

Case study

Life Changes Trust - improving the wellbeing and quality of life of care experienced by young people



Activities

Activities to gather views / experiences of people and communities and ensure voices are heard

Respond to consultations / Scottish Parliament evidence calls

Explicit funding of activities to change practice or policy

Build alliances with other influencers



Outcomes

Have improved / more participative policy-making processes

Are better able to identify and meet gaps in need

Have improved systems for reviewing / evaluating existing policy

Are better able to implement policy effectively

People who make POLICY

Background

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

As of 31 July 2014, there were 15,580 looked after children and young people in Scotland.

The Trust is committed to working with care experienced young people, care leavers, practitioners in all sectors, other funders and government in Scotland so that when young people leave care, they have positive life chances and outcomes just like other young people.

In 2013, the Scottish Government developed legislative proposals which would have a significant impact on children and families in Scotland. In particular, the legislative process offered the opportunity to address gaps in existing policy which resulted in young people leaving care at a very early age. This premature transition into adult life often leaves care leavers vulnerable due to a combination of inadequate support and the absence of caring relationships in their lives.

The Trust made an early decision that the voices

of our beneficiaries would be central to our work, and we recognised that this approach called for investment in individuals to enable them to develop a confident voice. Therefore, there was a clear role for the Trust to play in funding an appropriate organisation with experience and expertise in engaging care experienced young people to take part in influencing the development of the **Children and Young People Bill**.

The Trust agreed short-term funding to Who Cares? Scotland (WCS) to enable the organisation to support a group of care experienced young people to tell their stories and take part in a range of committee hearings and evidence-gathering sessions. The focus of this activity was to directly influence the provisions in the Bill which would affect care leavers, in an effort to address the gaps in existing policy. At the same time, WCS ran a public-facing campaign, utilising a range of media channels, to raise awareness of the challenges faced by care experienced young people. This media work brought these issues to the attention of the wider public, which was important in terms of moving the issues surrounding care leavers higher up the public policy agenda. WCS would have undertaken this influencing work without the additional funding, but support from the Trust enabled the organisation to expand and intensify its efforts, particularly in relation to supporting the direct engagement of young people.

The campaign process

Who Cares? Scotland (WCS) is a charity which provides advocacy, participation and support services across Scotland for children and young people with experience of care up to the age of 26. Although the organisation had always campaigned, the development of the Children and Young People Bill provided a unique opportunity to address some of the challenges facing care experienced young people, particularly in relation to their transition out of care.

With funding support from the Life Changes Trust, WCS worked with young people to shape the concept of the campaign, which was branded "It's Time to Listen". This campaign provided the framework for the engagement with the Scottish Parliament as the Children & Young People's Bill developed.

Influencing legislation

The work on influencing the legislation took just over a year and included:

- › Closed-door session with care experienced young people and MSPs
- › Evidence sessions in parliament
- › Meetings with civil servants
- › Input to external events – engaging key stakeholders
- › Engagement in related policy developments

MSPs heard first-hand the impact of the current policy framework on the lives of young people leaving care. They heard moving testimony from young people who effectively faced a cliff-edge at the age of sixteen or seventeen, trying to make the transition from living with foster carers or in residential homes to setting up home alone, whilst also looking for work or attempting to hold down a college place. For the majority of care experienced young people, there is no family network to fall back on – in fact, many try to make this transition without the support of even one significant caring relationship in their lives.

Research has clearly established the link between this difficult transition and the poor life outcomes experienced by care leavers as a group; outcomes which all too often lead to the potential of young

people with care experience being stifled. The testimony of the young people brought these research findings to life, as one-by-one they bravely described the challenges they had to overcome, including homelessness, imprisonment, addiction issues and mental health problems. All of the young people concerned spoke eloquently about their desire to change things for the care leavers of the future.

Creating the conditions for success

Who Cares? Scotland also formed an alliance with two other children's charities – Aberlour and Barnardo's Scotland. This collaboration strengthened the campaign to influence the legislation by:

- › Highlighting that other organisations supported the call for improved support for care leavers
- › Bringing in additional expertise on the legislative process
- › Combining research resources to back up the case for change

As a funder, the Life Changes Trust strongly supported this partnership effort. Third sector organisations are often uniquely placed to make sure the voices of those who are disadvantaged or marginalised are clearly heard – when they collaborate, these voices can be amplified.

