

Move On Up evaluation: Summary of findings

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. 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 years and its potential for replication elsewhere.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is conducting an independent evaluation of Move On Up. The aim of the evaluation is to assess whether the project: increases the future options available to young adult carers, measured by increased personal sense of well-being, education and employment options; improves relationships between young people and their family members; enables young people to transition into the private rental sector/independent living.

Move On Up will run for seven years, from 2017 to 2024. The evaluation will run from March 2017 to March 2020. Three waves of data collection, analysis and reporting have been carried out so far, at six month intervals. This paper summarises the main findings of the three interim evaluation reports.

Key findings

Demand for the project and potential for replication

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 are able to offer little in the way of housing support to young adult carers. This project is therefore addressing a neglected support need.

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 England. Any replications of the project would need to consider: having expertise in both supporting young adult carers and running a housing project; splitting the project manager and support worker roles across two members of staff; and providing young adult carers with clear information on finances and support for move on at the start of their engagement.

Outcomes for participants

At the time of the third wave of the evaluation, seven of the original 12 participants had moved on from the project, five successfully. These participants found the support from the project manager invaluable in enabling them to make decisions about when to move on, and to where.

"It's given me more of a sense of identity. In some way, my life always just revolved around taking care of them, and I think I was just viewed as the spare child who would just deal with anything... now, I think I'm regarded more as my own person."



Participants have experienced a range of outcomes so far, many of which have resulted from the respite from caring which living independently affords them. Participants reported considerable improvements in their relationships with their families, and some had achieved their goals of going to university or starting teacher training. Other outcomes included a better understanding of their own needs and aspirations, improved independent living skills and increased social participation and friendships. ***"If they did need care, I'm ready, I'm here. The happier I am, the better support I can give, so if I'm miserable, then I'm not going to help anyone."***

Some benefits to participants' families are becoming apparent, but this still needs further evidencing.

Chrystal's story



Chrystal, 26, has taken care of her mum on and off since she was 13. Her responsibilities had become unmanageable at the point her mum was taken into care.

“She has got multiple illnesses and has had multiple strokes in the past. She has epilepsy, dementia and arthritis. She also has a very severe anxiety disorder. At least once a week she has a panic attack that runs for the whole day and she doesn't know who she is, it's hard for her to eat and drink and take her medication.”

After university, Chrystal moved back home but was quickly forced to leave. **“I was basically made homeless, they wouldn't allow me to stay on the tenancy without my mum. So my support worker referred me to Move On Up. Jon (Move On Up manager) has been a really big help throughout. I've suffered from anxiety and depression for many years. He was a person I could talk to about my background. I've learnt to manage my budget and think about what I want to do next.”**

Chrystal has a passion for dance, something she didn't have time for until now. **“I have more time for myself, I am able to do more things, and I'm able to concentrate on my dance work. I want to focus on my career so I can reach the goals that I want to achieve in the coming years.”**

Success factors

The selection of participants and their motivations for engaging in the project appear to be key in facilitating a successful outcome. 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 progress their personal goals. However, many factors have influenced participants' engagement with the project and it is challenging to assess potential participants' likely engagement with support on entry.

It is clear that ensuring a good 'fit' between flatmates is vital for the success of the project. 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 and their shared experience of caring can enhance the outcomes experienced by participants. However, disruptive or challenging relationships can be detrimental to their progress and engagement with the project.

Evidence so far suggests that both elements of Move On Up – the shared housing and specialist support – is needed in order for the project to be a success. Participants felt that, while the shared housing offer has enabled them to achieve many outcomes, 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. The relationships between the project staff and tenants also appears to be important in facilitating successful outcomes for participants. Those who have moved on successfully have tended to have a positive and constructive relationship with the project staff.

Move On Up is a learning project and QSA have embraced this fully, making changes to the project model in light of their own reflections on what has worked and the findings of the interim evaluations. This has including adapting their approaches to promoting the project, assessing potential participants and the engagement of existing tenants, inducting new tenants, the support available and, most recently, the staffing structure of the project.

Next steps and plan for the final evaluation

The evaluation will be undertaking a final wave of data collection in February/March 2020. The final evaluation report will be published in the summer of 2020.