis. The need for more housing that is accessible and affordable for people with low incomes is endorsed by most experts, commentators and political parties. However, the 2018 Social Housing Green Paper fell short of the ambitious public investment in a building programme that some had hoped for and the current (at the time of writing) Coronavirus social distancing and isolation policy is likely to slow down even existing housing building activity.

Affordability is a particular problem for people under 35 years. The local housing allowance payable for housing costs is lower than most rent levels in any given area. When set in 2012, it was intended that LHA rates would cover the bottom third of local rental markets across the country, giving people claiming LHA just enough to survive in the private rental market. Rates have been frozen for three years and Shelter estimates that rates do not cover rents in 97% of the country, not even the bottom tenth of rents in a third of England⁶. The situation is most acute in London and other areas of high housing costs. For most people under 35, affordability is exacerbated because they are only able to claim the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The Government announced recently that LHA rates will rise from April 2020 by the Consumer Price Index (1.7%) but rents rose by 15% from April 2012 to November 2019⁷, leaving the LHA rates trailing behind. As such, most commentators argue this rise in LHA rates will do little to close the gap⁸.

The wider context is a significant rise in numbers of homeless since 2010⁹. In 2017, the National Audit Office¹⁰ linked the steep rise in homelessness to LHA rates. Since then, the

³ Centrepont website. Information about the causes and effects of youth homelessness retrieved 06/07/19 <https://centrepont.org.uk/youth-homelessness/>

⁴ TNS-BMRB and Aldridge, J. (2016) The lives of young carers in England. London: DfE.

⁵ Becker and Becker (2008) Young Adult Carers in the UK: Experiences, Needs and Services for Carers aged 16-24. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers; and APS Group Scotland (2017) Young carers: Review of social research and data. Scottish Government

⁶ Shelter response to the UK Government's announcement on Local Housing Allowance rates. Downloaded on 27/03/20

⁷ Index of Private Rental Prices. Monthly Estimates quoted in Shelter response downloaded on 27/03/20 see Footnote 7.

⁸ Shelter response to the UK Government's announcement on Local Housing Allowance rates. Downloaded on 27/03/20

⁹ Fitzpatrick, S. et al (2019) The Homelessness monitor: England 2019, Crisis

¹⁰ A Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General; Homelessness; National Audit Office; HC 308 Session 2017–2019; 13 September 2017

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) has placed more responsibilities on local authorities than ever before to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

As yet there does not appear to have been any robust monitoring of the impact of the HRA on young people. However, around the time the new legislation came into force, Centrepont conducted a national survey of local authorities to find out how they expected to deal with a predicted upsurge in demand from young people in housing need. The survey established that "...authorities are concerned that welfare reform and wider housing market problems will undermine the good intentions of the HRA ... 99% say the level of housing benefit is not enough for a young person to afford a private rented tenancy". In addition, 93% of local authorities referred to the roll out of Universal Credit as a deterrent to landlords letting to young people and 80% stated that they would struggle to help young people because of a lack of suitable housing in their area¹¹.

Alongside their duties under the HRA, local authorities also have a duty to undertake a carers assessment/transition assessment with young adult carers, around the age of 18. As part of this process local authorities should consider young adult carers' housing needs and, across their local area, ensure join-up with administering new duties under the HRA.

The nature of young adult carers' lives, combined with the UK's housing crisis, means that many young adult carers are living in situations which have a serious impact on their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing, or are homeless as a result of unsustainable caring arrangements and breakdowns in family relationships. Learning and Work Institute's consultations with carers services as part of this evaluation suggests that housing is an increasing concern for carers services, and that they are spending more time supporting young adult carers to manage housing-related issues. However, young adult carers do not appear to be recognised as a group requiring specific housing-related support. In the current climate of extreme housing need, demand for shared housing and nervousness about developing specialist housing schemes unsupported by revenue commitments, Move On Up stands out as an innovative project, focused on a group whose needs have typically been overlooked.

Move On Up is being delivered in London but could be needed and something similar established in other parts of the UK where there are likely to be different housing market conditions. However, although affordability problems may not be as acute outside of London and other high housing cost areas, the impact of national policies such as LHA rates and the SAR for young people create affordability problems across the UK, and require careful financial modelling to make sure projects stack up and are accessible to young adult carers in need.

1.2 The Move On Up project

Move On Up is a housing project for young adult carers which is being delivered by Quaker Social Action (QSA), in partnership with Commonweal Housing. It tests a pathway to independent living, alongside tailored support to make positive transitions and to deal with challenges that individual young adult carers living in shared accommodation may experience. The Move On Up project fits well with the principles of recent legislation and the

¹¹ Centrepont (2018) The Homelessness Reduction Act. Will it work for young people?

aspirations of national and local government policy for young adult carers, and addresses a clear need in the context of the current housing crisis and the gap in government's considerations of young adult carers' housing needs.

Shared housing is now the only realistic housing option for young people in London, especially those on low incomes and dependent on benefits. This is likely to be the case for most in the target cohort for the Move On Up project, and so the evaluation particularly explored the appeal and potential value of shared housing to foster mutual support between young adult carers.

1.3 The evaluation

The evaluation took place alongside the first three years of Move On Up's development and delivery, to ensure that findings could be shared with partners on an ongoing basis and improvements made where needed. The evaluation identified the challenges faced by young adult carers in relation to housing and assessed the outcomes achieved by the young people taking part in the project. Its aim was to develop recommendations for policy and practice for the housing sector, which may not otherwise consider the support young people need to manage their caring responsibilities, and for organisations supporting young adult carers, who may not consider housing issues. It also considered the potential for wider replication and key success factors, both as a holistic programme of support/shared housing and through analysis of the impact of the component elements of the project on the young adult carers who participated.

2. Methodology

The evaluation ran from March 2017 to March 2020. It took both a formative and summative approach, identifying emerging learning to support the project's ongoing development, while also capturing emerging outcomes for participants, their families and any wider stakeholders.

The evaluation adopted an in-depth qualitative methodology to reflect the tailored and individualised support model developed by QSA. Through a 'theory of change' approach to data analysis, the evaluation captured how independent living, shared living and tailored support, resulted in positive or negative outcomes experienced by participants. This approach was also used to explore what may have happened in the absence of the independent housing, shared housing and/or specialist support, and any potential cost savings or implications for the state and support services.

The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, combining the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. During the development of the evaluation plan, L&W worked closely with QSA and Commonwealth Housing to ensure that the collection of monitoring and evaluation data was not onerous for the young people involved in the project. Where possible, the evaluation drew on the data collected by QSA and only collected data directly from young adult carers when this was necessary to avoid researcher bias (for example, when asking for their opinions on the programme).

This is the final report of the evaluation and brings together the findings of all five waves of data collection carried out over its three-year period. These activities included:

- **Analysis of participant data gathered by QSA**

In their initial assessment and subsequent one-to-ones with the Move On Up Project Manager, participants complete a carers star and support plan. These documents gather information on young adult carers' protected characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity, as well as data on the following indicators:

- Current financial situation (sources of income, benefits etc)
- Current and recent housing situation
- Level and impact of caring responsibilities
- Mental and physical health

- **'Distance travelled' questionnaires for young adult carers**

In order to track participants' progression over the course of their engagement with the project, L&W worked with QSA to develop a 'distance travelled' questionnaire for young adult carers to complete on a six-monthly basis. The questionnaire collected quantitative data on participants' perceptions of their health and wellbeing, finances, current situation, caring responsibilities, and education and employment situation. Project staff asked participants to complete these in their one-to-ones during each evaluation wave, and shared the completed forms with L&W. For this final evaluation report, participants' first responses were compared with their final responses. In total, 15 of the 21 participants completed an initial questionnaire, and 10 participants completed a final follow-up questionnaire. Participation in the evaluation was voluntary, so not all tenants agreed to complete the questionnaires, and challenges in engaging some participants in the support offer were also replicated in engaging them in the evaluation. Consequently, fewer participants completed a final questionnaire than an initial one. However, these

data have been included in this report as they provide a useful comparison with the qualitative findings.

- **Qualitative in-depth interviews with Move On Up participants**

30 interviews with 15 participants were conducted via telephone over the course of the three years. The interviews explored their experiences of the project, challenges and how these were overcome, support received, plans for moving on, and any emerging outcomes.

- **Qualitative in-depth interviews with former project participants¹²**

In-depth interviews were conducted by telephone with three of the ten participants who had moved on from the project. These interviewees had all succeeded in making positive or at least sideways move-ons; the four who experienced negative move-ons were unable to be contacted. These interviews explored their views of the project, outcomes they had experienced as a result of Move On Up, and which elements of the housing and support enabled them to move on.

- **Qualitative in-depth interviews with Move On Up project staff**

For each wave of the evaluation, an interview with the Move On Up project manager was conducted by telephone and aimed to gain a detailed understanding of the project's progress so far, challenges and enablers, any initial outcomes for participants and other stakeholders, any changes to project delivery, any areas for improvement and plans for the remainder of the project. The fourth and fifth waves included a telephone interview with the new development worker. In addition, the third evaluation wave included a telephone interview with the QSA finance manager, to explore the costs of the project and the process for chasing rent arrears, and the final wave included an interview with the QSA Director, to capture their views of the project's progress from a strategic perspective.

In addition to interviewing QSA staff and participants involved in the project, the third wave of the evaluation involved research with carer support workers and young adult carers who were not involved in the project. This additional research aimed to explore the replicability of the Move On Up model and whether the findings of the evaluation so far were unique to the London housing context, or were relevant to young adult carers living in other areas of England. In total, five telephone interviews were conducted with carers service staff based in different parts of the country (two were in London, one was in Leicester, one was in Rugby and the other was based in Newcastle). These interviews explored support workers' understanding of the barriers young adult carers face when making the transition to independent living, the factors they consider when moving out of the family home, challenges in achieving this transition, and their thoughts on the Move On Up project model. In addition, two focus groups were conducted with young adult carers – one in Warwick and one in London – to explore young people's experiences and thoughts on making the transition to independent living and on the Move On Up model.

¹² Participants who had progressed on from the project into independent living.

3. Project management and design

This section describes the aims and objectives of Move On Up; its development and set-up; the current project model; strategic partnerships and promotion; and project costs.

3.1 Project aims and objectives

The aim of Move On Up is to provide a safe and high-quality shared housing option for people aged 18-25, who have previously or currently care for someone. By providing young adult carers with their own space away from the family home, alongside tailored and holistic support from a dedicated worker, the project aims to enable:

- The best outcomes for the young people in terms of increasing the future options available to them, measured by increased personal sense of well-being, education and employment options.
- Improved relationships between young people and their family members.
- Successful transitions into the private rental sector/independent living.

The project is for young adult carers who were in housing crisis as well as those who wanted to make a planned transition into independent living from the family home. As such, the aim of Move On Up is not necessarily to provide accommodation for those with an immediate housing need, but is instead to provide a safe space away from caring, or the impact of caring, that enables young people to develop their own personal goals and progress towards these.

3.2 Project development and set-up

The project was developed based on research that QSA conducted in 2016, which aimed to identify particular groups that were affected by the housing crisis but tended to be overlooked by policy makers and practitioners in the housing sector. During this research, QSA found that young adult carers were likely to be at risk of homelessness and could benefit from a small-scale housing project. Following this, QSA approached a number of key organisations working with young adult carers, including Carers Trust and Learning and Work Institute, to explore the project idea and assess its feasibility.

Once it was clear that a housing project for young adult carers could be beneficial, QSA approached Commonweal Housing with a proposal for the project. At this point, QSA already had a partnership in place with Quaker Homeless Action (QHA), who had agreed to support the project. Commonweal secured the additional investment needed on top of the funding provided by QHA to purchase and refurbish four properties in East London through their social investors.

Purchasing and refurbishing the properties for the project took longer than initially anticipated, so the first participants moved into the project accommodation in November 2017, a few months later than planned. Twelve months into the project, one of the original properties became untenable for participants due to a particularly vexatious neighbour. Once all available options to remedy the situation had been exhausted, Commonweal, QSA and the social investors took the decision to move participants out of this property and instead bring on board another house which had previously been used for a different Commonweal project.

Alongside purchasing and refurbishing the properties, QSA spent a considerable amount of the project set-up time developing relationships with potential referral agencies, including housing organisations and charities, carers services and local authorities, to raise awareness of the project and start receiving referrals. This meant that, as the properties became available, participants were ready to move in, thereby reducing the number of void rooms at the outset.

This initial set-up period was very time consuming for the project manager, as their role covered managing the refurbishment of the houses, recruiting and assessing participants, moving and settling in tenants, and dealing with all of the teething issues that arose. In hindsight, the QSA Director felt that staggering the kick-off times for each of the properties would have made this more manageable for the project manager, and enabled QSA to test their eligibility criteria and tenant matching process before rolling these out across all of the properties.

3.3 The current project model

QSA currently has four properties on the Move On Up project, located in Hackney, Bethnal Green, Stoke Newington and Tottenham. Each of these properties houses up to three people at a time, so the total capacity for the project is 12 participants.

Every participant can live in a Move On Up property for up to two years, although initially a 12-month contract is signed which is renewed for a further year as long as the participant is engaging well. Participants initially signed assured shorthold tenancy agreements, but after the first year it was decided that the project would move to licences instead¹³. As such, the majority of participants are on licences, although a small number from the original cohort remain on tenancy agreements.

Rent is set at the Local Housing Allowance rate to make it affordable for participants, even for those who may rely on Universal Credit. This ensures that employment is not a precondition for young people's involvement in the project, as QSA recognise that a caring responsibility and housing need may act as barriers to employment. Participants do not need to pay a deposit or any other fees in advance, but they are responsible for paying their rent and a service charge (which covers gas, electricity, water, TV licence and internet) once they have moved in.

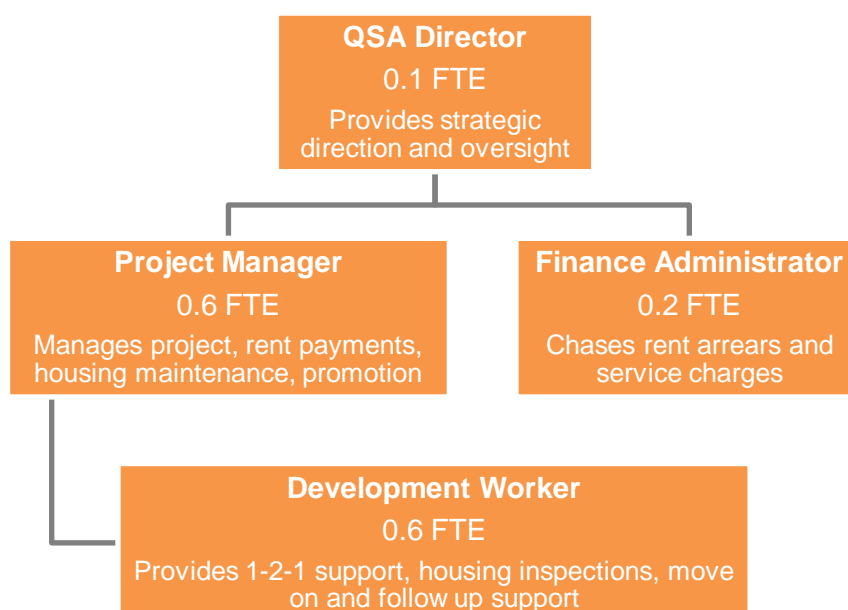
Participants receive a tailored and holistic support offer from QSA staff. The Move On Up model is not supported housing, nor is it staffed as such. Instead, the project aims to enable young adult carers to define and take responsibility in progressing towards their goals, by providing holistic and constructive support which equips participants with the skills and experience needed to make successful transitions into independent living.

At its outset, the project was delivered by one main member of staff, who acted as both the project manager and development worker for participants. When this member of staff left, they were replaced with two part-time workers, which separated the project management and development worker responsibilities into two roles. This was in response to the original project manager's reflections and the findings of the formative evaluation, which suggested

¹³ The reasons for the move from ASTs to licences are explored in section 4.7.4.

that their relationships with participants were impacted by the need for them to both provide support and deal with rent arrears and issues with the properties.

Below is the current staffing structure for Move On Up.



The stages of the current Move On Up project are described below. A visual model is also presented. This delivery model is now relatively established, although project staff are flexible and will continue to adapt their delivery of the project to suit participants' needs.

Promotion of the project: The project manager promotes the project through leaflets, online advertising, engagement with relevant stakeholders, meetings with potential referral agencies and attendance at events. This promotion is supported by an in-house comms assistant.

Referral made: A young person is referred to the project, either through self-referral using the form on the QSA website or through a referral agency such as a carers service or housing officer.

Assessment: The young person's suitability for the project is assessed by the project manager and development worker in a face-to-face meeting which explores their caring situation, housing needs, wider support needs, financial situation and their plans for the future.

Waiting list: If the young person is deemed suitable for the project and wants to join, they are placed on the waiting list for a vacancy in one of the properties. The project manager calls them at least once a month to keep them updated on the project and make sure they are still interested in joining.

Selection process: When a vacancy comes up in one of the properties, the project manager and development worker review the young people who have recently been referred and pick one or two who they feel might be a good fit with the existing tenants in the

property. These potential participants then meet with the existing tenants to ensure that they will get on as a household. The preferred participant is then offered the vacancy.

Initial move-in meeting: The new participant meets with the development worker to go through the licence agreement for the property and sign their contract. They also discuss their goals and develop a support plan, and the development worker answers any questions they have about moving in.

Initial tenancy management training: The new participant takes part in two hour-long workshops, one on their responsibilities in relation to paying rent, service charges and bills, the other on living with others, sharing and conflict resolution. This may happen pre move-in, or shortly after they move into the project accommodation.

Support to move in: The participant is offered support to move into the property, if needed. For example, practical help to move belongings.

Participant moves in: The participant is provided with a booklet outlining the ground rules for the property, key information and contacts.

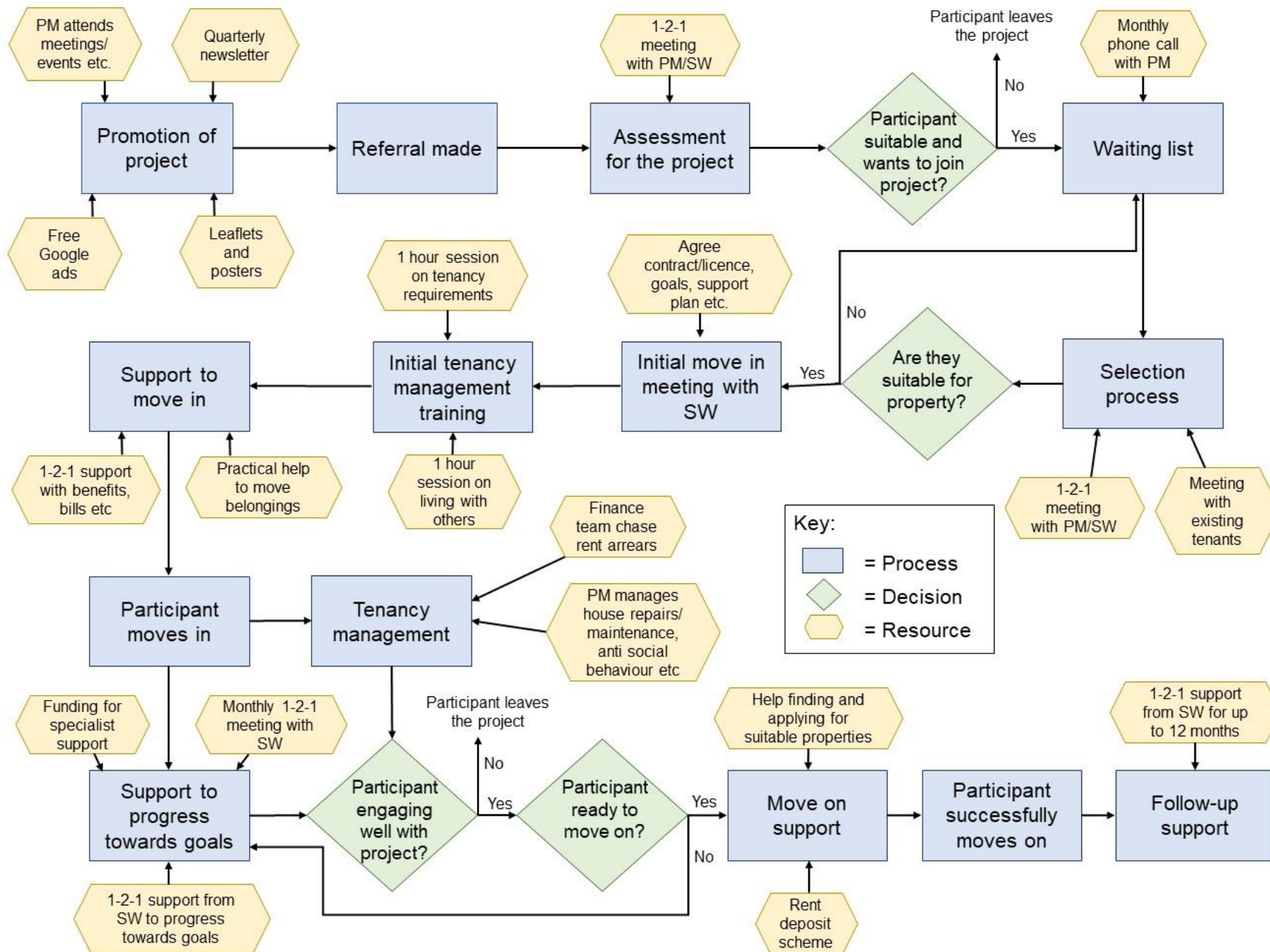
Post move-in meeting: The participant has a face-to-face meeting with the development worker within two weeks of moving into the property, to ensure that everything is going smoothly with their housemates, their direct debits and bills are set up, and address any initial teething problems.

