



Move On Up evaluation

Second interim report - summary

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1. Introduction

Young adult carers are at a high risk of experiencing homelessness. The youth homelessness charity, Centrepoin, reports that 60% of young people using its services identify a major cause of their homelessness as breakdown of a relationship in the family home. 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 adulthood. However, as young adult carers tend to come from lower income households and feel socially isolated¹, 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 ending up 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 acute nature of the UK's current housing crisis, which is widely acknowledged, including by Government.

In response, Quaker Social Action and Commonweal Housing have developed a new shared housing project. Move On Up is a unique flat share option for carers aged 18-25, who are looking to live independently, while building life skills and focusing on achieving aspirations.

1.1 Move On Up

Move On Up is testing a pathway to independent living for young adult carers, offering access to shared accommodation alongside support to make positive transitions and to deal with challenges.

Between now and April 2020, QSA and Commonweal Housing may wish to consider ways in which the project could be adapted to fit with both the changing policy context and the emerging findings of the evaluation. For example, following the publication of the national action plan for carers, individual local authorities are likely to publish their own local action plans for carers. This could present opportunities for QSA and Commonweal Housing to promote Move On Up to different stakeholders or develop it in line with local priorities. In future evaluation reports, L&W will consider the changing policy context and make recommendations for the future development of Move On Up.

1.2 The evaluation

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is conducting an independent evaluation of Move On Up. The aim of the evaluation is to assess whether a shared housing pathway for young adult carers aged between 18-24 years, alongside empathetic and specialist support, 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.

¹ 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.

- Young people to transition into the private rental sector/ independent living.

The evaluation is formative as well as summative, to ensure that findings can be shared with partners on an ongoing basis and improvements can be made where needed. It is taking a mixed methods approach, combining the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from the project manager, project participants and wider stakeholders.

Move On Up will run for seven years, from 2017 to 2024. The evaluation will cover three years of delivery, from March 2017 to April 2020. This report presents the findings of the second wave evaluation activities carried out between June and August 2018. 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**
These questionnaires collect quantitative data on participants' perceptions of their health and wellbeing, finances, current situation, caring responsibilities, and education and employment situation. The small number of participants so far means that the current analysis of this data is speculative. However, as the number of participants increases, stronger conclusions can be drawn about the impact of the programme.
- **Qualitative in-depth interviews with Move On Up participants**
These were conducted individually via telephone and aimed to gather more in-depth information on participants' experiences of the project so far.
- **Qualitative in-depth interviews with former project participants²**
At the time of the second wave fieldwork, one of the participants had successfully progressed into independent living and moved on from the project. An in-depth interview was conducted by telephone with this participant and 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 interview with the Move On Up Project Manager**
This interview was conducted face-to-face 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.

² Participants who had progressed on from the project into independent living.

2. Key findings

The second interim evaluation activities identified a number of key findings and lessons learned for the Move On Up project:

- It appears that Move On Up is addressing a gap in the current landscape of combined housing provision and support for carers. Currently, housing services do not typically consider caring as a contributing factor to youth homelessness, and carers services offer little in the way of housing support to young adult carers. This project is therefore addressing a neglected support need of young adult carers.
- After an initial slow start, the project has received consistent referrals from carers services, youth services and self-referrals. This can be attributed to the original work done to raise awareness of the project, demonstrating the importance of establishing strong referral routes at the outset of a project. The project manager is continuing to develop these by attending events at carers services, youth services and homelessness projects.
- The messaging in promotion materials has changed in light of the findings of the first interim evaluation, suggesting that the Move On Up project is successfully implementing lessons learnt in order to adapt the programme to potential participants' needs.
- It is clear that ensuring a good 'fit' between flatmates is vital for the success of the project. The matching process for incoming participants will therefore be an important part of the ongoing project delivery. Many participants suggested an increased number of pre-move meetings between participants, in order to 'test out' the fit between flatmates. However, it will be important to identify effective ways of engaging participants in these meetings.
- For most participants, housing was their most pressing need and the main motivation for joining Move On Up. Once on the programme most participants appreciated the additional support from the project manager and volunteers, but none of the interviewees cited this as their primary reason for joining.
- In general, those who had signed up to Move On Up purely to address a housing need tended to be less engaged with the programme, compared to those who had wanted independent housing in order to facilitate broader goals such as wellbeing, education or employment progression.
- Participants had had positive experiences of living independently, facilitated by the high quality of the furnishings in the flats and support from the project manager (especially with setting up benefits).
- There is a mismatch between interviewees' perceptions and actual need for support with managing finances. The number of participants in rent arrears suggests that this is a clear support requirement and the project manager is addressing this with individual participants.
- Shared living appeared to be the most challenging element of the programme for most participants. Issues with shared living included flatmates having parties, getting noise

complaints, inviting overnight guests/boyfriends/girlfriends, a lack of common ground between flatmates and anxiety around challenging unacceptable behaviour. However, even where there were challenges with flatmates, all participants felt that they were better off on the Move On Up programme than in their previous situation.

