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Transition Hub for Children Looked After: Feasibility and Pilot Study Report

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Youth Endowment Fund

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EVALUATION REPORT

Transition Hub for Children Looked After

Feasibility and pilot study report

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University
of Exeter



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About the Youth Endowment Fund

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

Children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence deserve services that give them the best chance of a positive future. To make sure that happens, we'll fund promising projects and then use the very best evaluation to find out what works. Just as we benefit from robust trials in medicine, young people deserve support grounded in the evidence. We'll build that knowledge through our various grant rounds and funding activities.

And just as important, is understanding children and young people's lives. Through our Youth Advisory Board and national network of peer researchers, we'll ensure they influence our work and we understand and are addressing their needs. But none of this will make a difference if all we do is produce reports that stay on a shelf.

Together, we need to look at the evidence and agree on what works, then build a movement to make sure that young people get the very best support possible. Our strategy sets out how we'll do it. At its heart, it says that we will fund good work, find what works and work for change. You can read it [here](#).

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Contents

About the Youth Endowment Fund	2
Glossary	5
About the evaluator.....	7
Executive summary	8
The project.....	8
Interpretation.....	9
Introduction (feasibility and pilot phases combined)	10
Background	10
Intervention.....	12
Ethical review.....	18
Data protection.....	18
Project team and stakeholders.....	20
Feasibility phase	22
Research aims.....	22
Success criteria and/or targets.....	22
Methods	23
Participant selection	23
Data collection.....	24
Analysis.....	26
Timeline	26
Findings – quantitative findings	28
Participants.....	28
Intervention feasibility.....	28
Evaluation feasibility	31
Findings – qualitative findings.....	33
Participants.....	33
Intervention feasibility.....	33

Logic model development.....	49
Conclusion	50
Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility	51
Interpretation.....	56
Limitations.....	57
Implications for the pilot phase.....	58
Pilot (pre-/post-test) phase	60
Research questions	60
Success criteria and/or targets.....	60
Methods	61
Participant selection	61
Data collection	61
Analysis.....	63
Timeline	64
Findings – quantitative findings	65
Participants.....	65
Evidence of promise.....	69
Findings – qualitative findings.....	73
Participants.....	73
Findings.....	73
Conclusion	82
Evaluator judgement of intervention and evaluation feasibility	83
Interpretation.....	84
Limitations.....	86
Future research and publications.....	88
References	90
Appendices.....	93

Glossary

AfC – Achieving for Children: a not-for-profit social enterprise providing children’s services in Kingston, Richmond, Windsor and Maidenhead; one of the Transition Hub sites

CiN – Child(ren) in need: a child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

Designated school – the school which the young person is due to attend

Destination school – see ‘Designated school’

DT – Designated teacher: a teacher responsible for overseeing and supporting the education of looked after children in the school. It is a statutory requirement for each school to have a nominated designated teacher

EAL – English as an Additional Language

GASF – Global Assessment of School Functioning: a measure of a student’s overall level of functioning (academic, social, behavioural) within the school environment

Host school – A school that hosts a physical Transition Hub

Inreach – Support provided to young people in the physical Transition Hub, focusing on academic skills, pre-learning on topics the young person will be studying in their school, social-emotional learning and enrichment activities

Journey Planner – A planning and assessment tool used by the Transition Hub to help set and monitor targets for young people and inform service provision

Outreach – Visits by the learning mentor to the young person in their school, focusing on continued support with agreed targets

LLB – London Borough of Barnet; one of the Transition Hub sites

PASS – Pupil Attitudes to Self and School: a measure used to assess how students feel about school and themselves as a learner, including connectedness, self-efficacy and motivation

PEP – Personal Education Plan: a document describing a young person’s educational history, strengths, needs, additional support provided and short- and long-term targets and action needed for them to gain the most from their education

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

PYD – Positive youth development

RCT – Randomised controlled trial

SDQ – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: a measure used to assess aspects of children’s social-emotional development

Section 20 voluntary care – an agreement under the Children Act 1989 whereby anyone with parental responsibility can voluntarily allow the local authority to accommodate their child

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

UASC – Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child(ren)

UPN – Unique Pupil Number

Virtual School – A statutory service within each local authority to support and challenge all those involved in the children in care, established by the Children and Families Act 2014

YEF – Youth Endowment Fund

About the evaluator

The evaluation team is simultaneously part of two research groups at the Universities of Plymouth and Exeter respectively. The Community and Primary Care Research Group at the University of Plymouth has a strong track record of health and social care research, including prevention and early intervention to improve child and youth psychosocial outcomes. The Children and Young People's Mental Health (ChYMe) research collaboration at the University of Exeter researches the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, with the aim of developing evidence-based policy and practice to improve the lives of children/young people and the communities around them.

Several members of the evaluation team are part of the National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula (NIHR PenARC, <https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/>) based at the University of Plymouth and the University of Exeter. PenARC works to address the immediate issues facing the health and social care system through applied health and care research, working collaboratively with health and social care professionals, researchers and local communities.