Tenancy management: The project manager monitors participants' rent and service charge payments. The finance team chase any rent arrears or outstanding service charges. Significant rent arrears may result in an exit from the project.

Support to progress towards goals: The participant is offered tailored, one-to-one support from the development worker and monthly catch ups to ensure they are progressing in line with their support plan. Poor engagement with the development worker and/or flatmates can lead to an exit from the project. Participants also have access to a small pot of funding to help them progress towards their goals, for example, by paying for driving lessons.

Move on support: When a participant feels ready to move on, the development worker provides support to go through their options, find and apply for appropriate accommodation, and move out. Participants can also access the rent deposit scheme which was set up by QSA using underspend from one of their other projects.

Follow-up support: Once the participant has successfully moved on, the development worker can continue to support them for up to 12 months. This involves monthly catch up calls and advice to ensure they settle into their new accommodation and to help them deal with any challenges that arise during and after their move.



3.4 The target group

Between November 2017 and February 2020, Move On Up supported 21 young adult carers. Of these, a third (seven) were male and two-thirds (14) were female, and the majority had current caring roles, with only a third (seven) being recent or past carers.

Initially, the criteria for a young person to join the project was that they were aged 18-25 and a current or recent carer. The project manager also explored their housing situation, support needs, and the potential benefits they could gain from being involved in the project. As the project progressed, it became apparent that these criteria needed further clarification, in order to maximise the likelihood that participants will fully engage with the project (both in terms of paying rent and engaging with project staff to derive maximum benefit from the support available).

When exploring typologies of participants and who the project is best suited to, it seems that there are five key variables to consider. The first is **the intensity and level of their caring role**. While the project is targeted at young adult carers, QSA does not have a strict definition of the level or intensity of caring that a young person must be carrying out in order to be eligible for the project. Instead, the focus is on the impact that caring has had and continues to have on young people's lives, measured using the Multidimensional Assessment of Caring Activities (MACA). As a result, participants may: be current carers who continue to care at the same level when they move into the project; current carers who reduce or change their caring role when they move in; have recently stopped caring; or have stopped caring some time ago. There appears to be no strong correlation between the intensity of participants' caring roles and their levels of engagement.

A second way of categorising participants is in relation to their **housing need when joining the project**. Some participants were homeless and therefore had an immediate housing need when they joined the project. Others were in desperate need for their own space to provide some respite from caring, in order to focus on their own personal development, wellbeing, education or employment. As such, their housing needs were less urgent, but there was a clear potential benefit to them joining the project and moving into the shared accommodation.

A third way of categorising project participants is through the clarity of their **personal development goals**. The evaluation broadly found that participants' goals and aspirations for their personal development was a strong indicator of whether they would engage with the support from the project staff. In general, those who signed up to Move On Up purely to address a housing need tended to be less engaged with the programme, compared to those who wanted independent housing in order to facilitate broader goals such as wellbeing, education or employment progression. However, this was not always clear cut and some participants who had an immediate housing need developed personal goals once this had been addressed. This possibly demonstrates the importance of stable, independent housing for self-realisation amongst young people.

Another important factor to consider when looking at participants' suitability for the project is the **level and intensity of their support needs**. The staffing on Move On Up means that it cannot cater for multiple participants with high support needs, as this can be very time consuming for the development worker. Instead, the project is targeted at those with low or moderate support needs. This can be difficult to assess on entry to the project, as some

needs may only emerge once a participant is living independently or in shared housing for the first time. However, it is important that staff are confident they can provide the level of support needed for participants to engage in and progress in the project.

Finally, a key factor that has recently emerged from the project is **participants' financial situation and ability to cover the rent, service charges and bills** associated with living in the Move On Up properties. If a participant is in insecure work or a low-paid zero-hour contract, it will likely be challenging for them to afford the rent set by the project, as they may not know how much they will earn on a weekly basis. While the project aims to be inclusive, it also needs to cover its costs, otherwise it will not be financially viable. Ensuring that participants have a realistic understanding of the costs involved in being on the project and have the means to pay their bills is therefore an important consideration when looking at the target group for the project.

After two and a half years of delivery, the evaluation has identified that the most appropriate target group for Move On Up is young people who:

- Are a current or recent carer, or a previous carer who is still affected by their past caring role
- Have a less urgent housing need (i.e. will not be homeless if they do not join the project) or have an immediate housing need but with a desire to make progress in key areas of their life, e.g. education or employment
- Have clear personal goals or are willing to agree goals and work towards these
- Have low or moderate support needs
- Can afford the costs of living independently in a Move On Up property, either through their salary or benefits

If a participant meets these criteria then they are most likely to engage with the support offered by project staff, be a good housemate to other participants, and not fall into rent arrears. The challenges remain in accurately assessing these criteria on entry to the project.

3.5 Strategic partnerships and promotion

From the outset of the project, QSA has had a number of strategic partnerships in place that support the development, delivery and promotion of Move On Up. Key to the success of the project has been QSA's relationship with Commonweal Housing. Commonweal secured the investment needed to purchase the properties through their social investors, and has played a key role in supporting the project throughout its development and delivery. They provided QSA with expertise and advice on purchasing and refurbishing the properties for the project, and convene a quarterly (then biannual) strategic meeting which brings together key stakeholders in the housing and carer sectors, along with the social investors for the project, the evaluators and QSA, to explore how the project is progressing, emerging learning, and to troubleshoot significant issues. Commonweal also support QSA to share emerging learning from the project with key audiences and continue to help them troubleshoot key issues arising from the project through quarterly operations meetings.

“All of the set-up stuff was handled by Commonweal, so... we could focus on the bit that we brought expertise to and our passion to, which was to actually running the project... I think their model is fantastic and they’ve been very, very encouraging and very supportive, and very interested in how the project is going as well. I’ve always felt like they’ve got our back, and that all the time they would be as helpful as possible for us.” (QSA Director)

QSA also found the expertise of Learning and Work Institute and Carers Trust helpful in developing a housing model targeted at young adult carers. QSA approached both organisations in the early stages of their planning for the project to scope potential interest and the feasibility of running a housing project for young adult carers. Similarly, QSA’s engagement with housing charities such as Crisis has been invaluable in helping them to think through and adapt their delivery model.

Other key partnerships that have been important to the success of the project so far include those with the social investors, who participate in the strategic project group, and local stakeholders. The QSA Director reflected that having the social investors involved in the strategic direction of the project has enabled them to develop a deeper understanding of the difference the project is making and, as a result, they are interested in supporting it beyond simply protecting their bottom line.

“I think that really shows when we had the situation... where we had a neighbour who was really just making the lives of our tenants a nightmare. I think the investors could have responded in a very different way... What mattered to them was making sure that we provided a good, safe, supportive environment for the people we were housing... Because they’d been so close to the project and they really understood it, they helped deal with that situation in a very, very calm way.” (QSA Director)

In terms of local stakeholders, QSA recognise that strong partnerships with carers services, local authorities and housing organisations are not only crucial for the project to receive appropriate referrals, but also to promote its work and learning with agencies who may consider replicating the project in the future.

3.6 Project costs

This section presents the current costs of the Move On Up project. It provides a detailed breakdown of the project running costs, describes the subsidies received from Commonweal, and explores the financial context and risks.

3.6.1 Annual income statement

QSA have provided a detailed breakdown for the costs of delivering Move On Up in London. The costs cover 2017/18 and 2018/19 – the main difference being that 2017/18 includes fit out and start-up costs. The costs are based on 12 clients per year. See Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of costs.

The table below shows all actual income received specifically for Move On Up, set against the project specific costs.

	Project Year 1	Project Year 2	Project total
	Apr-17 to Mar-18	Apr-18 to Mar-19	
Investment income	£212,000	nil	£212,000
Trusts & other income	£33,058	£8,815	£41,873
Rental income	£37,636	£51,808	£89,444
Project running costs	£111,543*	£111,535	£223,078
Surplus/Deficit	£171,151	-£50,912	£120,239

* note – this includes one off fit out/start-up costs of £20,514.

During year 1, QSA was in the fortunate position to allocate a significant windfall from investment income/reserves and further grant funding from Quaker Homeless Action to support the project. QSA has developed a seven-year (2017-2023) project budget for Move On Up and has identified that they need to secure significant additional income over the project's lifespan.

Over the seven-year period, income from grants secured to date plus anticipated rental income is expected to total over £600K. Total expenditure including direct costs and indirect costs apportioned to the project is expected to be over £750k¹⁴. This leaves a gap of approximately £150k which will need to be met by securing additional grants or by allocating unrestricted income from QSA's supporters and funders over the coming years.

3.6.2 The Commonweal subsidy

The social investment required to purchase the four properties used by QSA for the MOU project (totalling circa £2.3m) was accessed by Commonweal Housing, who also provide operational and strategic support. Social investment was sourced from a group of four separate social investors. The loan sits with Commonweal, just as the assets sit on their balance sheet, thus insulating QSA from the financial risk linked to the ownership of the properties.

Commonweal pays a yield to the investors on an annual basis, covered by income from the leases to QSA.

The properties are leased to QSA at a subsidised rate, which is a percentage of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. This allows QSA to let rooms to tenants at or near the LHA shared room rate, whilst still having some margin to cover other project costs. This notional subsidy (i.e. the reduced lease cost to QSA) is part of Commonweal's offer to provide pilot projects with a greater degree of financial security, while testing innovative housing models.

3.6.3 Financial context and risks

At the end of March 2019 (end of project year 2), the project was running a surplus of £140,752. This is largely due to QSA's decision to allocate investment income to the project and its success in securing income from trusts. The Commonweal subsidy has also been important in enabling the project to be financially viable.

¹⁴ A breakdown of the full costs are included in section 6.5 and the appendix.

It would not be financially viable to deliver Move On Up based on rental income alone, and, increasing rental income would be difficult for several reasons:

- The level of arrears is very high across the project. At the moment, only three of the 12 participants have no arrears and the arrears owed equates to over £12k. This suggests participants are struggling to pay their rent at its current rate, therefore increasing the rent is unlikely to bring in additional income.
- At least five participants moved out of their rental accommodation with arrears that they do not intend to pay back. This would likely increase if rent was increased.
- There is also the issue of voids in rent payments between participants leaving and new participants moving in. Increasing rent would mean the cost of these voids are higher.
- Participants on Universal Credit currently have to wait five weeks until they receive their first payment, or request an advance payment which they then have to pay back. This often means that participants start from a position of debt, which they struggle to pay off in subsequent months. Increasing rent would only make this more of a challenge.

The two largest cost items in the delivery of Move On Up are salary and office costs, which make up 60 per cent of the overall costs.

The main salary costs are for the direct project staff – the project manager and support worker. It may be possible to employ someone outside of London with similar skill levels for less but within London there is little space for manoeuvre without reducing the level of support.

Fit out costs which were accrued during the first year amounted to just over £20K. There may be opportunities to make savings (for other projects) if the project re-used a considerable amount of furniture, fittings and equipment from an existing premise.

Finally, office rent amounted to £45.4K in year 1 and £46.6K in year 2 – any reduction of this would have a significant impact on overall costs but this may only be achievable outside London.

4. Project delivery

4.1 Participant recruitment

Project staff have adopted a range of methods to recruit participants onto the project. The initial process of identifying young adult carers for the project was resource intensive and challenging. The project manager spent a considerable amount of their time engaging with relevant stakeholders in the housing and care sectors to raise awareness of the project and promote its offer to young adult carers. This was complemented by leaflets, posters, online adverts, attendance at local meetings and events, and directly approaching potential referral agencies.

Since the initial cohort was recruited and started on the project, recruitment has become less intensive, and is only a key focus when there is a vacancy coming up on the project. In recent months, the current project manager has focussed on developing relationships with organisations who they feel will refer appropriate young people to the project, but acknowledged that it is important to be clear about the number and frequency of likely vacancies with potential referral agencies.

“It’s a very fine balance between being known and getting the right referrals, but also knowing that we can’t carry a big waiting list because we don’t have vacancies that often... We don’t want to be in a position where people think that we can offer this service when actually we might not have a vacancy for six months, so it’s about managing expectations.” (Project manager)

In total, the project received 107 referrals. Of these, 48 were registered and added to the waiting list, and 21 were successfully housed on the project. Referrals came from a range of sources, including youth support services (32), carers services (17) and other housing organisations (7). However, by far the largest source of referrals were self-referrals from young people themselves (51), and the majority of these came through QSA’s website form. This form asks where the applicant heard about the project; half said they found out about it by searching online using Google, and a small number each said they learned about the project by word of mouth, their carers service, another key worker or a health professional. This suggests that the recruitment methods described above have been effective in raising awareness of the project amongst the target group, and the project manager also believes that current participants are raising awareness of the project by word of mouth, which is helping the project gain self-referrals from local young adult carers.

Interestingly, the project generally receives few referrals from carers services. Discussions between the project manager and these services suggests that, while their young people are initially very interested in the project, emotionally they do not yet feel ready to take that step, and so the promotion of the project to carers services does not necessarily translate into referrals. This suggests that, while carers services recognise the need for housing support amongst young adult carers, individual young people need significant support to consider taking the step into independent living for themselves. However, Move On Up has a strong relationship with a small number of carers services who refer regularly.

In recent months, the number of self-referrals received through the website has been sufficient to fill vacancies on the project with appropriate young people, which means that the

relatively low number of referrals from support services and agencies is not currently viewed as a challenge which needs to be addressed. In fact, the level of referrals and conversions to tenancies/licences means that QSA feels the project's capacity is sufficient to meet local demand.

"...four properties, three bedrooms, twelve [tenants] was our target number, but we had no way of testing out if there was that level of demand... but it seems like it's about the right number. When we know we've got some vacancies coming, we do have to push and we do have to remind people we're there, but we're getting a slow trickle of interest." (QSA Director)

4.2 Participant matching and move-in

Over the course of the project delivery, the importance of ensuring a good 'fit' between flatmates in the properties has been emphasised by both participants and the project staff. When the first cohort was moved in, the project manager was reliant on their initial assessments of participants and their understanding of their aims and personalities to match participants into households.

After some significant issues with a small number of participants, which disrupted two of the four households in the project, the project manager added a new 'peer interview' stage to the allocation process for participants. This enabled existing tenants to meet two or three potential new participants and have a say in who would move into their property. The aim of this stage was to provide existing tenants with a sense of ownership over who moved into their flat, and to also give prospective participants an opportunity to meet the people they would be living with and ensure they would get along.

This additional stage seemed to improve the matching process and have a positive impact on the engagement and responsibility of existing participants. However, one of the households that went through the peer interview stage broke down within a few weeks of the new participant moving in. This was the result of a number of different factors which affected the relationships between the participants in this property, but project staff also felt that one of the tenants was particularly strong-willed and did not want anyone new moving into their home. As a result, they did not offer the interview stage to this household again but instead only organised a pre move-in meeting between the existing tenants and a new participant.

Going forward, QSA will adopt either the peer interview or pre move-in meeting approach to matching, depending on how many young people they have on their waiting list and their own judgement of the situations within each property.

4.3 The support offer

The Move On Up development worker and project manager provide participants with tailored support on a range of issues to enable progression towards their goals, including education and employment, health and wellbeing, and plans for future living arrangements. All participants develop and agree a support plan with the project development worker and are invited to monthly catch up meetings, although engagement varies. In between such appointments, participants can contact the development worker or project manager with problems or queries.

Much of the support focusses on managing their properties and relationships with housemates, as the development worker is generally the first point of call when any issues arise. Other support includes helping participants explore their options in relation to education and employment and refine their goals; employability support to help them get into or find different work; signposting participants to specialist advice and support; and generally being available to listen to participants and provide information and advice on a wide range of topics. The project development worker is looking to introduce more intensive support on job search and applications in the coming months, to support participants into more secure employment and address the issues of rent arrears discussed in 4.7.1 below.

Another key aspect of the support offered through Move On Up is helping participants manage their caring roles following their move-out of the family home. For many, their caring reduces when they move out, but some have found their family resistant to this and require support to establish boundaries and manage their caring alongside living independently.

“...she’s settling in to having her own place, and is trying to reduce her caring, that’s been quite difficult, because I think her family is resistant to that. So, I’ve been working with her on just trying to identify her own mind about it... trying to go through that process gradually with her, so that she can have some more boundaries.” (Project development worker)

Overall, participants were appreciative of the support offered throughout the project and had few suggestions for improvement. Participants liked that QSA staff were very responsive to their requests for support, tailored support to their particular needs and worked with them to reach an appropriate decision, rather than doing things on their behalf. This reflects good practice in other supported housing schemes, where participants are supported to recognise and build on their assets and identify goals and the skills and knowledge they need to achieve these.

“[Project manager’s] got the right kind of approach towards this. It’s always very practical. He doesn’t just say what you think is best, he helps guide you to the right choice in a rational, sensible way, without dismissing how you feel about the situation. He always takes everything into consideration.” (Participant, discussing support from the original Project Manager who delivered both the housing and support elements of the project)

One participant commented that the support they received on the project had given them the confidence to engage with other formal support workers. This participant also received support from a care coordinator, and the development worker and project manager had worked with them to ensure a comprehensive package of support for this participant.

“In one way, it sounds silly, but [project manager’s] helped me build up more trust in working with people in that kind of role... When I first started to see [project manager] I would almost see it like I was in trouble, so I would want to get through the meeting as quick as possible, not cause any problems, don’t raise any issues about what was going on at the flat, because I had that fear that, ‘I don’t want to lose my place here, I don’t want to have these things happen’. And [project manager] has really helped me alleviate those fears and make me feel confident.” (Participant)

While the majority of participants were very positive about the support received on the project, a small number commented that, although they felt listened to in their support meetings and practical issues were addressed quickly, they sometimes wanted more intensive support or guidance to help them progress towards their goals. It is therefore likely that the more intensive job searching support that the development worker is planning will be appreciated by participants.

In addition, two participants felt that the level and quality of support had changed since the original project manager left and the two new project staff started. More details on this challenge is described in section 4.7.3 below, but these participants explained that, because the new staff joined during a time of uncertainty and conflict within their property, it was challenging for them to develop positive relationships with them. As such, they felt reluctant to approach the new members of staff for support, or were more critical of the support on offer.