- The issues with shared living challenges the assumption that carers will necessarily have similarities or be able to offer each other peer support. Where peer support is happening, this seems to be more because flatmates have similar interests and natures rather than a shared experience of caring. This may be due to the varied nature of care roles and carers, which means that being young adult carers is not sufficient common ground for a peer support relationship to develop.
- Overall, participants were very enthusiastic about the support offered by the project manager and offered few suggestions for improvement. In particular, they appreciated the project manager's solutions-focussed approach and that support is tailored to their individual needs.
- The interview data suggests that 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 manager. Even where there were challenges among flatmates, all the participants interviewed felt they were better off than in their previous living situation.
- There is some continuing confusion amongst participants over the project manager's role. This is being addressed through the recruitment of specialist volunteers to provide expert advice and support, which appears to be working well for participants.
- There are varying levels of engagement with support amongst participants, which appear to be in line with their motivations for engaging in the project. This suggests a need for greater clarity about the expectations of how and when participants will engage with the support on offer at the outset of their involvement in the project.
- Most of the participants interviewed had anxieties about what would happen when their participation in Move On Up comes to an end. Some are reluctant to discuss this with the project manager, while others seem unclear about whose role it is to look at move on options.
- Participants have experienced a range of outcomes so far, many of which have resulted from the respite from caring which living independently affords them. This has enabled them to improve the quality of care they provide and relationships with their families, improve their mental and physical wellbeing, make transitions in education and employment, and provide space for them to develop their own identity and sense of self, as well as increase their social participation and make friends.

3. Theory of change

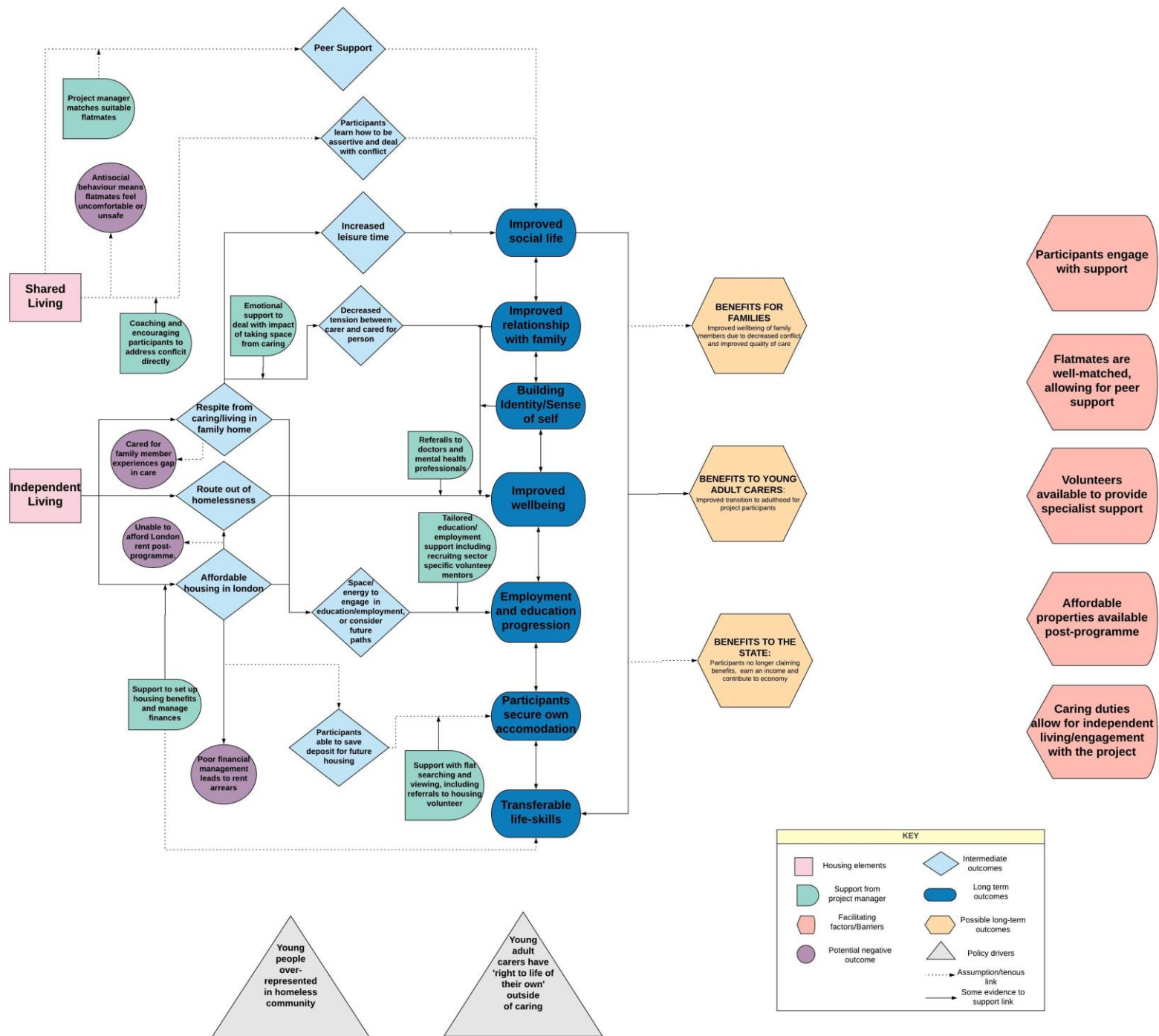
We drew on the findings of the evaluation to develop a ‘theory of change’ for the Move On Up project. A theory of change is a visual map of a programme’s activities and how they lead to intermediate and long-term outcomes, as well as facilitating factors, barriers and possible negative outcomes.