Young people were given extensive support by WCS staff both before and after engaging in giving evidence or working with journalists. This was a resource-intensive process, as many of the young people involved were talking openly of traumatic experiences for the first time. WCS had to make sure that appropriately trained and experienced staff members were available to provide support in a very flexible way.

It can be difficult for organisations to secure funding to provide this type of intensive support, as from the outside it can appear that it only benefits a small number of individual young people. However, the Trust believed that by providing this investment, the benefits would cascade well beyond the young people who were directly involved. Even if the campaign had not been successful in securing new rights for care leavers, the public profile it created would

provide other opportunities to tackle some of the disadvantaged faced by all care experienced young people.

Campaign results

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 became law in March 2014. It introduces a number of changes to how children and young people in Scotland are cared for. In terms of care experienced young people, the Act confers important new rights which have the potential to significantly improve the transition from care:

- › Looked after young people now have the right to stay in their care placement up until the age of 21, when they feel it is in their best interests. This is known as continuing care.
- › Local authorities providing support to looked after young people will also have a duty to provide them with advice, guidance and assistance to care leavers up until the age of 26 where this is something that could benefit the young person.

These legal provisions create a policy framework which is much more supportive and enabling for care experienced young people. The Scottish Parliament also agreed a funding package of £5m for local authorities to support implementation.

Evidence of the impact of the direct involvement of care experienced young people in the campaign to secure these new rights included the following:

- › Parliamentary committee requested a session with young people
- › Significant references made to young people's testimony during parliamentary debates on the Bill
- › Children's Minister referenced messages from the campaign publicly
- › Content of final legislative proposals were influenced by the coalition of Who Cares? Scotland, Aberlour and Barnardo's Scotland

In addition, WCS was asked to facilitate the involvement of young people on follow-up working groups developing the guidance to support the implementation of the legislation.

Lessons learned

Young people with care experience are often marginalised and stigmatised. However, Who Cares? Scotland, working in partnership with other charities and supported by the Life Changes Trust, has demonstrated that these young people can make a significant contribution to public life.

Key learning points from this experience include:

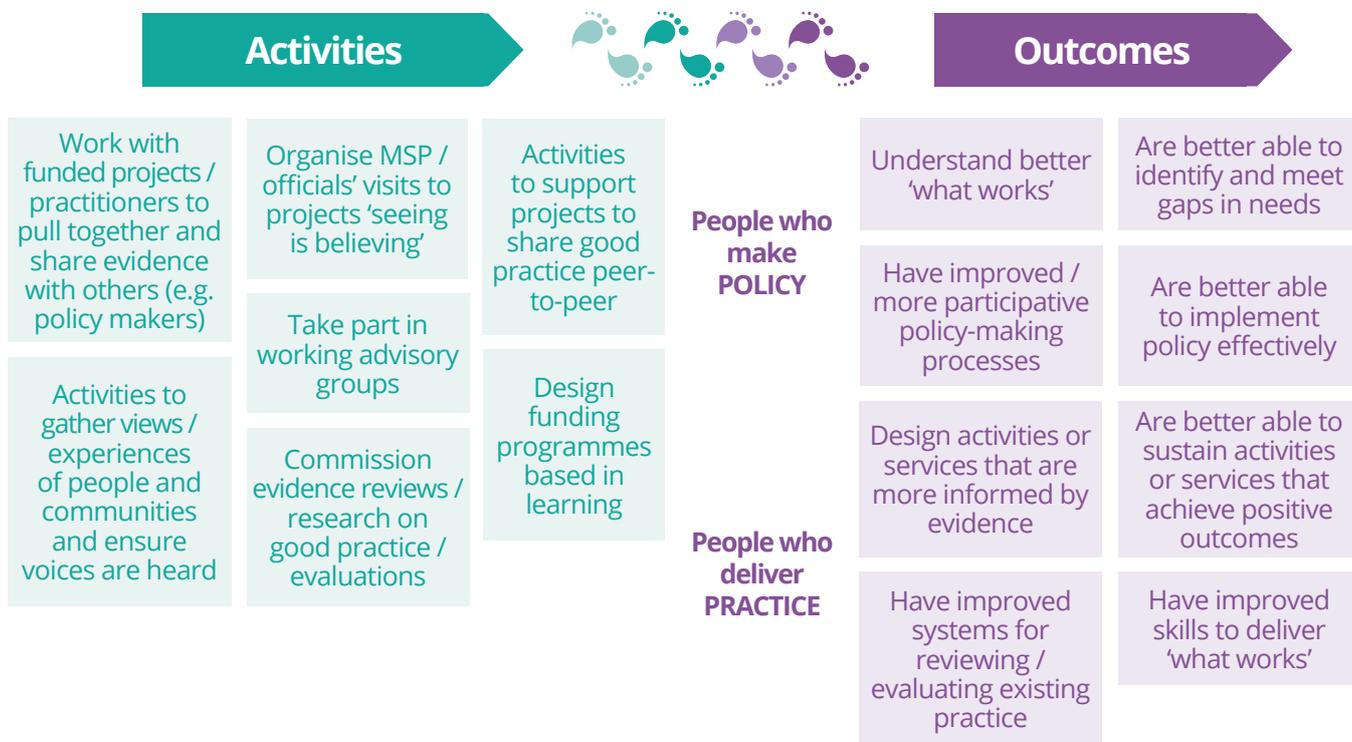
- › People are experts in their own lives – policy makers need to hear directly from people whose lives are affected by policy and practice
- › For this process to be meaningful, there has to be investment in individuals and organisations
- › Funders should recognise the costs involved in engaging with young people and supporting them to develop their own voice
- › Policy gains can create the conditions for change, but for legislation to positively impact of the day-to-day lives of young people, improvements are needed at practice level (the Trust is also investing at practice level)
- › Campaigns focussed on securing policy change should also include a phase two which looks at implementation