“...because they came in on a time where there was conflict so I didn’t feel like I knew them enough to go to them with my problems. So, I don’t feel like I got enough help, because I didn’t feel like I could go to them for the help.”

(Participant)

However, it is worth noting that staff turnover is highly likely in any project, and this will inevitably affect participants’ engagement with any support offered. As such, it is important to mitigate the potential negative impacts of this. By moving to a structure with two members of staff, any future staffing changes may be less problematic for participants as they would continue to have a relationship with at least one QSA worker on the project.

At one stage, the project recruited a number of expert volunteers to provide specialist support to participants. However, take up of this offer was relatively low, and so this has mainly been replaced with the small pot of funding for additional support, as described in the project model in section 3.3. Participants have found this money very useful, particularly in enabling them to take up driving lessons which they felt had increased their mobility both in terms of future employment and housing options.

4.4 Independent living

Generally, participants were very positive about their experiences of living independently as part of Move On Up. Throughout the evaluation, most participants felt they did not need help with the practicalities of independent living (such as cooking, budgeting, cleaning and paying bills), with many saying they were used to doing these activities as part of their caring responsibilities or because they had lived away from home previously.

“I’ve obviously been living alone for like a very long time, because I first moved out my mum’s house at nineteen, so I’ve gotten used to it, I don’t struggle at all, like I know how to cook, I know how to clean, I know how to manage my money, I know how to attend sessions with [development worker].” (Participant)

However, participants who had not previously lived independently reported that Move On Up had enabled them to improve their confidence around living independently. This is supported

by the questionnaire data which showed that, by their final response, all participants said they were confident that they were able to live independently.

“Before joining the project, for less than a year I lived on my own and it was sort of a struggle but I’ve found my feet in living here. And I feel confident in myself that I can do it, whereas before I wasn’t sure.” (Participant)

In addition, while participants claimed to need little support in managing their homes, rent arrears were a consistent issue throughout the first three years of the project, at times becoming a significant challenge for its financial stability. The implications of and reasons behind this are discussed in more detail in section 4.7.1 below, but these issues clearly demonstrate that participants needed more support with budgeting and financial management than they themselves acknowledged.

All of the participants reported being happy with the quality of the flats and the furnishings. In addition, participants commented that QSA’s responsiveness to issues meant that they were confident that any problems with the properties would be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

“Everything was dealt with rapidly... And everything’s been done super nice and super fast and that’s made me feel confident in the project.” (Participant)

Participants experienced a range of benefits from independent living¹⁵ with many attributing their progression in education or employment, improvements in wellbeing and increased social participation to the opportunity to live independently.

4.5 Shared living

Participants’ experiences of shared living varied considerably over the course of the project. There were some tensions between tenants in most of the properties at various points throughout the evaluation, and these sometimes came to a head, with QSA having to run mediation sessions between housemates, evict some tenants or, on one occasion, move a tenant to different property.

Issues reported between housemates included some participants hosting parties and incurring noise complaints from neighbours. At other times, some participants felt that the number of guests brought in were inappropriate, and there were also reports of antisocial or inconsiderate behaviour from guests, and one instance where a participant had felt threatened. Other issues included different expectations about cleanliness and a perceived lack of respect for agreed house rules. It is worth noting that all of these issues are common complaints in shared properties, and appeared to have little to do with participants’ experiences of being young adult carers.

Conversely, when the tenants got on well, this created opportunities for housemates to form supportive relationships with one another which greatly enhanced their experience of the project. A few of the properties fostered very strong relationships between participants, and these friendships have continued beyond their involvement in Move On Up. Some participants spoke about quite dramatic improvements in their household when problematic housemates moved out and new participants moved in.

¹⁵ These benefits are elaborated under the ‘Outcomes and Theory of Change’ section.

“It’s totally changed the whole energy. One person coming has improved my relationship with both housemates. So now all three of us socialise and chill together and everything’s good. Whereas before I was a bit nervous and hid in my room.” (Participant)

However, other participants found it challenging to deal with changes in their housemates. This was particularly the case in one property where three participants formed very strong friendships. When one of the participants in this property moved out, this caused high levels of anxiety amongst the remaining two tenants. This was a main driver for the project manager to introduce a peer interview element to the selection process, which gave the existing tenants a say in who moved into the house with them. Despite this, the relationship between the two existing tenants and the new participant rapidly deteriorated, to the point where QSA had to move the new participant to a different property. Ongoing issues between one of these participants and new housemates means that QSA have decided not to run peer interviews for this property, but instead only hold pre move-in meetings for participants to meet one another.

“We couldn’t give her that choice. She actually said she wanted to be part of the decision-making team in future. She wants to be a member of staff. So, that’s not really possible, she can’t have that level of control about what we do and the decisions we make, but we did everything we could to be mindful of her feelings... But, yes, unless anyone’s got a real, real, valid objection we would still move someone in.” (Move On Up Project Manager)

These findings about the shared living experiences of participants challenge the initial assumption of the project that carers will necessarily find common ground and be able to offer peer support to each other. While this shared responsibility can create opportunities for participants to develop positive and supportive relationships, a caring role was not enough to guarantee that this would occur. This was reinforced by many of the participants.

“I naively went into it thinking, ‘oh, I’m going to be living with other young carers, they’re going to be super mature and get how it is to be a young carer’. That’s not necessarily the case... not everyone goes into it and knows how ‘to adult’, and manage bills, and knows how to run a household, and knows the actual domestic skills et cetera. Because that’s the thing about being a young carer, you don’t necessarily choose to be a young carer so you’re not automatically equipped with all of those skills.” (Participant)

Participants identified a number of factors that they felt were key to ensuring a good match between flatmates. The most common was the level of maturity of participants. This was emphasised by the majority of those interviewed, and was often linked to age (although it is worth noting that the participants in the flat with particularly strong relationships were of varying ages).

“I’m much older than the rest of the QSA lot, and so there was a bit of a difference between myself and the others.” (Participant)

It is worth noting that levels of maturity are a key basis for a good match between households in any shared housing project. Interestingly, participants in Move On Up also

linked maturity levels to the level and intensity of their caring role. Many participants felt that those who were not fully engaging in the project had fewer caring responsibilities and that this in turn meant that they were not as mature.

Gender was also a key consideration. One participant had found that being the only female in the household had created challenges in developing supportive relationships with their flatmates. A new participant also felt more comfortable with the idea of living with other young women and that this meant they had more of an immediate bond.

Overall, participants seemed to agree that the key factor in enabling flatmates to get along was their intentions or motivations for being involved in the project. This may be affected by participants' age, caring responsibilities or personalities, but was viewed to be the most effective common ground for tenants to get along.

"I don't even mean age or gender but like maturity or intentions, if people's intentions match up. Because if the person that was here before was with other 19-year olds who had that drinking, college mentality it could've all been cohesive and fine." (Participant)

However, once a supportive relationship or friendship was established, the shared experience of being a carer seemed to enhance this and facilitate peer support between flatmates. In fact, many participants felt that they would not have experienced the same level of benefits from the project if they were living with other young people who were not carers.

"I feel like being carers allows us to communicate and, sort of, help each other out more... I don't know that I would feel so confident and speak freely about my family and my experiences and even ask for help from people who had a totally different upbringing." (Participant)

Importantly, new participants continue to find the idea of living with other young adult carers appealing.

These findings suggest a complex relationship between caring and the other factors that have enabled participants to build supportive relationships. While a common experience of caring does not appear to automatically lead to peer support, a significant caring role does appear to provide participants with the emotional intelligence which contributes to other important factors which affect participants' relationships, such as maturity and intentions while on the project. In addition, once a positive relationship has been established between participants, their common experiences as young adult carers appear to offer opportunities for additional peer support, and enhance their experiences of Move On Up.

4.6 Support to move on from the project

Over the last year, a key focus of the support provided by project staff for participants has been on enabling a successful move-on from the project. Initially, the project manager's time was spent settling in participants and dealing with teething issues, and they tended to begin having conversations with participants about their move-on options around six months before the end of their tenancy, unless they expressed a desire to move out earlier.

However, project staff found that some participants had unrealistic expectations of their move-on destination; for example, many said that they did not want to live in shared housing

because of their experiences with flatmates, or they wanted to live near their families in central London, when they were already struggling to afford the relatively low levels of rent on Move On Up.

These unrealistic expectations, combined with a change in staffing on the project at the time of the initial tenancies coming to an end and high support needs in relation to mental health, meant that three participants over-stayed their contracts because suitable housing could not be found. Given QSA's charitable aims, project staff felt it would be difficult to justify ending these participants' contracts when they have nowhere else to go, and that they have a duty of care for participants.

"I feel that's one of the challenges of the project like this because it's not only a housing project, it's about being aware of every individual's needs and their vulnerabilities and acting in an ethical way, so that's the reason why we can't evict that young man with the mental health disabilities, is because that would not be the right and ethical thing to do, regardless of our criteria... These are dilemmas that we have to consider alongside the needs of the project to run smoothly." (Project manager)

Consequently, both the project manager and development worker now discuss possible move-on destinations with participants at the outset of their involvement in the project, in order to set expectations and ensure their plans are realistic.

"We're trying to talk about moving on much earlier, and try and keep tabs on where people are at, and really, really start working hard on it six months before the end. Trying to be really realistic with them about their options..." (Project development worker)

Other move-on support offered to participants included helping them to look at properties using mobile applications, contact estate agents, view flats and complete applications for accommodation. Staff also signposted participants to housing specialists for tailored advice about their move-on options. Participants reported that this specialist advice was particularly helpful in clarifying their options and giving them a better understanding of what they could realistically afford once they had moved out.

"[Volunteer] helped find out what would be available with my budget in mind... It was helpful. It was just a bit sobering, but basically it made me realise I couldn't afford to live on my own and I'd have to live with other people." (Participant)

Another key aspect to supporting participants to have the best possible move-on is ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills needed to live independently. The project development worker reflected that many of the participants lack basic knowledge about the costs and practicalities of living independently, and so much of their time is spent helping participants recognise the importance of maintaining a rented accommodation, and how to fix minor issues around the house.

"I have to do ask them quite basic questions, or explain to them what I think are quite basic things, in order for them to actually have the knowledge they

need, to think about their move on, or how they're going to cope in the future. I think we assume sometimes that because they've been young carers, they have practical skills and they have practical knowledge, but they don't, necessarily." (Project development worker)

Participants who had successfully moved on found the rent deposit scheme invaluable in enabling them to do this. This scheme provides participants with the deposit for the property they are moving on into and was set aside by QSA at the start of the project.

"You do need a bit of help getting to that next step and that was a huge help because it actually gave me the chance to be able to do that and afford to move out as well. Because it's not a small amount of money when you're asked for a deposit." (Participant)

However, some participants felt that the support offered in relation to move-on was lacking. In recent months, this was again due to participants not feeling that they had strong enough relationships with new staff to ask for help, which meant that they felt that they had to make their own arrangements to move out. Earlier in the project, some participants felt there was a lack of clarity over what would happen at the end of the project and the support they would receive following a successful move into independent living. This led to many anxieties about what would happen after their participation in Move On Up ended, and was another motivation for project staff to begin discussing potential move-on destinations with participants earlier in their tenancies. However, some participants still felt that more could be done to help participants start to think about their move-on earlier in the project. Many of these anxieties are likely to be the result of the rental market being particularly challenging in London, which means participants are acutely aware of their limited options for a positive move-on from the project. As such, a move back to the family home may be a positive outcome for participants, if the project enables them to negotiate this so that their caring responsibilities have less of a negative impact on their personal wellbeing and goals. However, many participants were focussed on moving into alternative independent living at the end of their tenancy, rather than moving in with a relative.

"I don't want to be, like, I've got three months left, and I've still got nowhere to go... I feel like you should be already getting help, so when the time comes to move on, you basically know where you're going." (Participant)

While QSA are proactively encouraging participants to plan for their move-on, they also recognise that they have a duty of care to avoid tenants becoming homeless at the end of their tenancies wherever possible. For this reason, QSA have agreed to extend the contracts of two participants who are struggling to find satisfactory accommodation to move into. Both of these participants have mental health problems and have limited housing options, but are struggling to be accepted for appropriate housing by their local authorities. Consequently, QSA anticipate that these participants will remain on the project for an additional six months.

"We can't evict him. We have a duty of care towards him I think. This is how we both feel. He was given an agreement to have a rolling extension until he was housed because of his vulnerabilities." (Project manager)

While participants could access support from project staff for up to 12 months after they had moved on, very few accessed this and even then, this was only for a few weeks until they were settled in their new accommodation.

4.7 Challenges and how these have been addressed

This section discusses the key challenges experienced by project staff and participants in the first three years of Move On Up. These include: rent arrears; engagement with the support offer; staffing changes; relationships between housemates; dealing with maintenance of houses; the intensive support required by a few participants; and housing maintenance.

4.7.1 Rent arrears

High levels of rent arrears have been an ongoing challenge for the project. Only three of the current 12 participants owe no arrears to the project, and seven of the previous participants left the project owing arrears, amounting to almost £15,000 in total. While some of these are working to pay this off, the level of rent arrears across the project is a key concern for staff.

QSA have introduced a number of changes to the project model in an attempt to improve the level of rent arrears owed by participants. These have included having the finance team take over the chasing of rent arrears from the project manager, introducing more explicit questions about income, budgeting and managing rent payments into the assessment process, and asking new tenants to take part in an hour-long workshop on their responsibilities, including paying rent. The current project manager also sends letters to those who owe arrears, explaining that if they do not agree a payment plan for these then they will be evicted from the project. These changes initially had a strong positive impact on participants and levels of rent arrears, but this lessened over the course of a few months.

There are a range of reasons behind participants falling into arrears. The highest levels were accrued by participants who disengaged from the support offered through the project and were subsequently evicted or did not have their contracts renewed. Other reasons included participants losing or changing their jobs, which resulted in a gap in income, or struggling to earn enough income through zero-hour contract jobs to pay their rent. One participant explained that their rent arrears was partly due to their mental health problems which affects their ability to manage their money.

“I don’t think I have good money-management skills, so it was hard for me at times to keep on top of my rent and pay my bills, especially with the depression and anxiety. Like, I’d be in and out of work, so, yes, it became difficult sometimes. I did, at times, have a good record of keeping up with bills, but at other times I didn’t, because it just got difficult for me sometimes.”

(Participant)

An increasingly common reason for participants falling into rent arrears was the move to Universal Credit. New claimants for Universal Credit have to wait five weeks for their first payment, which immediately places participants in a position of debt. Participants may choose to apply for an advance payment to cover their costs while they wait for their first payment. However, this is then paid back out of participants’ Universal Credit payments for up to 12 months, which means they may not have enough money to cover all their costs on

the project and can fall into arrears. A key aim of the support worker for the next few months is to help these participants enter work and address this problem.

“I suppose those two things are very much linked. Providing more intensive support around work, looking for work and things like that, actually is directly related to being able to pay off the rent arrears. So, that’s the plan, that’s the focus now, because actually, we can’t function as a project with these arrears.” (Project development worker)

These findings challenge one of the project’s initial assumptions that young adult carers will have developed the skills needed for independent living and managing a budget through their caring roles. Instead, the extent of this challenge suggests that participants need some intensive training or intervention when they first join the project to ensure that they can manage their money and understand the importance of paying their rent and bills on time. Even those who believe that they have strong financial capability skills should be required to take part in this session, as they may not be as good at budgeting as they think. Working closely with participants to set a weekly budget and review this in monthly meetings may also help address this challenge.

4.7.2 Engagement with support

Participants’ levels of engagement with project staff varied hugely, from very high to almost none. The reasons for this were unclear, with no apparent correlation between levels of engagement and employment or education status, or rent arrears. Some participants engaged well but struggled to pay their rent, while others hardly engaged yet paid their rent in full and on time.

One way in which QSA judge levels of engagement is through the ‘three buckets’ test. This looks at three key areas in which it is felt that participants need to be compliant in order to be considered as engaging strongly in the project: paying rent, engagement with the support offer, and being a good housemate/tenant. If all three or at least two of these ‘buckets’ are being filled then the participant is considered to be engaging. However, if the participant is only ticking one of these boxes (for example, they are paying their rent but not engaging with the project manager and causing problems for their housemates) then there is cause for concern.

During the first year of the project, two participants completely disengaged from the support on offer. One of these participants was evicted and the other’s tenancy was not renewed after the first year. The issues with these participants, and the length of time it took to resolve them, led QSA to move from tenancies to licences for new participants. Using licences meant that it was potentially easier for QSA to evict a participant in the future; however, they also recognised that this was a lessening of participants’ rights and it was not a step that was taken lightly.

One apparent indicator of levels of engagement amongst participants appeared to be their motivations for joining the project. Those who signed up to Move On Up purely to address a housing need tended to be less engaged with the support offer, compared to those who wanted independent housing in order to facilitate broader goals such as wellbeing, education or employment progression.

Reflections from the original project manager seemed to support this, as they commented that the broad and tailored offer of support may not work if participants do not recognise their own support needs. For example, those with an immediate housing need may have felt that their needs had already been fulfilled by the project and therefore felt no need to engage with the project staff beyond this unless a problem or crisis occurred.

“It’s all different things that are going on for people which determines whether they take it up or not. And there is a thing I think for some people – not the majority by a long way – but some people think that all they need is the place to live, and actually I can see, ‘No, you need a lot more than that’, but it’s not my place to say, ‘This is what you need to be working on.’ So that’s the challenge.” (Project manager)

Another factor which may have affected participant’s engagement was confusion about the original project manager’s role, as they not only offered support but also chased rent arrears, arranged for repairs to be made and managed issues between tenants. Since these responsibilities have been split into two separate roles, this confusion appears to have cleared somewhat, although participants who had a strong relationship with the original project manager were unsure if two staff made it better than one.

“I feel like it probably makes more sense for a lot of people because at times I wouldn’t know what was appropriate to ask [original project manager]... Whereas I feel like moving forward, if they know that if it’s to do with like landlord sort of stuff, call this person. If it’s to do with like, support work, call this person. I feel like it’s probably just clearer.” (Participant)

The project manager also reported that separating the landlord and development worker responsibilities into two roles appears to have helped with participants’ engagement with staff, as the development worker acts as their key point of contact and the project manager can deal with difficult conversations about rent and payment issues. However, there are still some ongoing challenges around this, as both roles are part-time and therefore occasionally need to cover one another, which can blur their responsibilities, and it is still one organisation which is trying to both provide support to tenants and be their landlord.

“...that then feeds into the difficulty of being both the support-giver and the landlord. That, sort of, gets in the way. Particularly with those people who are a little bit more vulnerable and chaotic. They don’t necessarily understand why we, with one hand are trying to support them and try and help them to get from A to B, but on the other hand we’re saying, ‘Well, if you don’t pay your rent, we will evict you.’ So, it’s difficult.” (Project manager)

Some participants also reported that issues with their flatmates had affected their engagement with the project, both in terms of paying rent and their relationship with the project staff.

It is worth emphasising that just because participants do not engage well with the support, this does not mean that the project is not beneficial to them. It may, however, mean that they do not achieve their full potential while on the project, which could be achieved if they took up the support offer from the project staff. Given that engagement with support is a priority

for QSA, they may want to consider making participation in the monthly meetings with the project development worker as a minimum requirement for being on the project, and issue letters to those who do not comply with this, similar to those who are in rent arrears.

4.7.3 Staffing changes

In the summer of 2019, the project experienced its first major change in staffing when the original project manager left. They were replaced with two members of staff: a part-time project manager and a part-time development worker.

This change in staff was initially disruptive for participants, but was particularly difficult for two tenants who were part of the initial cohort for the project and had a strong relationship with the original project manager. These two participants were also coming to the last quarter of their tenancies at the time of the staffing change, and had recently had a new tenant move into their property, which added further stress to the situation for them.