The theory of change can be helpful both from the point of view of an evaluation and to examine programme delivery. Moving forwards, project partners may wish to amend the theory of change according to their own understanding of how the programme should be working, and L&W can use these assumptions within future waves of the evaluation.

The Move On Up 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 manager. It identifies a comprehensive range of long-term outcomes, including:

- **Improved social life:** Independent living and respite from caring can afford some participants the time to socialise. For some, shared living has offered them 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, initial 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 so far 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 – 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:** Although this is clearly a desired outcome, more time is needed to see whether these progressions occur. Currently, one participant has moved into their own accommodation.
- **Transferable life skills:** Through the programme, some participants acquire life skills including budgeting, navigating the benefit system, 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.

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. Some of these outcomes are evidenced in the preliminary findings, while others are aspirational and require further evidencing.



4. Points for consideration

The evaluation revealed five main points for consideration for project partners.

4.1 The target audience of the project

Our qualitative analysis has shown that participants can be categorised into different ‘types’ according to their needs and reasons for engaging in the project. The project manager suggests two types of participants: those who are current carers and need respite, and those who are previous carers and for whom family fall out has resulted in homelessness. We have identified other categories of young people: those who join the programme primarily for housing in and of itself, and those who have specific goals and were using the programme to transition towards those aims. The line between these groups is of course not clear cut but, in general, those with specific goals or aims tended to have better engagement with the project manager and support on offer. In turn, these participants appeared to have made the most progress so far in terms of personal development, education and employment. However, as participants are only part-way through their project tenancy, it remains to be seen whether those who are less engaged with the support do achieve these outcomes over time. A question for discussion is whether Move On Up should only be recruiting participants who are willing to engage with support and committed to development, or whether the project will recruit participants purely based on their housing need and status as a carer.

4.2 The support offer

Our research suggests that there is a need to more clearly define the Move On Up support model, including the roles and responsibilities of different staff members. Pinning down the support offer will make it possible to consider how Move On Up can be implemented across different contexts, and for staff and representatives to talk about Move On Up to external audiences and advertise and explain the offer to participants. The development of a logic model for the support offer will be incorporated into the next stage of the evaluation.

4.3 Matching process

Currently it appears that the benefits of shared living are not being harnessed due to conflict between flatmates. More effective matching could reduce this conflict and facilitate the development of peer support relationships, which are currently not occurring within the majority of the properties. A number of suggestions were made about how the matching process could be improved. Participants have flagged issues such as ensuring flatmates fall within the same age range, as well as the gender balance between flatmates. It also seemed important to participants that their flatmates had similar levels of caring to their own, in order for this to be the basis for peer support to develop. A stronger needs assessment could help to identify and match participants based on these variables, as well as bring the extent to which they have clear progression goals into the matching process. Participants also suggested the need for pre-move-in meet ups – although the project manager has attempted these but had issues with engagement.