The Life Changes Trust has now developed its own approach to influencing, which will continue to include funding support for other organisations engaged in campaigning activity. However, as we begin to build insight through the range of work we support, and develop our own relationships with our beneficiary groups, there will also be occasions when we will become more directly involved in influencing work.

Regardless of whether our role is direct or indirect, the Trust will always ensure that the voices of our beneficiaries are at the heart of all of efforts to support lasting change.

Case study

Inspiring Scotland investing in play



Background

Over the last five years Inspiring Scotland has been working in partnership with the Scottish Government to develop and expand free play¹ opportunities for children in disadvantaged communities across Scotland. The partnership originated from a joint recognition that children's freedom to play – especially outdoors - was declining and that this was a particular challenge for children in disadvantaged areas. There was a view that the play sector was not investment ready and could be supported to develop further evidence of the benefits of play.

Through two programmes, *GoPlay* and *Go2Play*, Inspiring Scotland has invested money, and provided bespoke development support for Scottish charities to help expand opportunities for free play, help understand how free play can contribute to wider policy outcomes, embed robust evaluation practices and support the capacity of the sector.

This work has both influenced practice on the ground, and helped inform national policy.

Activities

Understanding the case for investing in play

To understand the case for investing in free play, a baseline report was commissioned by Inspiring Scotland and produced by New Philanthropy Capital² the report outlined why investment was needed in Scotland and what it might aim to achieve.

This report helped to inform where initial investment was needed and where funding could be best directed.



Go Play Baseline report found:

Alongside concerns that children's freedom to play were decreasing, there was a recognition that Scotland was lagging behind the rest of the UK. Play was emerging as an issue in government policy.

Taking action through Investment and support

Using Inspiring Scotland's venture philanthropy model of high engagement, bespoke capacity building alongside performance management and evaluation support, charities were carefully selected to join portfolios.

- › Charities were helped to develop skills in articulating what they did and demonstrate the impact they achieved through their work.
- › Opportunities for collaboration were created through portfolio days – to learn from best practice and share, networking.
- › Collaboration and joint funding

The evidence of the initial two years investment informed the next phase of *Go2Play Fund* which provided for focused investment in one particularly successful model – Play Rangers, as well as funding innovation piloting.

Monitoring progress

Through monitoring, and evidence gathering, regular reporting, and by working collaboratively with the sector, Inspiring Scotland helped to create the case for the role of play and the need for continued investment.