The result of these combined events was that the relationships between participants in this particular property broke down. This not only caused significant challenges for these participants, but also the project staff, who had to spend a lot of time managing the situation, mediating relationships between participants, and attempting to find a solution.

After a period of time, project staff moved the newest tenant to a different property, where they are now doing very well. However, the relationship between the new staff members and the remaining participants in this property were quite strained as a result. Despite both the development worker and project manager spending a considerable amount of time dealing with the situation and supporting participants through it, these tenants felt it was difficult to build a positive relationship with the new staff given their initial experiences with them.

“They came at a time when there was a big argument with me and two girls - so two housemates and another housemate - it was some big commotion. So, I think that’s why we couldn’t really build a relationship properly, because they came in to solve our problem rather than to get to know everybody.”
(Participant)

As well as the situation in this property, there were other challenges that arose as a result of the change in staffing. While both members of staff settled in quickly, this change inevitably meant that relationships with participants had to be rebuilt and that there was a disruption to the support available while new staff familiarised themselves with young adult carers, housing and the project itself. Consequently, there were a few other issues that arose between participants in other houses, which project staff had to deal with. However, with the exception of the two tenants who struggled with this change, participants were generally very positive about having two members of staff on the project, and, six months later, things appeared to be settling down.

“I would speculate that things feel a bit more settled because they feel a bit more settled in the project, there isn’t so much getting expressed between them. So, yes, they seem to be getting on, all of them seem to be getting on better, and managing a bit more.” (Project support worker)

Having more than one member of staff on the project may help to facilitate any future change in staffing on the project, as participants will at least have a relationship with one member of staff going forward. Any organisations considering replicating Move On Up may want to consider having more than one member of staff delivering support for this reason.

4.7.4 Relationships with housemates

As has already been discussed in sections 4.5 and 4.7.3, a number of participants have had difficulties with their housemates over the course of the project. These issues included antisocial behaviour, problematic guests, different expectations of cleanliness and perceived lack of respect for other tenants.

Over the two and a half years, three participants proved to be extremely problematic for their housemates. These participants were eventually evicted by QSA, but this process took some time, and the impact on their housemates affected their engagement with the project, either because they felt that project staff did not take action quick enough to resolve the issues, or because they felt unable to live in the property and therefore stopped paying rent.

To address these issues, QSA has moved from tenancies to licences which enables them to remove participants more quickly if they are having a serious negative impact on their housemates. They have also taken steps to improve the participant matching process (see section 4.2 above), which appears to be crucial in enabling positive relationships to develop between housemates.

However, the project manager also reflected that these experiences are important for participants to deal with, as the likelihood is that they will have to live in shared accommodation, and therefore experience these challenges related to living with other people in the future. As such, these experiences are important learning points for participants and will hopefully provide participants with the skills to manage conflict and difficult situations with future housemates.

“They need to be able to co-exist. It's a part of being an adult. It's part of being in the real world in London now where they're not going to get their own properties, they're going to have to share for the foreseeable.” (Project manager)

Any replications of Move On Up elsewhere will need to consider the approach they take to dealing with issues between housemates. The learning from Move On Up shows that this can be a difficult balance between equipping participants with the experience and skills to address minor problems themselves, which they will likely need for the future, and stepping in quickly enough to avoid a breakdown in relationships between housemates. Supporting participants to address issues themselves in the first instance should be the initial response to any complaints. However, taking decisive action on tenants who cause significant ongoing disruption is also important, in order to minimise negative impacts on their housemates' experiences and relationships with project staff.

4.7.5 Levels of support required by some participants

A key challenge for the development worker is the levels of support that a small number of participants require. One participant in particular has very high levels of anxiety and requires regular meetings and phone calls in order to manage their relationships with their

housemates and progress towards a successful move-on. The issues arising from fallouts between housemates described in section 4.7.4 above has also created a lot of unexpected work for the development worker and project manager in recent months, which has been very time consuming.

The project manager reflected that this was the result of some participants presenting with higher mental health support needs than were identified in their initial assessment, and that it was apparent that the needs of participants emerged over the course of their involvement in Move On Up. Consequently, both the project manager and development worker have developed a more robust assessment of applicants' support needs, mental health and ability to deal with conflict, to ensure that these can be met through the project, even if additional needs emerge subsequent to their move-in.

Organisations that wish to replicate the Move On Up model should consider securing adequate funding for increased development worker capacity. It may be possible for local authorities to assign exempt accommodation status to supported housing projects for young adult carers which would permit higher charges to cover support costs, and enable organisations to engage young adult carers with high support needs. A downside to exempt accommodation schemes is that high charges make it more difficult for residents to move off benefits and into work.

4.7.6 Housing maintenance

A key issue that has been very time consuming for the project manager in recent months is the upkeep of the properties on the project, and specifically finding good contractors to undertake maintenance work. This is a particular issue for QSA who do not have any other housing projects, and therefore lack a set of vetted agencies to deal with repairs. The project manager has now built up a bank of trustworthy workers who they can contact about repairs, but other organisations considering replicating the project may want to consider how this can be put in place early in the project, for example by working with an established housing organisation. Having a project manager with experience in housing may also help to mitigate the impact of this challenge.

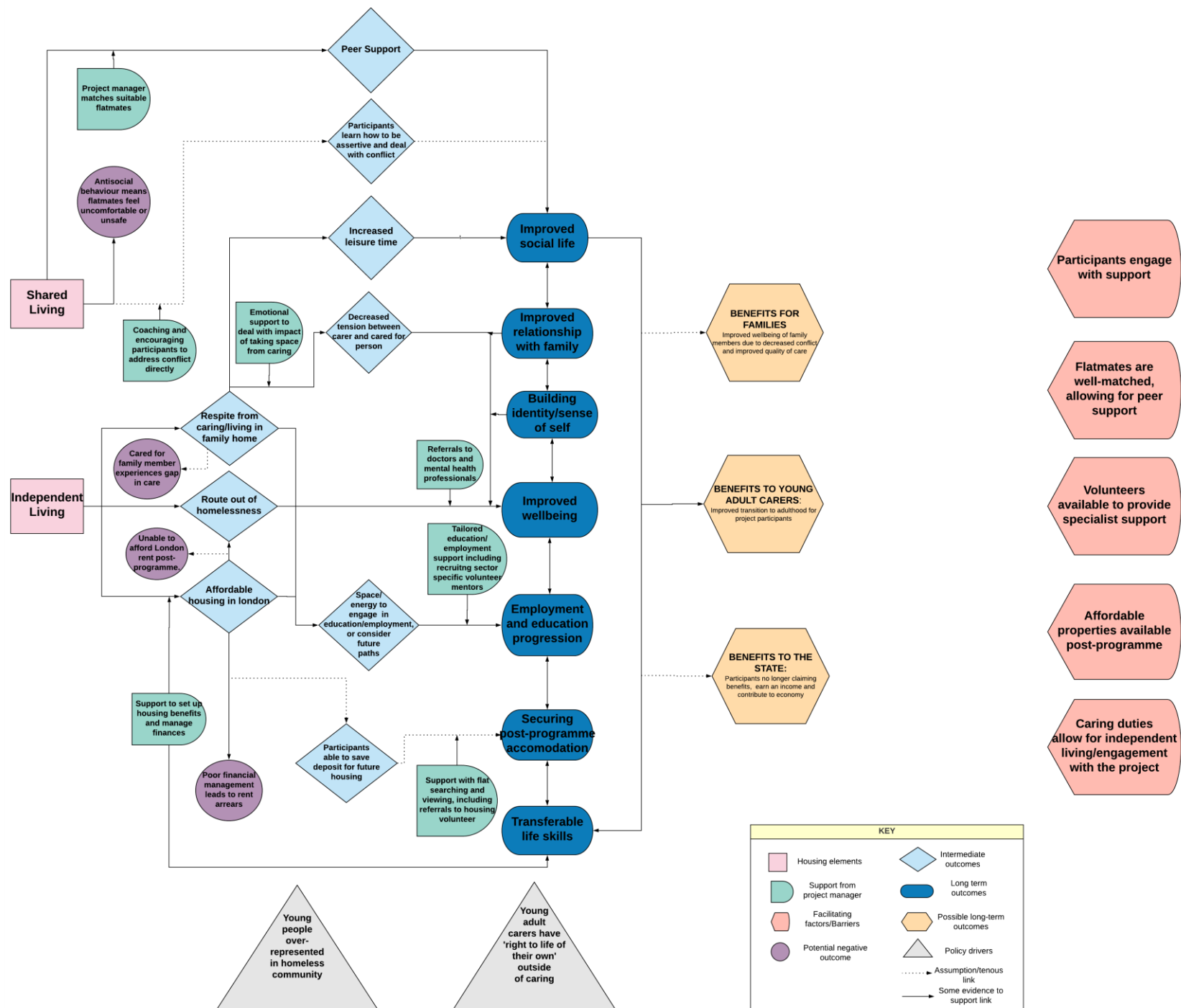
“Getting a bank of decent workmen and women to deal with repairs has been an absolute nightmare. I cannot over-emphasize how stressful it's been to get anybody who's trustworthy, who turns up, who doesn't try and rip you off, who doesn't antagonise the tenants, and who does what they say they're going to do. It's been something that has taken up a ridiculous amount of my time, and caused unnecessary aggravation.” (Project manager)

5. Outcomes and theory of change

This section examines the range of outcomes experienced by participants and maps them in a 'theory of change'. A theory of change is a visual map of a service or programme's activities and how they lead to intermediate and long-term outcomes, as well as facilitating factors, barriers and possible negative outcomes.

A theory of change can begin to identify which factors are evidence-based and which factors are assumptions that require further exploration. It also helps to tease out which elements of the programme lead to which outcomes. The theory of change looks at the programme rather than the individual. Individuals are not expected to achieve all of these outcomes, nor may they all be desired. The theory of change emphasises the importance of housing provision and respite from caring, and how the full impact of this is enabled by support from the project staff. The theory of change identifies a comprehensive range of assumed long-term outcomes from Move On Up, including:

- **Improved social life:** Independent living and respite from caring can afford some participants the time to socialise. Shared living may also offer young people a chance to learn how to be assertive and deal with conflict.
- **Improved relationship with family:** Despite concerns about the potential for a negative impact on family members, such as a reduction in the level and quality of caring and therefore their health and wellbeing, the evaluation findings suggest that moving out of the family home can decrease tension between family members and improve relationships. In some instances, participants reported that the quality of their care also improved.
- **Building identity/sense of self:** Findings suggest that having the chance to live independently, to have respite from caring, more time to pursue career and education goals, and to socialise with peers, often has a profound impact on participants' sense of self and personal agency – helping them make a transition to adulthood.
- **Education and employment progression:** Education and employment progression varied from making decisions about future options, to completing a course or gaining a job.
- **Securing post-programme accommodation:** A key aim of the project is to support participants to secure appropriate and sustainable accommodation and achieve a successful move-on from Move On Up.
- **Transferable life skills:** Through the programme, some participants acquire life skills including budgeting, navigating the benefit system, learning to live with others, dealing with landlords and searching for new properties.
- **Improved wellbeing:** Many participants described improved wellbeing as a direct result of respite from caring and relief from homelessness or overcrowding. Improved wellbeing also links to all other long-term outcomes.



This section further explores the long-term outcomes, as well as intermediate outcomes and the causal links between activities and outcomes. Through reference to the theory of change, it also unpacks the different roles of the housing and support elements of the programme.

5.1 Move-on destinations

Between November 2017 and January 2020, 10 participants moved out of the project. Of these, four were deemed to be positive move-ons; two were neutral or 'sideways' moves; and four were viewed as negative move-ons. Two of the participants who achieved positive move-ons successfully applied to university and moved into student accommodation before starting their course. The other two managed to save up enough money while on the project to move into their own accommodation.

The two participants who experienced a neutral move-on either moved back in with their relatives or moved into the local YMCA. These participants had quite different experiences: the first had a very positive tenancy and felt that, even though they moved back in with a relative at the end of their two years, they had gained a lot from being involved in the project. While this could be construed as a positive outcome for this participant, moving back in with a relative was not their personal aim for the project, and so it was recorded as a neutral move-on.

"It helped me grow as a person, helped me to make more decisions for myself... Knowing that I'm not alone in terms of the fact that there are other carers like me that are out there that have moved away from their caring experience, and that it's not a bad thing to move away from your caring experience. It's not a bad thing to put yourself first. That's what I've learnt, as well." (Participant)

The second participant did not have a successful tenancy but was satisfied with moving to the YMCA, as this was a more secure situation than they were in prior to joining Move On Up. As such, it could be argued that the two participants recorded as having 'neutral' move-ons were still in a more positive position physically and mentally/emotionally following their involvement with the project.

Of the four participants who experienced negative move-ons, two were evicted due to their behaviour or high levels of rent arrears. Evicting these participants was a last resort which QSA only reverted to once it became apparent that they had stopped engaging with the project, in terms of responding to staff, respecting their housemates and paying their rent. The final two participants left without providing any information about their destination, and so were assumed to be sofa surfing.

This mixed range of move-on experiences highlights the challenges in supporting vulnerable young people to achieve a successful transition into independent living, even with tailored and holistic support. For many, the costs of living independently prohibited them from making this move, while others only managed to experience a positive move-on by going to university. However, it is worth noting that previous participants who did not move into independent living and current participants who anticipate that they will move back in with their relatives, still identified many benefits they experienced as a result of being involved in the project.

5.2 Respite from caring

Respite from caring continues to be an important outcome for participants. This is depicted as an intermediate outcome in the theory of change because it is crucial to facilitating other longer-term outcomes such as improved wellbeing, improved family relationships, building a sense of self, and education and employment progression. For example, participants explained how respite from caring helped them to focus on their future, and have space to think about their career and education.

“Living independently, having some, like, it’s kind of, say, respite for myself to think what I want to do, be more focused.” (Participant)

Respite from caring also appeared to improve participants’ wellbeing by reducing stress, and facilitating more leisure time. It is also an outcome in and of itself, providing those young people who were still caring with free time.

“I am loving living independently, just come in, have my own respite. I am still looking after my mum but for less hours. Now I can have time to myself, whereas being a carer and living in with the person you care for, there’s no such thing as time out, to be honest with you.” (Participant)

Young adulthood is a transitional period, where individuals begin to develop a sense of self that is distinct from their family of origin. Previous research suggests that for carers, this sense of individual identity is disrupted by ongoing caring, and where it is practically possible it is often hindered by feelings of guilt when detaching from the cared for person. The findings of the Move On Up evaluation support this. Participants explain that the independent housing has given them space from their caring responsibilities, while project staff have helped them to deal with the often complex emotions that they experience as a result. Consequently, participants were able to consider their own needs and re-evaluate their caring roles.

“I think the fact that I’ve been separate from my family has helped me grow a lot... I feel like if you’ve been doing that stuff since you were young - it wasn’t always just when it was needed, it became that’s who you are, that’s your job. When I first came here, I had a lot of shame and guilt about feeling selfish, about being away from my family and being away from helping my brother and stuff, whereas being here has allowed me to realise that you can only help people at the best of your ability if you’re okay.” (Participant)

5.3 Relationship with family members

The potential negative impact of young adult carers moving away from the person they care for and other family members was initially a concern for the project team. However, the evaluation findings suggest that the distance and personal space that the project is creating for young adult carers is making a positive difference to participants’ relationships with their families. The quantitative data from the questionnaires also showed a slight improvement in participants’ relationships with their family, but this was not substantial¹⁶.

¹⁶ The quantitative data for this question and other sections not included here can be found at Appendix 2.

Generally, participants continued to care for their families when they moved out of the home and into Move On Up accommodation. However, as described above, having space away from their caring role has provided many participants with much needed respite, which in turn alleviated the tensions which they felt had been building up in the family home.

“[My mum is] loving it. She’s only ten minutes down the road. So the fact that we’re still close despite not living together is one of the best things. I felt like our relationship’s stronger, whereas if I was still living with my mum – which I can’t do, overcrowding, small rooms – I would’ve just felt stressed out, we’d have had more arguments.” (Participant)

Some participants felt that the support from the project staff and improvements in their own wellbeing, combined with having their own space and respite from caring, have contributed to significant improvements in their relationship with their cared for person.

“I know if I was living at home my mum and dad and my sisters, it’d just be too much, because the reason why I left is because it became too much, I wasn’t getting along with them. So moving to my own space has helped me a lot.” (Participant)

For one participant, their relationship with their family improved to such an extent that they were able to move back into the family home in order to save up to start university in the coming September.

“So one person, she was there for a year. She was sofa surfing because her relationship with her mum had deteriorated, and she was doing her last year of A Levels. Was able to move in, got on really well with her flatmates, passed her A Levels and got her university place which I thought she was going to in September. But because she moved in, her relationship with her mum improved so much that she was able to move back in with her mum, which was fantastic.” (Project manager)

5.4 Quality of care

Participants who had been in the project for a considerable amount of time also felt that they were able to provide better care for their families as a result of Move On Up. For some, this was due to improvements in their own wellbeing.

“I think moving out and figuring out what I want to do has just made me a lot happier, and the happier I am the better carer I am. So just a little bit of time apart just helps me refresh myself in a way, I can get the rest that I need to be able to provide better care for them.” (Participant)

Others found that improvements in their relationship with their family meant that they were able to provide higher quality care.

“Being away for a year made me and my mum’s relationship a lot better, because it wasn’t good when I moved out. And I’m able to care for her better, because our relationship’s better, so it all benefits.” (Participant)

One participant commented that feeling secure in their housing situation enabled them to provide more and higher quality care for their family.

“I do feel more confident and supported and able to help my family, because this is a stable base, which before I didn’t have. So there’s definite improvement.” (Participant)

However, the quantitative data from the questionnaires showed little change in the amount that participants worry about the person they care for, or the extent to which they feel that their caring responsibilities impact on their lives and the decisions they make. This suggests that, although participants feel they have more positive relationships with and are better able to care for their family members, they are still concerned for their welfare and take this into consideration when making decisions about their own lives¹⁷.

5.5 Education and employment outcomes

Over the course of the project, participants have experienced a wide range of education and employment outcomes. Many participants have started education or training courses while on the project. These courses have included teacher training, a Prince’s Trust course, and on-the-job training at work. Two participants who moved on from the project did so because they had secured places at university. For one of these, completing their A Levels and securing a place at university had been their main motivation for engaging in Move On Up.

“I got to finish my studies without no hinderance, which was my main goal. That was the whole reason that I wanted to move out.” (Participant)

A number of participants have also gained employment or moved jobs. On the whole, these tended to be entry level or part-time jobs to provide an income while they are on the project, but a number have found work in the sector they plan to build a career in. For example, one participant gained employment at a theatre, and another found work with a kitchen fitting company through an agency. Another participant has recently secured a job as a healthcare development worker, which they feel will provide them with good experience for their career.

“...that’s more in the healthcare setup, because I’m planning, in the future, to go to university to study, diagnosing in child nursing or maybe mental health. I’m literally just thinking of the two, but that’ll definitely go down well in the near future.” (Participant)

One participant had aspirations to work in the media and started a job in this sector, but found it difficult to balance the long working hours with their caring responsibilities and so had to leave their job. However, they still felt this was valuable experience as they were able to try out a potential career pathway without the risk of being evicted if it did not work out.

¹⁷ This is in line with wider research on young adult carers’ experiences, which shows that young people worry about the person they care for even when they receive a social care package, as they assume that this care will not be up to their own high standards. For example, The Carers Trust found that only 46% of young adult carers said their family received good support and services. <https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/time-to-be-heard/time-to-be-heard-a-call-for-recognition-and-support-for-young-adult-carers.pdf>

While many participants had been successful in finding work, others were struggling to gain secure employment. A number were in jobs which only guaranteed a few hours a week, which made it difficult for them to pay their rent. Others had left work due to wider issues such as a deterioration in their mental health. The Move On Up development worker was focussed on providing more intensive support to help these participants find appropriate employment, otherwise there is a risk that they will fall so far into arrears that they will have to be evicted from the project.