Moving forward, Move On Up partners should consider the extent to which matching flatmates should be prioritised over other criteria – such as participants’ needs and aims – when selecting from the waiting list. This should involve weighing up the benefits to be gained from having cohesive and well-matched flats, against the potential cost of excluding

potential participants who may benefit from the programme but are not well matched to pre-existing flatmates.

4.4 Moving on

Most participants interviewed had fears and anxieties about moving into their own accommodation after the programme. The theory of change identifies the possibility of participants not being able to find housing post-programme, particularly within London. Currently, one participant who has moved into their own flat demonstrates that this transition is possible. However, given the current housing crisis within London, participants may need support to explore options such as moving further out. When this is not possible due to caring responsibilities or other commitments, Move On Up may need to consider providing support for other options, including moving back into the family home (where possible) after the programme. It may also be a good idea for the project manager to discuss possible 'moving on' pathways earlier on in the programme and to explain the expectations about these, in order to quell anxieties and address the lack of clarity that participants reported around this. Information on the continuing support from QSA which will be available to participants following their progression from the project would also be helpful in enabling them to consider their options to move on.

4.5 Engaging participants in support and the evaluation

The evaluation has identified a clear challenge around engaging participants in the support and wider development aspects of the project. The project manager has taken steps to address this – for example, by being clear about the reasons why participants need to meet with them – but there is a recognition that encouraging engagement is a challenge. This also creates a secondary challenge, as only the participants who are most engaged tend to take part in the evaluation. As such, the evaluation risks only exploring the experiences of those who are fully engaged with the project manager and support on offer.

A consideration for the project is how to encourage participants to engage with the project manager and the evaluation, without forcing participants to engage when they do not need or want to. One participant suggested that a handbook, including guidelines for engagement, could be used to keep participants accountable for their involvement in the project. Some participants expressed confusion over the role of the project manager – and it is possible that a clearer articulation of this role will encourage participants to engage. Other approaches may include recruiting more volunteers to provide specific and tailored support and promoting this more widely to participants.

4.6 Other suggestions

Additionally, several specific suggestions have been made for the programme going forward:

- A handbook outlining expectations for flatmates and an agreement that they sign up to around this – for example, rules around guests, household duties and financial contribution to communal resources.
- Guidance offering greater clarity for participants on the role of the project manager.
- Access to an alternative named person at QSA who participants can contact if the project manager is unable to address their concerns.
- Background checking of participants.

5. The next stage of the evaluation

As well as continuing to map participants' outcomes and experiences of the programme, the next phase of the evaluation will also aim to address key questions brought up by this evaluation and the strategic group. These include:

1. What is the Move On Up support model?

This report has used the term 'tailored support' to describe the provision. The next stage will define a clearer picture of what this support involves. We will draw up a model of the support offer including who is involved, resources, inputs and activities/outputs. This will begin to create a model that will change across circumstances.

2. Who is accessing Move On Up?

This stage of the evaluation identified that there are different 'categories' of young people accessing Move On Up, and early data suggests that outcomes and experience of the programme may differ across these categories. We will continue to track participants and conduct analysis of outcomes by characteristics. This will explore the difference between participants who begin the programme with specific aims and those who do not have clearly defined goals, and between those who are previous and current carers.

3. What factors impact participant engagement with the project manager?

This stage of the evaluation found some confusion amongst participants over the role of the project manager. The next stage will explore participants' perceptions of the project manager and how this impacts engagement. It will test various hypotheses, including whether participants are less likely to engage if they view the project manager as a landlord as opposed to a support worker.

4. Why are programme participants accruing rent arrears?

This report showed disparity between the project manager's report of rent arrears and young people's perceptions of their own financial capability. The next stage will explore this disparity by this by asking more directly about participants in rent arrears and the reasons behind this. We will test out various hypotheses including whether young people are not paying their rent because they see Move On Up as a charitable enterprise, because of poor budgeting skills or because of affordability.

5. What are the predicted costings for future iterations of Move On Up?

In order to inform future iterations of Move On Up and the project's replicability across the sector, the evaluation will identify the costs of running a pilot versus the day-to-day running costs of a programme. We will meet with QSA to explore set up versus running costs and calculate a variety of future cost estimates based on different circumstances.

6. To what extent are the challenges and lessons learnt from Move On Up particular to a London context?

This evaluation identified challenges – such as the cost of and access to post-programme housing – which may be particular to its London context. The next evaluation will try to extrapolate the challenges and solutions which are transferable across locations, and those which are specific to London. This may be done by highlighting contextual factors in the theory of change.