Examples of tools used included:

- › Output collection tables
- › Outcome mapping tools and collection tools for each venture - supported by Outcome and Evaluation Framework
- › Assessed training needs - appropriate training sourced along with use of private sector volunteers.
- › Undertook quarterly reviews
- › Gathered Case studies
- › Used Independent Evaluation where relevant
- › Budget tables to effectively monitor expenditure

Outcomes

Independent Evaluation found Inspiring Scotland's investment in play successful in:

- › Developing innovation and testing a diverse range of new approaches to play, and new play materials.
- › Influencing strategic direction – articulating the profile of play, and its relevance to a wider range of local and national policy priorities
- › Evidencing the impact of play and improving evaluation methods
- › Developing a new generation of play sector leaders
- › Addressing inequalities by targeting deprived communities and vulnerable children
- › Promoting collaboration in the play sector
- › Building links between play and other policy agendas
- › Developing Scotland's third sector

Outcome and Evaluation Framework

Inspiring Scotland worked with Evaluation Support Scotland, providing practical experience of play work in order to develop an **Outcome and Evaluation Framework**³ for free play. This important tool described, for the first time, the work of the free play sector in Scotland and why it is important.

Policy implications

- › In 2013 the Scottish Government launched the first ever national play strategy
- › *Go2Play* aligned funding to support the delivery of the national play strategy and involved in the group tasked with implementation.
- › In 2015 *Go2Play* presented Play as a key change theme at the national Early Years Collaborative and then on the Play Ranger model.

¹The definition of free play widely used across play work was written by Bob Hughes of PlayEducation in 1982. It describes play as behaviour which is 'freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated, i.e performed for no external goal or reward'. The Inspiring Scotland programmes have focussed on free play as opposed to more structured activities such as organised clubs or training.

²New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) 2008: *GoPlay Baseline Report*

³ www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/media/6933/GoPlayOEF.pdf

- › Play now recognised within Government as having the potential to deliver significant positive benefits for Early Years work
- › Play now an indicator of progress towards health and well-being outcomes in Active Scotland Framework



Outdoor play is now included within the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework and is recognised as an indicator of progress towards health and well-being outcomes.

Practice implications

- › Greater expertise within play sector – more skilled people and volunteers advocating play.
- › Greater collaboration across the sector, through joint funded initiatives.
- › Play Ranger roll-out. Play Ranger activity increased into new areas across Scotland.
- › A Play Ranger Toolkit was developed using the learning of the eight initially funded Play Ranger charities and shared through a series of national roadshows.



Four charities were encouraged to apply for a joint Play Ranger bid in Edinburgh. This collaboration provided better reach, more hours and economies of scale with a central admin support and purchasing. It's helping the partners make a greater impact in their communities and in Edinburgh.

Learning

A close relationship with Scottish Government has been vital.

The partnership approach has been effective.

A regular programme of Ministerial and government visits to charities enabled greater dialogue between senior politicians, policy makers and individual ventures was delivered. These visits meant organisations were able to input practical delivery experience into strategic considerations.

Funding can be used to positively influence behaviour and support effective collaboration.

Support, and capacity building has been equally as important in what has been achieved.

Partnering with others, like Evaluations Support Scotland, University of Strathclyde has strengthened what has been delivered.

Report on the progress regularly through updates and reports. Openly share learning, and findings, often. Don't wait until the end of the programme to do this.

Feedback from other funders

Other Funders refer to the *Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Framework* when assessing funding applications for play focused activity: "The quality of the capacity building work certainly shows in applications – especially in understanding the measurement of impact." (Other Funder)

Venture insights

"Before we started to work with Inspiring Scotland we hadn't really fully considered how important what we are doing is to the wider community." (Venture consultation).

"The pro bono experts Inspiring Scotland get you know their stuff. They give good advice and have saved us having to buy in expensive professional support." (Venture consultation)



Inspiring Scotland and *Go2Play* ventures were directly involved in the play strategy, as co-partners on the working group, with ventures consulting with children and young people to inform content.

Play Strategy Partners feedback

“Inspiring Scotland’s people are its real strength. Their willingness to go above and beyond is second to none and has been a critical component across all of our play policy activity over the past 12 months.” (Play Strategy Group Partner)

Play is now recognised within Government as having the potential to deliver significant positive benefits for Early Years work and is an indicator of progress towards health and well-being outcomes in *Active Scotland Framework*.