Participants' views of their potential education and work pathways was one of the few sections of the questionnaire that showed a clear positive trend between participants' first and last scores. As figures 1a and 1b below show, participants were far more likely to say that they felt more confident in their skills and qualifications to get a job, and that they had more clarity around their career goals.

Figure 1a: Participants' views of their situation in relation to education and employment (start)

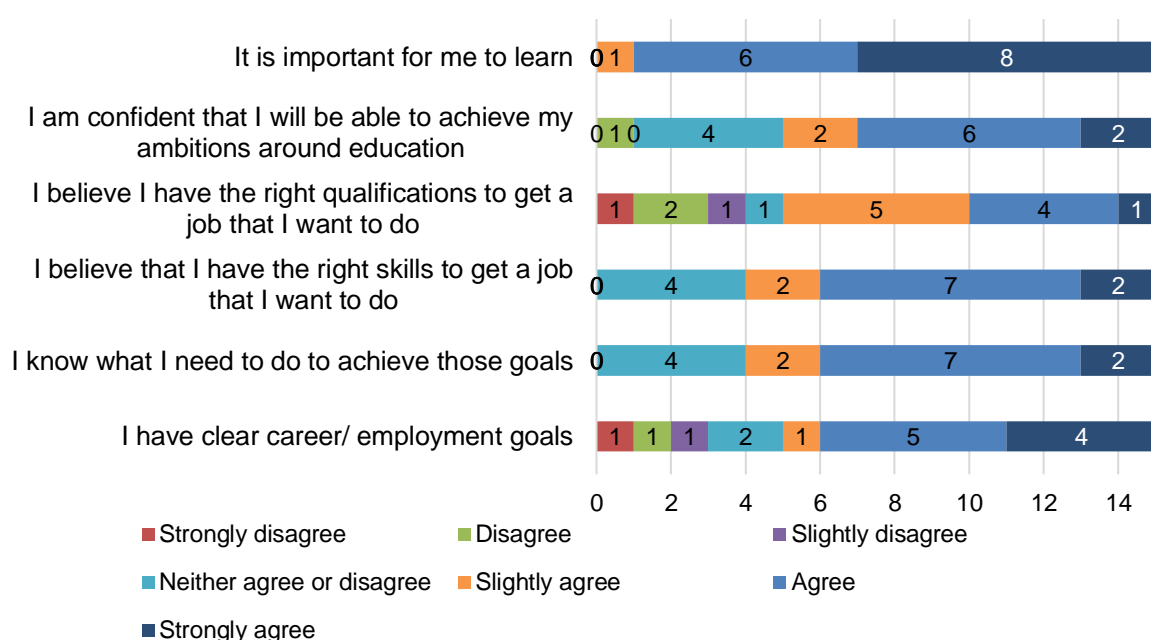
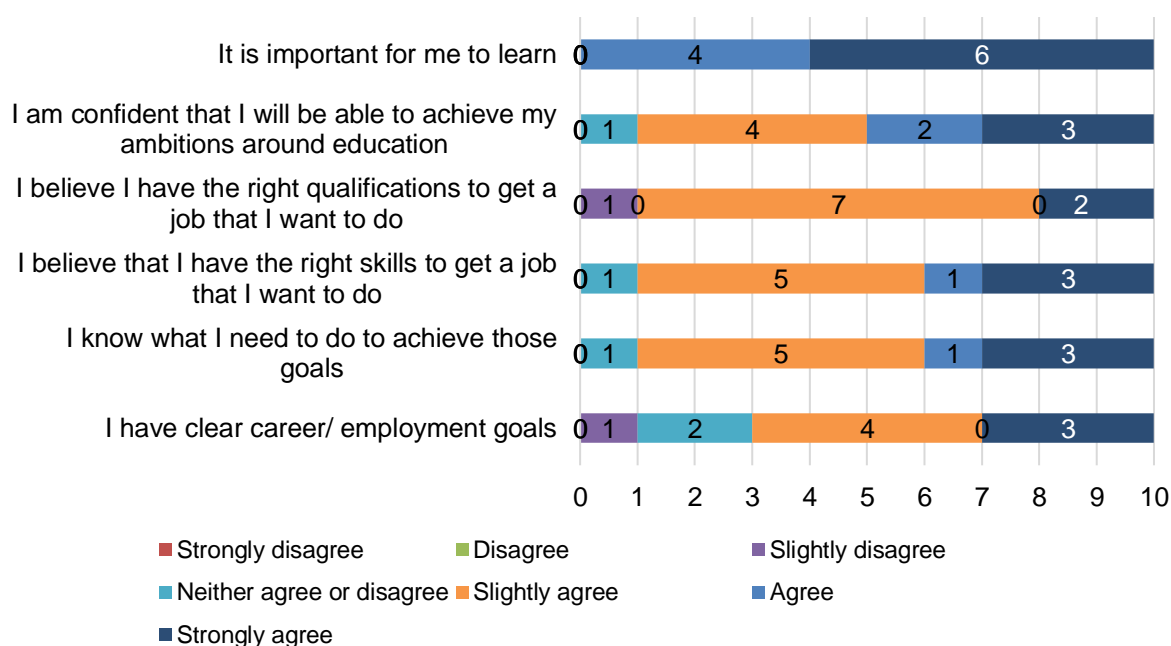


Figure 1b: Participants' views of their situation in relation to education and employment (final)



5.6 Social participation

Participants reported both an improvement in social skills and in time spent socialising. Some participants felt that they had made good friends out of their flatmates in the project, while others found that living away from home meant that they could invite their friends over to socialise.

"I made new friends so that is great for me personally." (Participant)

Some participants also spoke about developing their communication skills and feeling more confident engaging with new and different people.

"It is a good one, because living with people you then realise how to conduct yourself and how to actually adapt to environments and different social groups." (Participant)

This was reflected in an increase in the number of participants who said that they felt more confident meeting new people between their first and final questionnaire responses.

5.7 Life skills

Although most participants felt that they were capable of living independently before the programme, they still reported learning a host of basic life skills through the programme, including financial competence and budgeting, how to shop and cook for themselves, navigating the benefit system, searching for properties, and learning how to deal with landlords. Many felt that this had prepared them effectively for living independently after moving on from the project.

"Living at the flat gave me the skills for independent living. So if I didn't have that – if I'd gone straight from my mum's to uni – I think I would've floundered"

quite a lot, probably. But having the Move On Up project as a transition was helpful.” (Participant)

Even those who had experienced challenges with their flatmates felt that this gave them good experience and skills in dealing with conflict and negotiating with others, which would be helpful when living with others in the future. Many participants reflected that, although living on their own may have been less stressful, their experiences in living with others mean they now feel better equipped to move into other shared accommodation in the future, which is the most likely move-on destination for Move On Up tenants.

“I definitely wouldn’t have learned everything that I was learning with living with other people, understanding their communication, how everyone communicates, and overcoming problems and situations and stuff like that.” (Participant)

Interestingly, the questionnaire data showed a strong positive trend in participants’ answers relating to their finances. In particular, there was a strong improvement in participants’ views of their ability to pay their rent and bills, and manage their money. This contrasts sharply with the high rent arrears that the project is currently experiencing, suggesting that project staff may need to have clearer conversations with participants about their budgeting skills and the need to improve these. However, learning from other supported housing projects suggests that this challenge is not untypical and is especially likely to be the case in one-off projects delivered by organisations that do not have a track record of having to confront this in their structures, systems and culture of support versus housing management.

Figure 2a: Participants’ views of their situation in relation to finances (start)

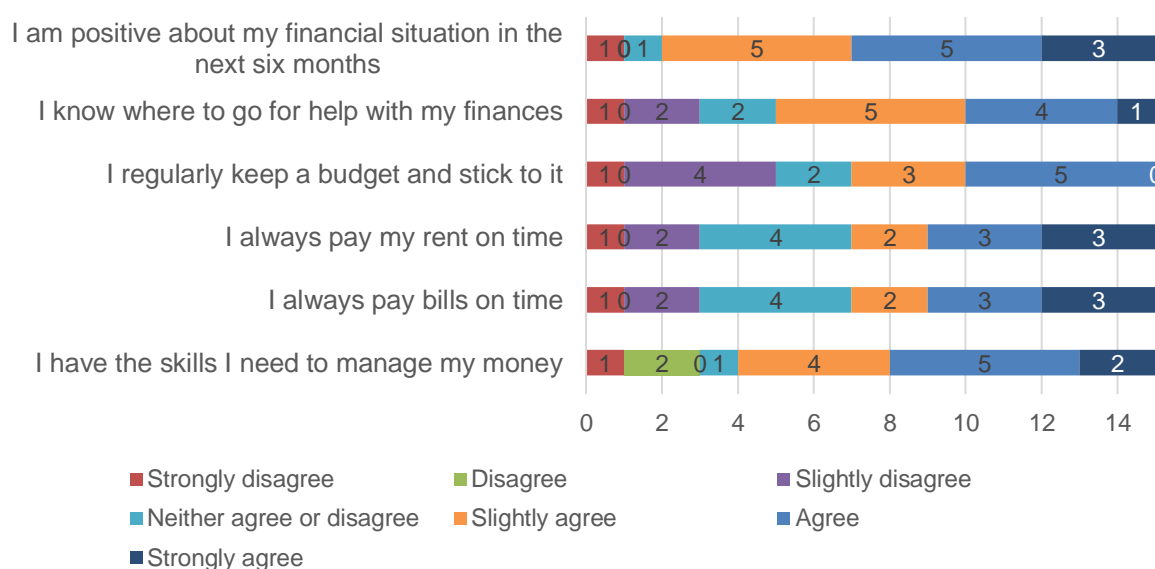
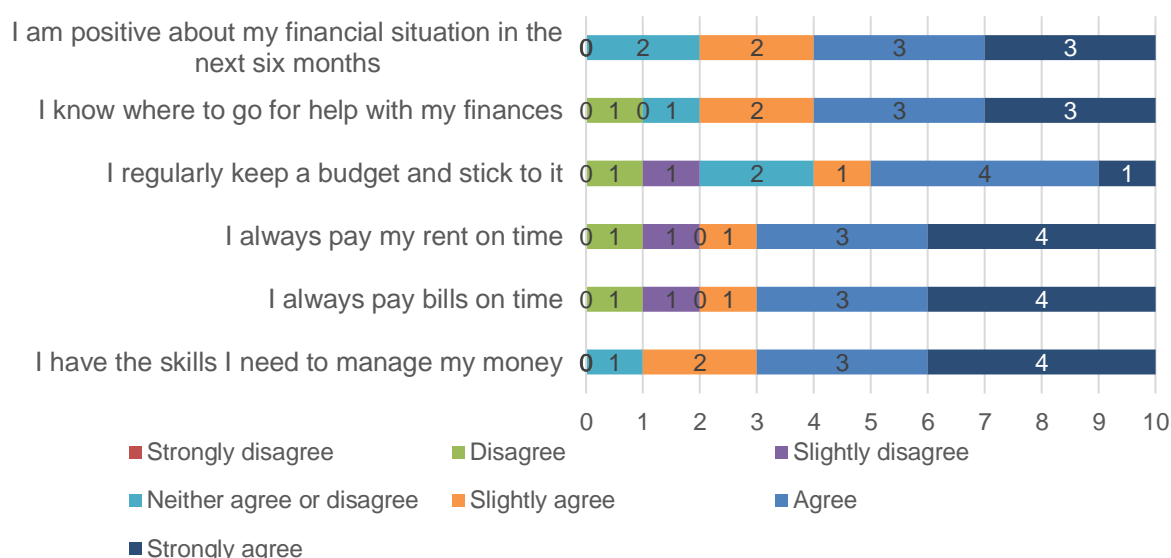


Figure 2b: Participants' views of their situation in relation to finances (final)



5.8 Health and wellbeing

The questionnaire data showed little change in participants' views of their wellbeing between the first and last survey. Similar proportions reported that they were able to make up their own mind, felt close to people or think clearly, while slightly fewer participants said that they felt relaxed, useful or positive about the future. The negative change in the latter indicators may be due to some participants feeling anxious about their potential move-on destinations or the recent upheaval resulting from clashes with housemates and staffing changes on the project (see section 4.7 for further exploration of this). There are many factors that can affect an individual's mental health.

In comparison with the quantitative data, all participants interviewed described improved wellbeing and ability to manage their mental health. For many this was as a result of respite from caring and their improved housing situation – particularly for those who had been homeless or living in overcrowded conditions.

"It's given me the independence to know that, essentially it's all a process: as long as I do my self-care and I have a space for myself, essentially, I can control the environment. So, I've got that home base that's like a solid foundation which then allows me to move more in the world and do more for myself." (Participant)

Others described the impact of support given by project staff or signposting to other services. For example, one participant experiencing poor mental health had been signposted to their doctor and medication had significantly improved their mental health. In addition, the project manager had helped them to improve their physical health, and together these factors had made a drastic improvement to their wellbeing.

"I mean I'm a bit more happy now, I'm a bit more healthy now, I've lost a lot of weight, I'm going to activities and stuff like that, I'm staying healthy and so and so forth. I think that has something to do with it as well." (Participant)

5.9 The roles of housing and support

Most participants saw independent living as crucial to achieving their outcomes, with many focussing on respite from caring as the central factor. As described above, participants had found that respite from caring provided them with personal space and leisure time which in turn improved family relationships, wellbeing, social relationships and quality of care. Many of the participants who had experienced positive changes in their employment also attributed this to the respite from caring created by living independently.

“I don’t think I would’ve had as much confidence [to get a job]. Because I was still looking after my mum, I would’ve thought, ‘Oh, there wouldn’t be enough time’. But coming into the project, it allowed me to have that time and space to myself and not having to stress about my mum too much.”

(Participant)

Some participants had previously accessed support from external agencies while in the family home, and therefore we can assume that support from project staff on its own would be insufficient to produce the outcomes they had experienced through the project.

Figure 2 below depicts how independent living and respite from caring leads to a range of intermediate outcomes and longer-term impacts for young adult carers. These could be seen as outcomes in their own right, and for participants whose central needs were housing, this was often reported as the desired outcome.

However, participants also explained that the support from the project staff was crucial to facilitating positive outcomes and there was a general consensus among participants that both the independent living and support elements of the programme were needed to create the outcomes they had experienced.

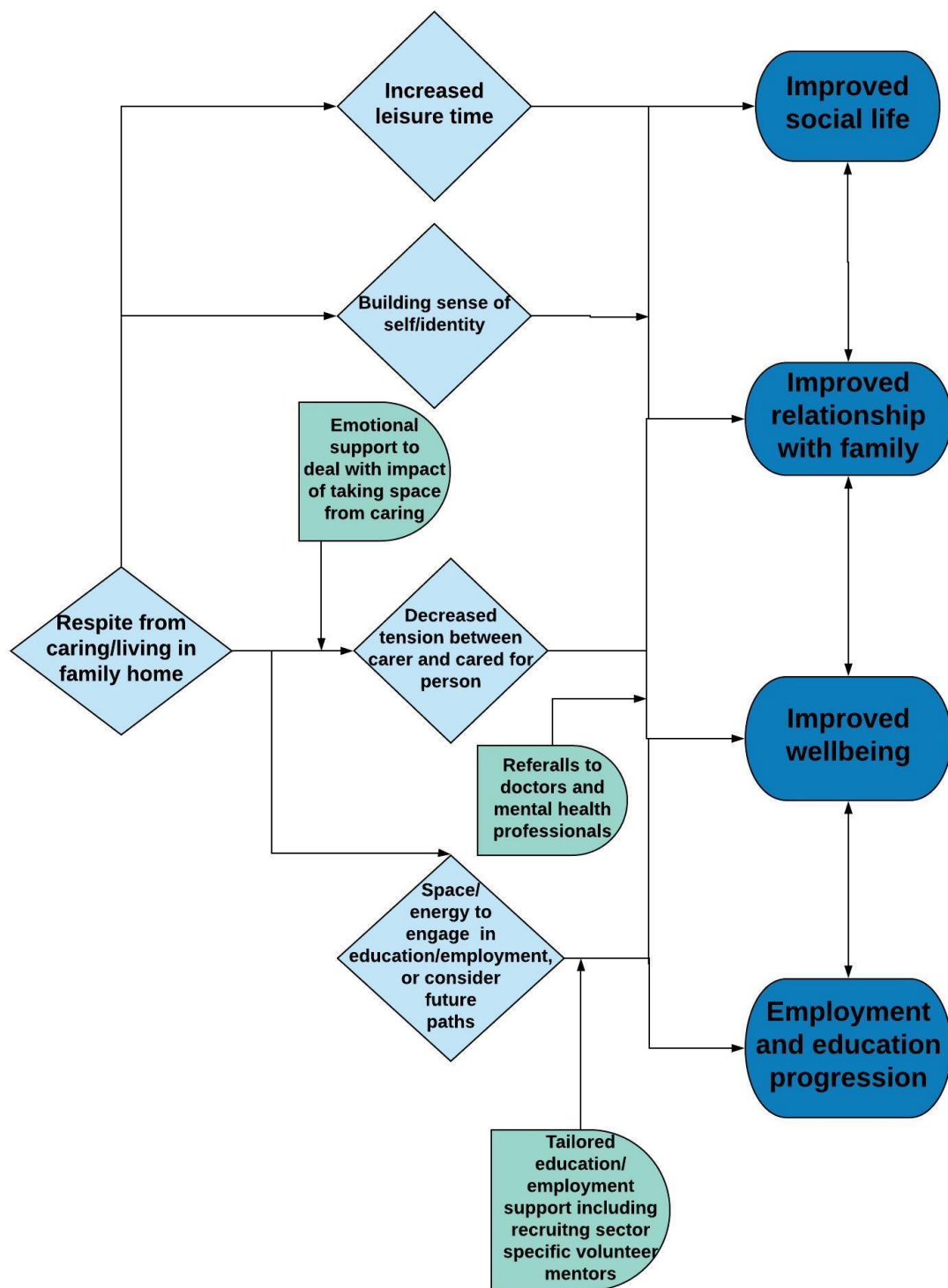


Figure 2: The impact of respite from caring

6. Project replicability

This section explores the key factors that any organisation interested in replicating Move On Up or delivering a similar housing project for young adult carers in their local area would need to consider. These include: the demand for such a project; the nature of the lead organisation or partnership which delivers the project; the housing model; the project costs; the location of properties and cost of living; the target group and capacity; the type and length of contracts; project staffing; and the support offer.

6.1 Demand for a project similar to ‘Move On Up’

Move On Up is a specialist and unique project, sitting at the intersection between housing and carers services. Since the beginning of the project, QSA have realised that Move On Up plugs a gap in the current landscape of both homelessness provision and carers services. The project manager explained that Move On Up addresses caring as an ‘unrecognised cause of homelessness’, as the pressures of caring can lead to family breakdown, and therefore result in youth homelessness.

“The crux is that housing projects or housing providers, people who work in housing, have not thought that young adult carers are a group of people who need housing. By and large the caring services have never thought about housing.” (Project manager)

The consistent flow of referrals to the project suggests that Move On Up is starting to be recognised as a valuable offer for young adult carers amongst referral agencies, as well as young adult carers themselves. This demonstrates a demand or need for provision of this type in the London area.

Interviews with carers services in other parts of England carried out in the third wave of this evaluation suggest that there would be sufficient demand for a similar project to Move On Up or for housing services to explicitly address the needs of young adult carers elsewhere. Many carers services commented on the impact of caring on young people’s ability to move into independent living, often because the level and intensity of their responsibilities prevents them from engaging in education or work and restricts their ability to consider a future for themselves. This, combined with a high demand for housing in their local areas and young adult carers’ need to live near their cared for person and established support networks, creates considerable barriers for young people to find suitable and affordable accommodation outside of the family home.

“A project like Move On Up would be absolutely perfect for them. It’s exactly the sort of thing that they’re crying out for that would help them develop those skills and help them to make that transition from caring becoming so difficult and impossible to manage to be able to be independent and move on from their caring role.” (Newcastle Carers)

Carers services also reported a poor understanding of the impact of caring on young people’s lives amongst housing providers and local authorities. As a result, these young people are rarely prioritised for housing, unless they have other characteristics which made them even more vulnerable.

These factors mean that there is likely to be a high demand for projects similar to Move On Up in other areas of London and England as a whole. However, any organisation considering delivering a housing project for young adult carers would need to research and map demand in their local area before starting, in order to ensure that it would be feasible to deliver. Close links with caring services in their local area would also be important in order to inform the development of the project model and create a strong referral route to the project.

6.2 Lead organisation or partnership

A key consideration for replication is the nature of the lead organisation or partnership which delivers the project. Move On Up is delivered by one organisation, QSA, which has taken responsibility for both the housing and tailored support elements of the project. QSA is not a housing specialist organisation and runs no other housing projects, so they had no processes or procedures for managing properties, rent collection and arrears, or tenancies in place at the start of the project. A housing organisation may find that they can deliver a project similar to Move On Up more efficiently, as they will have the structures and expertise to manage the housing element in place at the outset. In addition, these organisations may not have to invest as much time promoting the project to housing providers and other potential referral agencies in the initial set up stage, as these relationships will likely already exist.

In contrast, a carers service or other small youth organisation may experience similar challenges to QSA in gaining the expertise needed to ensure that houses are maintained, rents are paid and participants are living cohesively together.

“...whether you’re housing one person or a hundred or a thousand, you still need all of the housing management stuff to be in place. You need to have your processes managing rent collection and rent arrears in place, and you need to have your support in place... So, I would say think carefully about making sure you’ve got the capacity to put all of those things in place.” (QSA director)

However, what housing organisations may lack is the flexibility and expertise in offering tailored support to young adult carers, who often have complex needs in relation to living independently, progressing towards their goals and managing their caring responsibilities. A key strength of Move On Up is that it is a small and specialist project which can provide flexible and tailored support to participants. This may be lost if the lead partner is a large housing association.

“I guess a housing specialist organisation would not have been fazed by the housing element of it... The things that they would need to be really thinking through is, okay, so how quick are we to understand young adult carers?” (QSA director)

These findings suggest that it would be important for replicated projects to have expertise in both housing and young adult carers, in order to maximise the benefits for participants. A partnership approach to delivery may therefore be the most appropriate model for replication. An organisation with housing expertise could lead on the housing, tenancy and rent management elements of the project, while a specialist carers support or youth

organisation could deliver tailored and flexible support to participants. This model was approved by current project staff, who highlighted that this would also have the added benefit of further separating the responsibilities for rent/housing management and delivering support.

“So, say, if a support part was brought in, or the housing part was brought in, then that would be even more separate than [the project staff] are, definitely, because, at the moment, we’re separate, but we have the same agenda, basically, overall.” (Project manager)

6.3 The shared housing model

Another key consideration for replication is the type of housing offered to participants. Move On Up is based on a shared housing model, partly due to financial constraints, but also because there was an assumption at the outset that this would enable supportive relationships to be fostered between housemates, given their shared experiences of caring. The evaluation findings challenge this initial assumption, and suggest that, while this shared experience can create opportunities for participants to develop positive and supportive relationships, a caring role was not enough to guarantee that this would occur. However, it does appear that there can be additional benefits of sharing with other young adult carers, and that this can enhance participants’ experiences of the project.

“I think my impression is they get more benefit from living together, there are more pros than cons, overall, and they are a bit more sympathetic to each other, because they know they’re in similar situations. One of the first things that does create a rapport when they’re meeting each other, is that they can talk about their caring.” (Project development worker)

Additionally, new participants consistently reported that they had found the idea of living with other young adult carers appealing when they first found out about the project. A similar model delivered elsewhere may therefore want to keep to this approach. This may not need to involve purchasing properties to use for the project, as is the case for Move On Up, but could involve a local authority or housing association setting aside a property solely for young adult carers.

However, there are many other housing models that could be utilised. Young adult carers could, for example, be housed in shared accommodation with other young people who are not carers. Both Move On Up participants and other young adult carers not engaged in the project felt that there were potential benefits of living with others who had caring responsibilities, but placed more importance on housemates being of a similar age and having similar motivations and interests.

Other potential models might include placing young adult carers in existing properties owned by housing associations or local authorities, or potentially with private landlords who have a social interest. Challenges associated with these models might include the geographical spread of participants, and working with participants who live with other young people not involved in the project, as it may be difficult to manage the relationship between them.

“I think it would be quite hard, logistically, to run a project where the participants were spread out, and living with other people that we weren’t

supporting... It's a very, very small project, and it's much more efficient if we can do several things at once, during a visit." (Project development worker)

Some participants expressed a preference for living individually in their own property. While this may be possible in some areas of England, it does not seem feasible in London due to the high costs of rent and bills, and may risk participants gaining an unrealistic expectation of how they can live when they move on from the project. It would also mean that they do not gain the experience of living with other people or the skills to manage this, which appears to have been a key outcome for some Move On Up participants.

"So, if it was different and I was living by myself, yes, it would be less stressful, but you've got to put it against, like, meeting new people and obviously learning from every experience and, you know, overcoming things and stuff like that." (Participant)

These findings suggest that a shared housing model with other young adult carers is the project model which can result in the most benefits for participants – assuming that housemates are appropriately matched – but shared accommodation with other young people could also be a potential option for organisations looking to replicate Move On Up elsewhere.

6.4 Project staffing

The experience of delivering Move On Up has highlighted the importance of separating out the day-to-day management of the properties (particularly chasing up rent payments and service charges) and the tailored support offer into two separate roles. Combining these responsibilities into one role creates challenges for that member of staff, as participants may be reluctant to engage with a support offer from the same person who chases them for rent arrears or gives them warnings about anti-social behaviour.

Running the project in partnership between two organisations which take separate responsibilities for the housing management and delivery of support is one way to overcome this. However, this approach then risks tensions arising between the two partner organisations when the desire to provide holistic support clashes with the need to improve rent collection rates. Any organisation that aimed to deliver both aspects of the project should, if possible, recruit two members of staff who are each responsible for one of these elements.

For housing providers who decide to take on housing management in-house, having clear processes and ensuring that skilled staff are supported to deliver the housing management functions is crucial. Organisations involved in Commonweal Housing's Peer Landlord shared housing project identified that clarity about responsibilities for rent payments and efficient and clear processes was important not only for the viability of the project, but also to prepare people for renting from a less engaged and supportive landlord, given that most people in housing need are likely to end up in the private rented sector and even social housing providers are rigorous in their management of rent collection.

6.5 Project costs

A clear consideration for any organisation looking to replicate Move On Up is the costs involved and how these might be funded.

As set out in section 3.6, the social investment required to purchase the four properties used by QSA for the MOU project (totalling circa £2.3m) was accessed by Commonwealth Housing. Social investment was sourced from a group of four separate social investors.

The current running costs of the project (in London) are also detailed in section 3.6 above, and a summary of these are as follows:

SUMMARY	Year 1	Year 2	TOTAL
Total cost	£111,543*	£111,535	£223,078
Number of starters	12	12	24
Cost per starter	£9,295	£9,295	£9,295

* note – this includes one off fit out/start-up costs of £20,514.

The list of cost items provides some potential to look at how costs may differ outside London. However, this is limited to those items where there is reliable data showing regional differences. For this exercise, we have only shown regional differences for the two largest cost items: programme staff salaries and office costs.

Costs are presented at the regional level as many of the sources do not allow for smaller geographies such as local authority level. We have therefore shown figures for the North East (which includes Newcastle), the East Midlands (which includes Leicester) and the West Midlands (which covers Warwickshire). These three regions have been selected as, during wave 3 of the evaluation, staff from carers services in these areas were consulted about potential level of demand for a project like Move On Up, amongst the young adult carers that they support.

For **salaries** we have used the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) ¹⁸. We have used earnings for two occupations: “Other managers and proprietors” which relates to the direct project staff and “Administrative occupations” which relates to the admin role identified by QSA. ASHE data for 2018 shows the following results:

Occupation	% difference to London median
Other Managers and Proprietors	
North East	-26%
East Midlands	-18%
West Midlands	-25%
Administrative occupations	
North East	-27%
East Midlands	-30%
West Midlands	-28%

Office costs come from the Total Office Cost Survey (TOCS) which provides detailed

¹⁸ ASHE is the main measure of earnings in terms of structural statistics; it provides information about the levels, distribution and make-up of earnings and hours paid for employees in the majority of industries and occupations across the UK.

information on office costs for over 50 UK locations. The survey is conducted by Lambert Smith Hampton¹⁹. We have used the rates for Newcastle to represent the North East, Leicester to represent the East Midlands and Birmingham to represent the West Midlands. The differences in the costs per workstation compared to London are as follows:

Region	% difference to London
North East	-45%
East Midlands	-50%
West Midlands	-41%

Based on the costs provided by QSA and the evidence above on regional differences we arrive at the following table showing the overall difference in costs compared to London:

Region	Total cost	Cost reduction	Difference to London
London	£223,078	£0	0%
North East	£191,930	£31,148	14%
East Midlands	£192,998	£30,080	13%
West Midlands	£194,369	£28,709	13%

The above equates to a cost per client for each region as follows:

Region	Cost per client
London	£9,295
North East	£7,997
East Midlands	£8,042
West Midlands	£8,099

The above tables assume all other costs are the same no matter what area of operation – this may or may not be true but there is no evidence at the regional level to investigate the other cost items.

The figures are based on 12 clients per year as indicated by QSA for the London programme and all of the above assumes that clients in the other regions have similar barriers and issues and therefore require the same level of support. It is also based, nominally, on full occupancy.

Organisations looking to replicate the project should also bear in mind that there are some specific income streams and adjustments associated with Move On Up that may not be available for their project. They include:

¹⁹ <https://www.lsh.co.uk/tocs>. The survey compares rents, business rates, service charges and other property costs and is formed of independent data provided by leading service providers. Costs are provided for 54 locations and generated for both new and 20-year-old office buildings on a per sq. ft and per employee basis. It should be noted that it may not be necessary to take full office costs into account, if an organisation already incurs some costs.

- A subsidy provided by Commonweal which QSA do not have to repay guaranteeing financial return to social investors regardless of project performance – reducing their financial risk.
- Commonweal lease properties to QSA at a subsidised rate allowing QSA to cover other project costs.
- A windfall from QSA investment reserves and further grant funding to cover some of the costs.

6.6 Location of properties and cost of living

The location of the properties utilised for a housing project for young adult carers is an important consideration. If they intend to continue their caring role, young people are likely to need to stay relatively close to the person they care for when they move out, or at least have good public transport links to get home quickly. They will also benefit from staying in contact with their current support networks and services, and their place of work or education if they are currently in employment or learning, so will need to be close or have good transport links with these in their new accommodation. Utilising properties in a central location or with good transport links will therefore be important for potential participants.

“Distance from the cared for person is something that massively factors into it... Even if they’re trying to get more independence and they’re trying to move away from their caring role, they still want to be close enough a lot of the time to be able to provide some support if needed and have maybe a slower transition, instead of moving quite far away.” (Newcastle Carers)

The cost of being involved in the project will also be a potentially facilitating or prohibitive factor for young adult carers. This includes both the cost of moving out and of living independently. The rent for participants on Move On Up is set at the Local Housing Allowance rate, but the majority are currently struggling to afford even this relatively low rate of rent. For Move On Up, participants did not incur typical initial move in costs of a deposit, application fees, moving belongings and furnishing a property (these were covered by QSA). These costs would be likely to present a significant barrier for young adult carers to engage in a housing project, particularly as many of their families are in receipt of benefits. Any organisation considering replicating Move On Up would therefore need to think carefully about any upfront costs they would charge to participants, and the rate at which they set rent and service charges.

6.7 Target group and capacity

As discussed in section 3.4 above, the target group for Move On Up has become more refined over the course of the project’s delivery. When defining a target group for a similar project elsewhere, the lead organisation or partnership will need to consider what they are trying to achieve for participants. If it is to provide safe accommodation and respite from caring, then the assessment may focus on the urgency of their housing need, then consider their plans to progress towards personal goals as a secondary criteria. However, if the aim is to support participants to move on within a certain timeframe – as is the case in Move On Up – then participants’ plans or desires to progress towards personal goals becomes more important.

Lead organisations will also need to consider the level of support they can provide to participants. The learning from Move On Up shows the importance of project staff conducting a robust assessment of applicants' needs, to ensure these can be met through the project. It is also important that staff understand that additional needs may emerge once participants move into the project and begin their journeys to independent living. If a lead organisation identifies a need to provide a high level of support to participants, and decides to staff their project accordingly, this is likely to increase the overall cost of delivering the project and would need to be accounted for in funding plans.

Finally, the financial stability of potential participants is an important factor to consider when defining a target group. It is important that the project model is financially viable, and therefore that participants can afford to pay their rent, service charges and other bills associated with living independently. This is likely to be a challenge for those whose weekly incomes fluctuate (for example, if they have few guaranteed hours at work or are on a zero-hour contract).

"We're being really careful now about talking to potential new tenants about their financial situation... we actually look at their exact income and do a budget. We talk about contingency, so, what do you think you'll do if you lose your job, or you suddenly find you have a debt you need to repay? Have you got any savings? Have you got anyone who could lend you money? You need to have a contingency in case that were to happen, and we can't allow you to run up arrears. So, we're trying to have that conversation as part of the initial screening." (Project development worker)

Depending on the definition of the target group, the capacity of the project may also need to be adapted. Move On Up appears to be meeting the demand for this type of project in a specific part of London, but it is targeted at a very specific group of young people, who need housing in order to progress towards their personal goals. If this target group were broader – for example, any young adult carer with a housing need – then the capacity would need to be much greater. Other factors, such as the location and cost of properties, may also affect demand and therefore the required capacity of the project.

6.8 Type and length of contracts

The first cohort of Move On Up participants were initially signed up to 12-month tenancy agreements. However, as described in section 4.7 above, issues with two particularly difficult participants meant that the project moved to licences after the first year, to enable them to evict problematic participants more quickly, and therefore reduce the negative impact on their housemates. This was recognised as a reduction in tenants' rights by both QSA and ongoing participants, but was a step that QSA felt necessary to take. Any organisation aiming to replicate the project will need to weigh up the pros and cons of tenancies versus licences and decide which best suits their project model.

Move On Up is promoted to potential participants as being a two-year project. While a small number of participants have stayed beyond this timeframe, it was generally felt by project staff that two years is a reasonable balance between giving participants enough time to find their feet, learn how to live independently and make good progress, and maximising the number of young people that the project can support.

Young adult carers not involved in Move On Up agreed with this; in fact, they thought it was good to have a time limit on the length of the project so that they had a goal that they could work towards. However, some young people expressed concern about what would happen when they reached the end of their two-year tenancy, and said that they would need information and reassurance about this before they joined a project similar to Move On Up.

6.9 The support offer

A key strength of Move On Up is the flexible and tailored nature of its support offer, which aims to enable participants to gain the skills and knowledge required to achieve positive outcomes and make successful transitions into independent living. This was highlighted as important by project participants, carers services and young adult carers not involved in Move On Up alike, and so it would be important for any organisation replicating the project to ensure that they could provide a similar offer²⁰.

Any replicated project would need to ensure that participants received sufficient pre-tenancy support and information to make their transition into the project as smooth as possible. This includes providing information on the full costs of living in the project, the support available while on the project and to facilitate a successful move-on, and practical help with moving belongings and setting up direct debits for bills and benefits.

While on-project, participants are likely to need support with managing and maintaining their home. Move On Up project staff and participants both reflected that tenants' experiences of caring does not necessarily mean they have the skills and knowledge needed to keep a property clean and maintained, manage a budget or ensure that bills and rent are paid on time. This runs contrary to an initial assumption of the project, which was that young adult carers may have stronger skills in these areas than their peers, as a result of their caring role. In fact, the evaluation findings show a mismatch between participants' perceptions of their money management skills (which they felt were quite strong) and the reality of high rent arrears across the project. Basic DIY and intensive budgeting and money management skills training at the start of tenancies should therefore be built into any replicated project, to help address these issues.

Another key aspect of support that organisations should consider offering in a similar project is advice on living with others and how to manage relationships with housemates. This has been a challenge for many Move On Up participants, but shared accommodation is also likely to be the only feasible way that many young people will be able to afford to move out of the family home, especially in London. As such, learning to live with other people is a valuable lesson for project participants, but they may need support to address issues with housemates and learn how to establish house rules which foster mutual respect.

Other support needs which will likely arise for participants include help with accessing education and work, managing their caring responsibilities, and mental health and wellbeing. In these situations, tailored and flexible support which addresses individual needs and goals is most effective in addressing barriers and enabling progression. Links with specialist agencies such as carers services and mental health support can also enhance this support.

²⁰ The current project model and support offered to participants is described in detail in section 3.3.

Finally, any replication of Move On Up elsewhere will need to provide clear information and support with move-on destinations from the start of participants' engagement with the project. This helps tenants develop realistic plans for move-on and also assuages concerns and worries about what will happen when their involvement in the project ends.

7. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Lessons learned

The summative evaluation has identified a set of **key findings and lessons learned** from the Move On Up project:

- Move On Up is now a well-established project which is addressing a gap in support for young adult carers. In the current climate of extreme housing need, demand for shared housing and nervousness about developing specialist housing schemes unsupported by revenue commitments, Move On Up stands out as an innovative project, focused on a group whose needs have typically been overlooked.
- A number of changes have been made to the Move On Up project model over the course of its delivery, demonstrating QSA's willingness to learn from their experiences and the findings of the evaluation. The project model is now relatively firm, although project staff are flexible and will continue to adapt their delivery of the project to suit participants' needs.
- Move On Up is running at a surplus, largely due to QSA's decision to allocate investment income to the project and its success in securing income from trusts. The Commonwealth subsidy has also been important in enabling the project to be financially viable. It would be difficult to run the project on rental income alone. Other funders/organisations replicating delivery of the project would need to ensure that they could secure additional grants or invest their own funds to bridge any income gap.
- The consistent stream of referrals – and in particular self-referrals – suggests that the approach that project staff take to promotion and recruitment has been successful in raising awareness of Move On Up amongst the target group. In fact, the level of referrals and conversions to tenancies means that QSA feels the project's capacity is sufficient to meet local demand.
- After two and a half years of delivery, the evaluation has identified that the most appropriate target group for Move On Up is young people who:
 - Are a current or recent carer, or a previous carer who is still impacted by their past caring role
 - Have a less urgent housing need (i.e. will not be homeless if they do not join the project) or have an immediate housing need but with a desire to utilise the project support offer to progress personally
 - Have clear personal goals or are willing to agree goals and work towards these
 - Have low or moderate support needs
 - Can afford the costs of living independently in a Move On Up property, either through their salary or benefits

- The project continues to experience challenges with high levels of rent arrears. The reasons for participants falling into arrears vary, but an increasingly common reason was the move to Universal Credit, which requires new claimants to wait five weeks for their first payment (or request an advance payment which must be paid back over time). This immediately places participants in a position of debt. Other participants fell into arrears due to being on zero-hour contracts or having irregular hours of work. Consequently, the development worker is looking to provide more intensive job search and application support to help these participants find work and begin to pay off their arrears.
- Evidence suggests that motivations for engaging in the project – i.e. to address an immediate housing need or to progress towards personal goals – continues to be an indicator of levels of engagement with the project support offer. However, disruptive flatmates, mental health problems and wider life changes such as losing their job can also have a significant impact on participants' engagement in the project. QSA will continue to use the 'three buckets' test to measure levels of engagement in terms of paying rent, engagement with the support offer, and being a good housemate/tenant. If all three or at least two of these 'buckets' are being filled then the participant is considered to be engaging. However, if the participant is only ticking one of these boxes then there is cause for concern.
- Participants continue to be happy with the quality of the properties and the project manager's work in maintaining these. They also continue to appreciate the tailored and pragmatic nature of the support the project staff provide to help them define and progress towards their goals, although a small number said they would appreciate more intensive support to help them progress towards their goals.
- Generally, participants were very positive about their experiences of living independently as part of Move On Up. They report few challenges with living away from the family home, although the high levels of rent arrears suggest that project staff may need to have more open discussions with participants about their budgeting and money management skills.
- Participants have had varying experiences of shared living in the project. For some, this has been very positive, but many have experienced challenging situations. In two properties, this was the result of particularly disengaged tenants, and the move from tenancies to licences may help QSA to address similar future issues more quickly. In a third property, the breakdown in relationships was the result of a tumultuous time for two tenants, with a change in project staff, new flatmate and the pressure of entering the final quarter of their tenancies.
- A good match between flatmates and a cohesive home environment is crucial in enabling participants to make progress. Where this works particularly well, relationships between flatmates can enhance the outcomes experienced by participants. However, disruptive or challenging relationships can be detrimental to their progress and engagement with the project. Going forward, QSA will adopt either the peer interview or pre move-in meeting approach to matching, depending on how many young people they have on their waiting list and their own judgement of the situations within each property.

- Issues with shared living challenge the assumption that carers will necessarily get along or offer effective peer support to each other. Instead, it appears that other factors are more important in ensuring a good match between flatmates, including age or maturity, motivations and intentions while on the project, and potentially gender. However, it is recognised amongst participants that a caring role can contribute to the development of maturity and personal goals and, once initial friendships have been established, common experiences of caring can provide additional opportunities for peer support.
- Ten participants have now moved on from the project. Of these, four were deemed to be positive move-ons; two were neutral or 'sideways' moves; and four were viewed as negative move-ons. Participants who experienced a positive move-on found the support from project staff invaluable in enabling them to make decisions about when and where to move into. However, some participants still have anxieties about what will happen when their participation in Move On Up comes to an end and feel that discussions about move-on destinations need to start earlier in young people's tenancies, in order to maximise the likelihood that they will achieve a positive move-on.
- The mixed range of move-on experiences highlights the challenges in supporting vulnerable young people to achieve a successful transition into independent living, even with tailored and holistic support. For many, the costs of living independently prohibited them from making this move, while others only managed to experience a positive move-on by going to university. However, it is worth noting that previous participants who did not move into independent living and current participants who anticipate that they will move back in with their relatives, still identified many benefits they experienced as a result of being involved in the project, as described below.
- Participants have experienced a range of positive outcomes so far, many of which have resulted from the respite from caring which living independently affords them. These outcomes include considerable improvements in their relationships with their families, accessing education, finding employment and refining their future plans. Other outcomes included a better understanding of their own needs and aspirations, improved independent living skills and increased social participation and friendships.
- Evidence suggests that both elements of Move On Up – the shared opportunity for independent living and specialist support – is needed in order for the project to be a success. The interview data suggests that, while living independently has enabled participants to make many of the improvements discussed above, outcomes such as education/employment progression and improved wellbeing, family relationships and social life, would not occur (or at least not occur so quickly) without the support of the project staff.
- A small number of Move On Up participants are presenting with higher mental health needs than identified in their initial assessment, which has been time consuming for project staff. This has resulted in project staff implementing a more robust assessment of applicants' support needs, mental health and ability to cope with conflict, to ensure that their needs can be met through the project. There is also a recognition that additional needs will emerge during participants' involvement in Move On Up.

- Research with external carers services and young adult carers suggests that there is a demand for projects similar to Move On Up in other parts of London and the country. Any replications of the project would need to consider: having expertise in both supporting young adult carers and running a housing project; and the type of housing model adopted (shared housing is likely to be the most affordable and potentially beneficial for participants, but other models may also be used). In addition, the experience of this project suggests that splitting the project manager and development worker roles across two members of staff (or across two separate organisations through a partnership delivery model) may help promote engagement with support and rent payments, although other housing projects have successfully combined these responsibilities across staff. The key learning from Move On Up is perhaps that these two different support and management functions need to be given sufficient weight within a delivery model for a project such as this. Other considerations would include: how the project can be funded and financially viable; the location of properties and cost of living for participants; the specific target group and capacity of the project; the type and length of contracts used; and what the support offer for participants would be before, during and after their involvement with the project.

7.2 Conclusion

The impact of being a young adult carer can significantly affect a young person's wellbeing and long-term life chances. Evidence shows that young adult carers are more likely to experience physical and mental health difficulties compared to other young people. They are also more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET), be isolated from their peers and live in low-income households. Many young adult carers talk about becoming 'trapped' in a caring role, which restricts their opportunities to lead full and active lives as they transition into adulthood.

The cross-government Carers Action Plan, published in June 2018, set out a range of measures to support young adult carers to establish a 'life of their own' outside of caring. However, the plan does not take account of young adult carers' housing needs, which, as has been evidenced through this evaluation, is a key contributor to young adult carers feeling unable to pursue their own ambitions and career aspirations. Consultations with professionals and young adult carers both in London and in other parts of England confirmed that young adult carers often live in precarious housing, or are at risk of becoming homeless. This contributes to the day to day pressure and challenges that they face, alongside restricting their long-term life chances.

Move On Up is an innovative project designed to test the impact of shared housing, alongside empathetic and specialist support, in enabling young adult carers to secure positive outcomes. The evaluation has shown that the model is having a positive impact in a range of ways, including providing respite from caring, improved relationships with family members, higher levels of participation/outcomes in learning and employment, improved social engagement, and improved confidence, communication skills and wider life skills. The model is also relatively successful in terms of move-on destinations and outcomes, with two-thirds of participants who have left the project reporting a more positive situation compared to when they initially engaged.

The key conclusion of this evaluation is that the Move On Up model should be replicated and sustained. Extending the opportunities presented by Move On Up would enable young adult carers across the country to benefit from improved outcomes. This is important from a social justice perspective in the context of the government's own levelling up agenda, particularly given the contribution that young adult carers make to their families and society.

Any replication of Move On Up should include both elements of the project model: the independent living and tailored support. The evaluation found that providing young adult carers with their own living space away from the family home enabled them to reflect on their own needs and aspirations, develop their sense of identity and make progress in a range of key areas, including education, employment and mental health and wellbeing. However, the tailored support provided by QSA was crucial in enabling participants to make a successful transition into independent living, sustain their tenancies and realise the benefits of the project much more quickly than they would have done without this support. As such, both elements are important in a housing project targeted at young adult carers.

The housing model utilised for the independent living element of the project could vary in different parts of the country, depending on the local context. The conclusion of this evaluation is that a shared housing model exclusively for young adult carers would be the preferable option for any replicated project, as it often supports participants to secure good outcomes: it can create opportunities for strong peer support, based on shared experiences of caring, which enhance friendships developed between housemates, reduces social isolation and further improves mental health and wellbeing. In addition, shared housing is the most viable option from a funding perspective. However, this model can create tensions within households which at times escalated to breakdowns in relationships between housemates in Move On Up, although this was typically the result of a clash of participants' personalities rather than their experiences as carers. Replicating organisations may find it easier to house young adult carers in individual properties or with other young people (who are not carers), but these models may miss out on opportunities to build peer support between participants based on their shared experience of caring.

Move On Up is a unique project. QSA should be commended for designing and implementing an innovative and ambitious model targeted at a group of young people whose needs are often overlooked. Likewise, Commonweal should be commended for supporting the project, both financially and through its specialist housing knowledge. However, it must be noted that Move On Up is an expensive project to set up and deliver, and that the costs per participant are relatively high.

Both QSA and Commonweal have strong and ambitious values driven by a commitment to challenge social injustice. Whilst it may be possible for the partnership formed by QSA and Commonweal to be replicated, there is a risk that there are few other organisations who are motivated, or in a position, to set up such a high cost and ambitious project, particularly in the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The decision taken by QSA to allocate investment income to the project, and their success in securing grant income should particularly be noted. Whilst other organisations may be able to replicate the financial model, it is important that other financially viable delivery models are considered, that do not require such significant investment/grant income. A further key finding of this evaluation is therefore that mainstream housing providers, particularly local authorities and social housing

providers, should establish partnerships with organisations such as carers services, to address the housing needs of young adult carers in their localities. This would require housing providers to allocate some stock specifically for young adult carers, who are then supported by carer or youth organisations to overcome individual barriers. This approach would both build on providers' expertise in their respective areas and create economies of scale, whilst maintaining the independent living and specialist support elements of the project.

7.3 Recommendations

The findings of the evaluation lead to **two key recommendations regarding the replicability of Move On Up:**

1. **Move On Up is an innovative project which should be replicated in other parts of England.** The evaluation findings suggest that the project successfully enables young adult carers to secure positive outcomes by providing them with the opportunity to live independently, alongside access to empathetic and specialist support.
2. **Replications of Move On Up should be delivered as a partnership between housing and carer/youth organisations.** Socially responsible private landlords, social housing providers and local authority housing providers with suitable properties should allocate housing stock specifically for young adult carers, whilst carers services or youth organisations should provide tailored support to meet young adult carers' individual needs. This approach would both build on providers' expertise in their respective areas and create economies of scale, whilst maintaining the independent living and specialist support elements of the project. Where possible, replicating organisations should adopt a shared housing model exclusively for young adult carers to deliver the project.

Below are further recommendations for national government, local authorities, housing providers, carers services and wider stakeholders. These support the two main recommendations above and are drawn from the findings of the evaluation and discussions at a workshop of key stakeholders, convened by Commonweal Housing and Learning and Work Institute in November 2019.

7.3.1 For national government

- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) should undertake a two-year review of the Carers Action Plan, as it currently only includes actions to be taken up to the end of 2020. In updating the plan, the Department should include a specific focus on housing, and consult with young adult carers on the actions that would most benefit them in relation to this.
- DHSC and MHCLG should commission national research to explore the extent to which unpaid caring responsibilities contribute to homelessness. An understanding of the scale of the problem and the impact should inform government policy and feed into an updated Carers Action Plan.

- DHSC should ensure that Transition Assessments (TAs) for young adult carers are routinely undertaken, and make it a duty for these to include an assessment of housing need. Where housing needs are identified through a TA, this should trigger the local authority's prevention duties and right to refer, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, so that the young person in question receives housing support. DHSC should issue guidance to local authorities about how to conduct TAs and ensure they assess housing need.
- DWP should work with MCHLG to ensure that the benefit system is an adequate safety net which prevents homelessness. In particular, the government should:
 - Abolish the five week wait and at the very least change the advance payment which is currently available from a loan to a grant.
 - Urgently restore LHA rates to reflect at least the bottom 30th percentile and establish a robust mechanism to maintain rates at this level. At the time of writing, this has been implemented due to the coronavirus crisis and should be maintained.

7.3.2 For local authorities

- Local authorities should prioritise funding for carers services to support young adult carers' transitions into independent living.
- Local authorities should ensure that Transition Assessments for young adult carers are routinely undertaken and include an assessment of housing need. Where housing needs are identified through a TA, this should trigger the local authority's prevention duties and right to refer, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, so that the young person in question receives housing support.
- Local authority carer leads should be trained in the links between caring and housing need amongst young people, in order to encourage the development of local initiatives that provide housing support to young adult carers.
- The Local Government Association should facilitate a coordinated approach amongst local authorities to link duties to carers and those in housing need. This would improve coordination and enable sharing of effective practice in terms of social letting practices, implementation of the HRA, transition assessments for young adult carers and specialist housing developments for young people

7.3.3 For housing providers

- National umbrella and membership bodies supporting socially responsible landlords such as The National Housing Federation, The Chartered Institute of Housing, The National Landlord Association, PlaceShapers and Homes for Cathy should consider how they can promote within their membership the housing needs of young adult carers and the relevant recommendations in this report. This could be through a toolkit commissioned by QSA and Commonweal, based on the lessons learned from the delivery of Move On Up.
- Social housing providers should run training sessions to raise staff awareness of young adult carers, the ways in which caring can lead to a housing need, and the specific

needs that a young person may have if they are a carer (for example, to be housed in a particular area, close to the person they care for).

- Social housing providers should also build strong partnerships with local carers services. This will not only lead to improved referral pathways and support for young adult carers with housing needs, but could also enable housing providers to improve the housing expertise of carers service staff, so they can provide more practical and intensive support to young people.

7.3.4 For carers services

- Carers services should build partnerships with their local authorities and housing providers to raise awareness of young adult carers and their needs in relation to housing. Partnerships between carers services and housing associations work well when housing staff have a good understanding of and empathy with young adult carers. Strong partnerships between these organisations can also result in a two-way referral process.
- Carers services should also consider employing a staff member with expertise or training on housing. Much of the advice and support offered by housing providers could be delivered by carers services in-house, if they had the capacity and expertise to do so.

7.3.5 For wider stakeholders

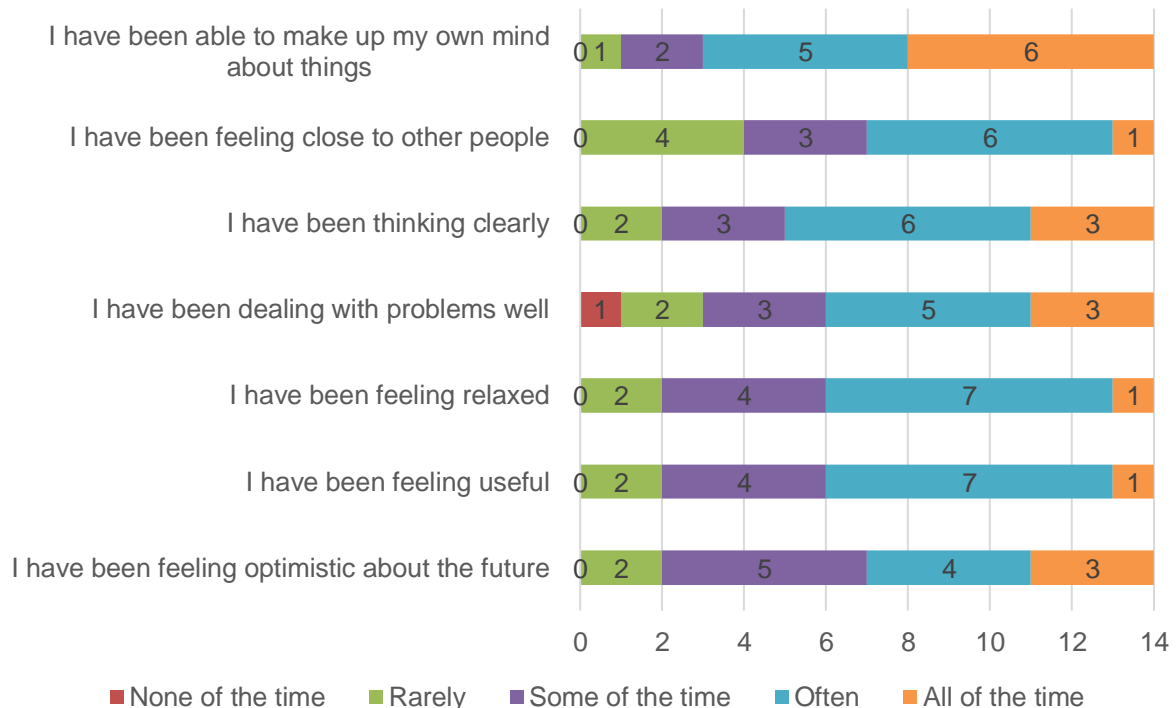
- Wider stakeholders should work to increase awareness and understanding of young adult carers amongst housing providers and representative organisations. Carers organisations such as Carers Trust, Carers UK, The Children's Society and Barnardo's should work with housing organisations such as Commonweal Housing, Shelter, Centrepont, the National Housing Federation, DePaul, Homeless Link and Crisis, to run a joint campaign which promotes the needs of young adult carers amongst housing providers.
- In addition, carers organisations such as Carers Trust, Carers UK, The Children's Society and Barnardo's should support their services which work with young adult carers to develop their expertise in relation to housing and equip them with the skills and tools required to advocate on their behalf to housing providers.

Appendix 1: Detailed costs for the delivery of Move On Up in London

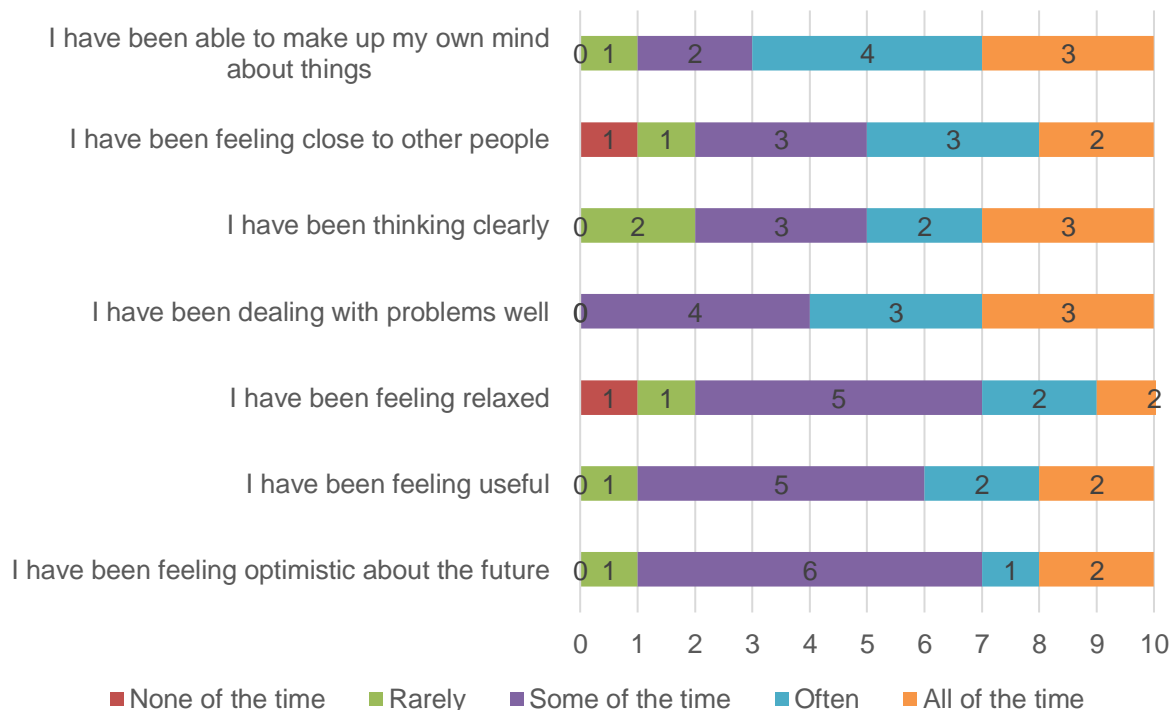
Cost items	2017/18 Financial year			2018/19 Financial year			TOTAL for all years
Direct staff costs	Average gross salary	FTE	Total	Average gross salary	FTE	Total	
Key workers (PM and support worker, plus some Director staff time)	£41,349	1.0	£41,349	37,567	1.0	£37,567	£78,916
Sub-total		1.0	£41,349		1.0	£37,567	£78,916
One off costs Year 1 only	Average Unit cost	Number	Total				
Fit out costs	£20,514	1.0	£20,514				£20,514
Indirect staff costs	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Total
Other staff training	£914	1.0	£914	464	1.0	£464	£1378
Travel & Subsistence	£340	1.0	£340				£340
Utility use	£922	1.0	£922	972	1.0	£972	£1,894
Sub-total			£2,176			£1,436	£3,612
Corporate Overheads	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Total
HR Support Costs				252	1.0	£252	£252
Finance Support Costs							
Financing Costs							
Other Corporate Overhead Costs				22,389	1.0	£22,389	£22,389
Sub-total					-	£22,641	£22,641
Accommodation costs	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Total
Rent / Lease / Mortgage Costs	£45,463	1.0	£45,463	46,670	1.0	£46,670	£92,133
Office Equipment	£732	1.0	£732	720	1.0	£720	£1,472
Advertising & Marketing	£681	1.0	£681				£681
Sub-total			£46,876			£47,390	£94,266
Other programme costs	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Cost per unit	Units	Total	Total
Participant Training Costs				25	1.0	£25	£25
Other Participant Costs				520	1.0	£520	£520
Payments to sub contractors	£40	1.0	£40	685	1.0	£685	£725
Consultancy: Legal fees	£588	1.0	£588	1271	1.0	£1,271	£1,859
Sub-total			£628			£2,501	£3,129
GRAND TOTAL			£111,543			£111,535	£223,078

Appendix 2: Quantitative data from participant questionnaires

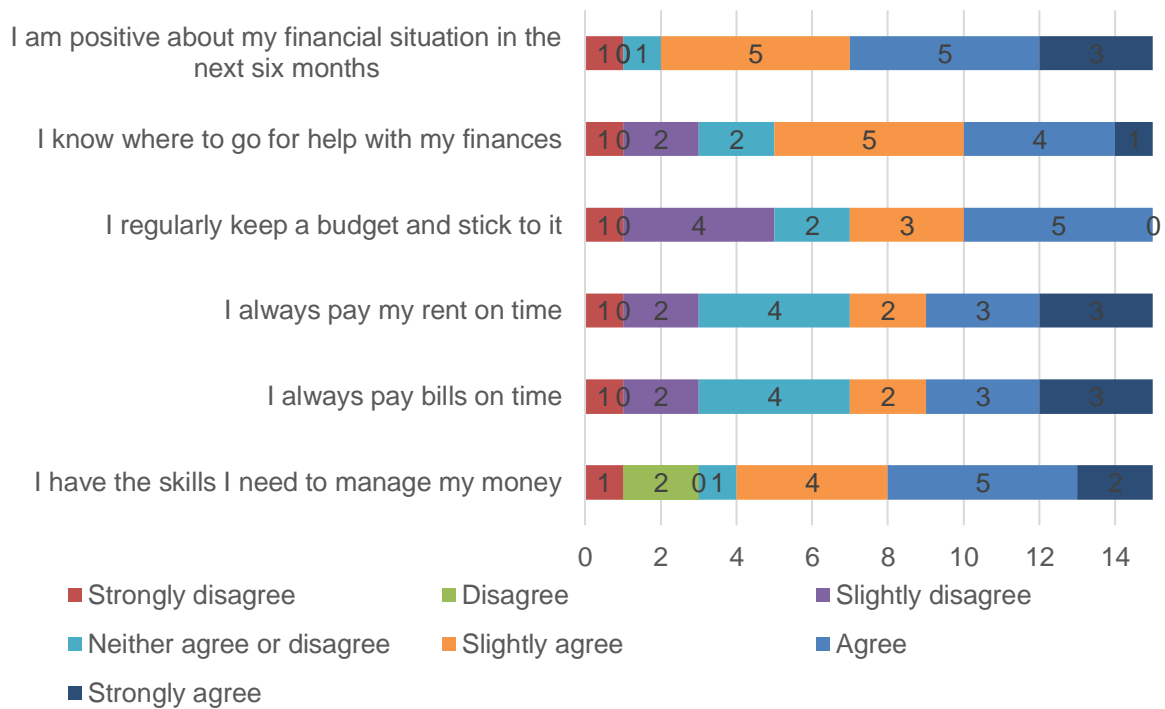
Participants' views of their health and wellbeing (start)



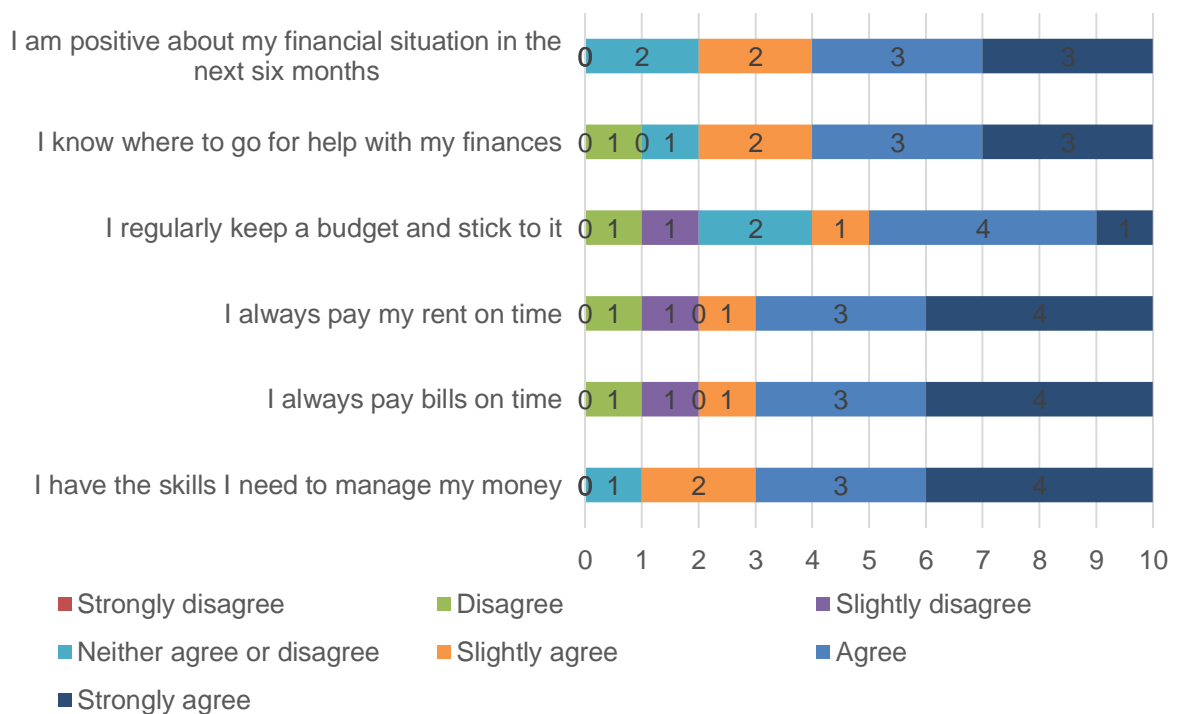
Participants' views of their health and wellbeing (final)



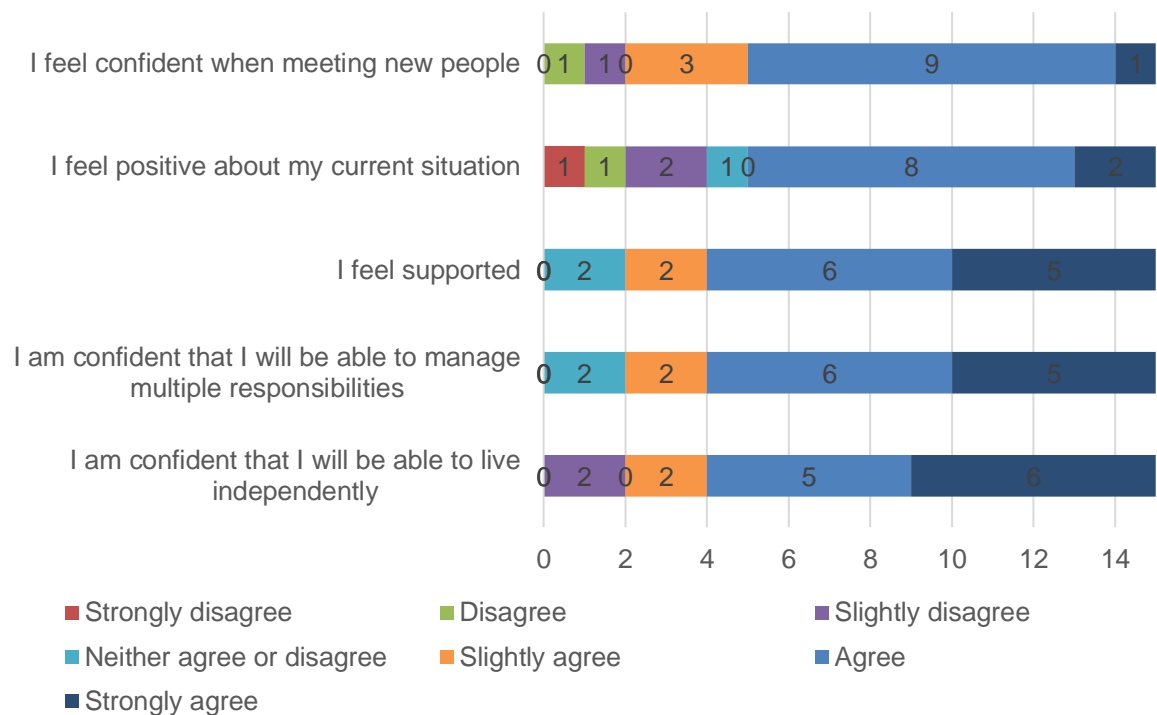
Participants' views of their situation in relation to finances (start)



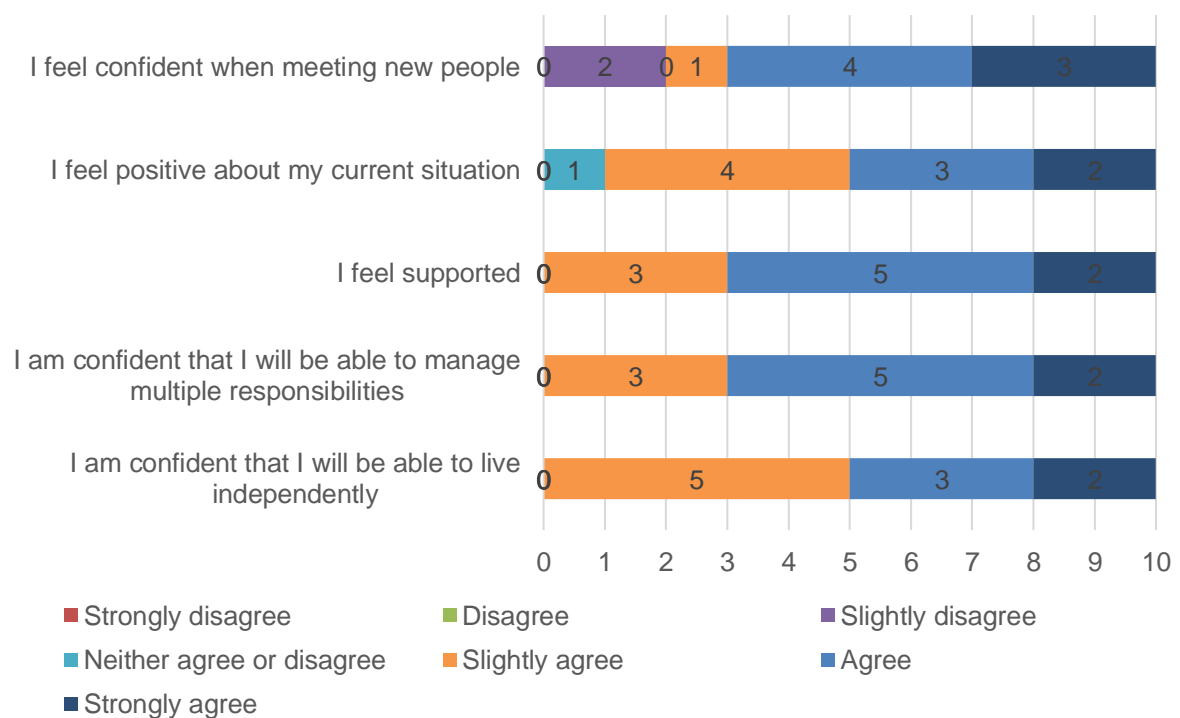
Participants' views of their situation in relation to finances (final)



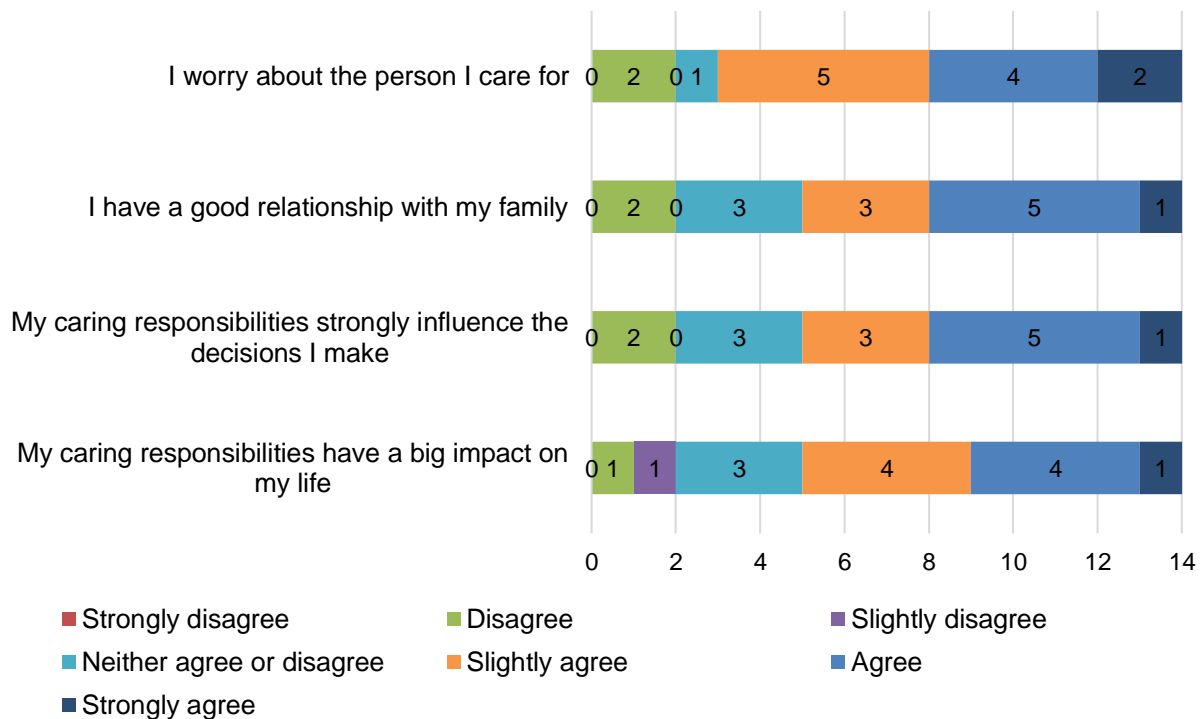
Participants' views of their current situation (start)



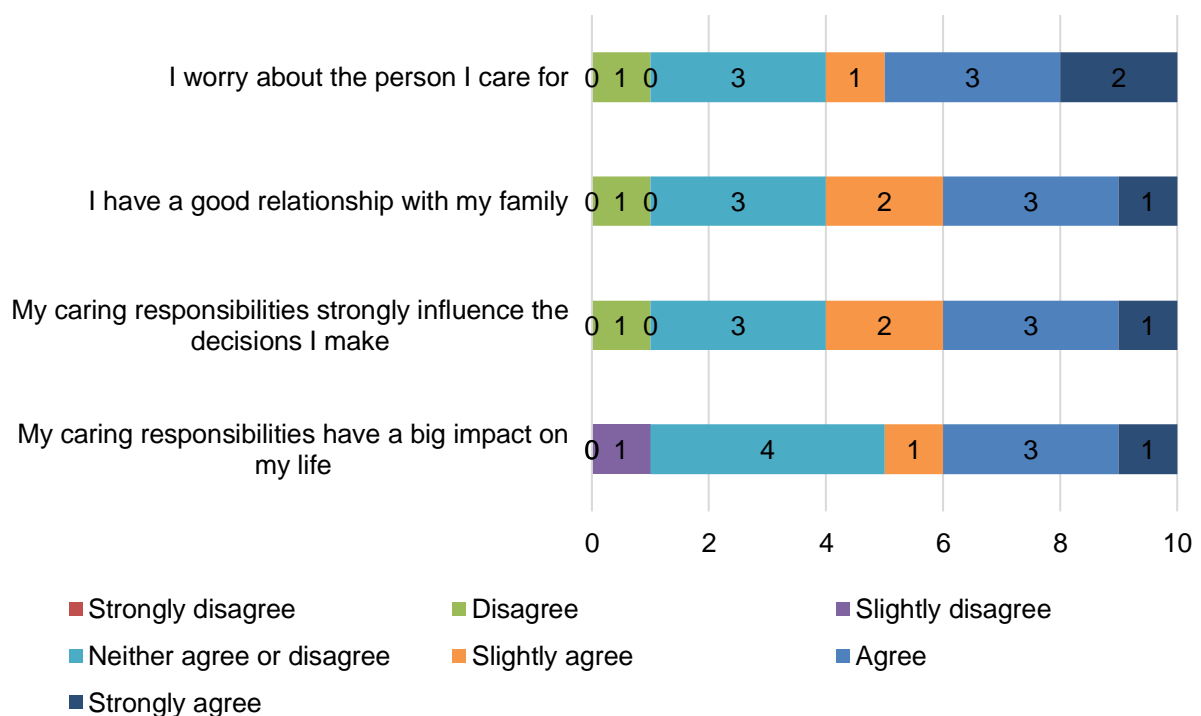
Participants' views of their current situation (final)



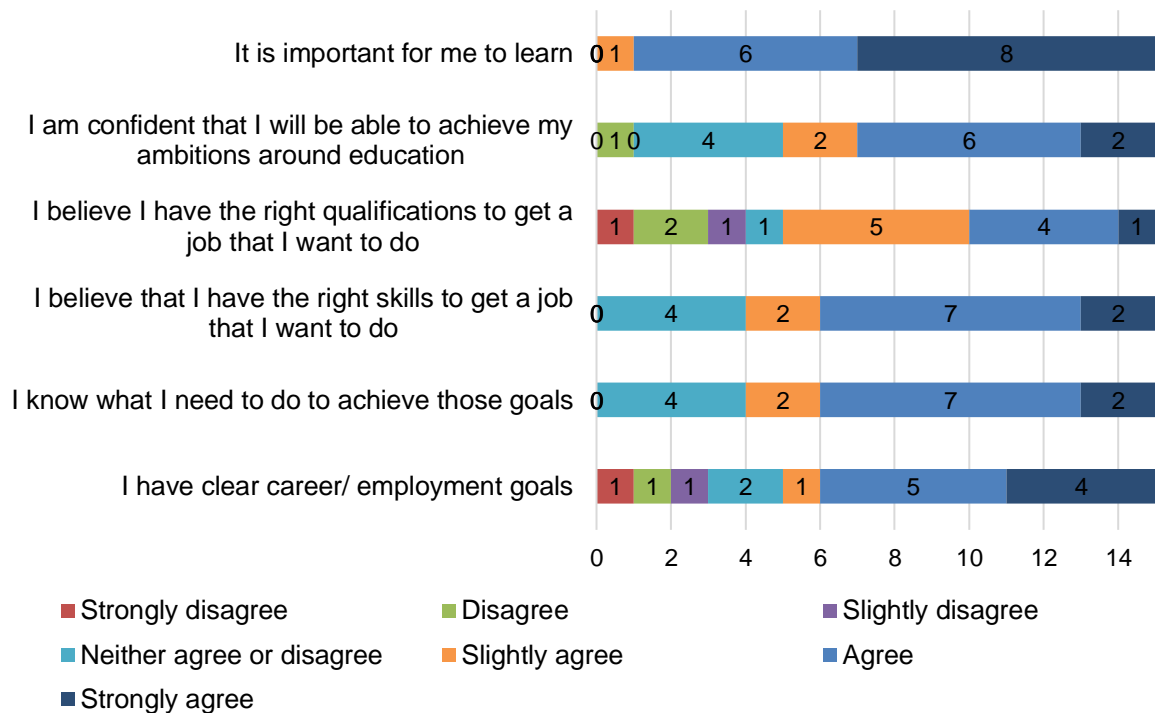
Participants' views of their caring responsibilities (start)



Participants' views of their caring responsibilities (final)



Participants' views of their situation in relation to education and employment (start)



Participants' views of their situation in relation to education and employment (end)