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The project

The Transition Hub aims to support young people aged 11 to 17 who are making the transition into care or experiencing a placement transition. It does this through a multi-disciplinary team which provides support to young people, their carers and schools. Developed by Dr Catherine Carroll, working in collaboration with Achieving for Children and Barnet Local Authority, the Transition Hub aims to support the social and academic development of young people. Depending on the young person’s situation, either they receive ‘inreach’ support delivered in a physical hub for up to six weeks followed by five months of ‘outreach’ support, or they receive six months of outreach support only (provided in a young person’s school). Inreach support provides daily lessons, 9 am to 3 pm, Monday to Friday, that focus on academic skills, pre-learning on topics the young people will be studying in their school, social-emotional development and enrichment activities. Inreach is delivered in a physical hub located at a nearby school for the young people who gradually transition into their own school as the project progresses. In outreach support, young people receive six weekly in-school meetings with a learning mentor who supports them with a range of issues, including attendance, core curriculum subjects, homework, friendships and extra-curricular activities. Following the first six weeks, they receive four monthly meetings (unless the young person requires additional support). School staff and young people’s carers also receive support and training to support the transitions. The programme is delivered by multiple staff, including lead teachers, learning mentors and an educational psychologist.

YEF funded a feasibility and pilot evaluation of the Transition Hub. The feasibility phase explored the feasibility of delivery and aimed to provide lessons for further research. The pilot phase examined whether the Transition Hub might evidence promise on desired outcomes and sought to offer further learning about delivery and acceptability. Across the two phases, 80 young people were supported by the Transition Hub. Qualitative methods used to evaluate the programme included semi-structured interviews with young people, foster carers, Transition Hub staff and other stakeholders. The evaluator also analysed data routinely collected by the Transition Hubs, including delivery monitoring data, school attendance data and data from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey. Delivered from January 2020 to December 2022, the study was undertaken during the coronavirus pandemic, requiring the delivery and evaluation teams to adapt to challenging circumstances.

Key conclusions
The feasibility phase of the study found that the Transition Hub was broadly acceptable to all parties and perceived to fill an important gap in provision. Young people engaged with the Transition Hub for six to seven months on average, and engagement was regarded as being good. Covid-19 did pose challenges for programme recruitment and engagement, and the delivery team responded by delivering a ‘blended’ in-person and online approach and by revising recruitment targets. These revised targets were met for the feasibility and pilot phases.
Facilitators of successful delivery included the physical location of hubs, the dedication and diversity of Transition Hub staff, staff training and support, and good learning mentor relationships with foster carers and stakeholders. Barriers included physical access difficulties for some young people, tensions around Transition Hub accountability and autonomy, insufficient educational psychologist time and online delivery during Covid-19 lockdown.
Qualitative interview data from the pilot phase suggested that Transition Hub support helped young people with education, placement stability, relationships, and social-emotional development. Quantitative data from the pilot phase showed little evidence of promising change, although care is needed in interpreting this.
The pilot phase found that the inreach element did not always work as well as anticipated. The location of the physical hub was impractical for some young people, and it also forced some into a ‘double transition’ – first into the Transition Hub <i>and</i> then into their new school.
Several evaluation challenges were identified in the pilot, including the difficulty in recruiting young people and carers for qualitative interviews and challenges with outcome data collection. There were complete data for 69% of the sample for the SDQ and 52% for the PASS (both youth self-report).

Interpretation

Findings about Transition Hub feasibility were generally positive, although there was useful learning to help optimise the programme. In the feasibility phase, young people engaged with the Transition Hub for six to seven months on average, which was positive given the expected length of the programme. Covid-19 did pose challenges for programme recruitment, as fewer young people entered care than in previous years. However, recruitment picked up pace throughout the delivery period, and the delivery team responded to the pandemic by delivering a 'blended' approach of in-person and online support. The Transition Hub offer was generally deemed to be appropriate for young people's needs in the feasibility phase, supported by the flexible, trauma-informed and personalised approach. There was a strong sense that the Transition Hub filled an important gap in service provision. However, concerns were expressed that some young people who would benefit from the programme were missing out because they did not meet eligibility criteria.

Facilitators of successful delivery included the physical location of hubs (embedded in schools in the community), the dedication and diversity of Transition Hub staff, staff training and support, project lead input, and good relationships with foster carers and stakeholders. Barriers included physical access difficulties for some young people, tensions around Transition Hub accountability and autonomy, insufficient educational psychologist time, online delivery during Covid-19 lockdown and not enough staff training at the start (the latter barrier was addressed as the project progressed). Evaluation challenges were also encountered during the feasibility stage. One was using programme data as evaluation data; measurement completion rates were lower than desired. The other evaluation challenge was the difficulty of obtaining interviews with foster carers and young people, partly due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and the need for remote contact but also the evaluation team's reliance on busy Transition Hub staff to broker contact.

Qualitative interview data collected during the pilot phase suggested that Transition Hub support helped young people with education, placement stability, relationships with peers and professionals, and social-emotional development. Carers reported feeling supported in managing young people's behaviour, and staff and stakeholders reported positive changes in their own practice. These included a changed approach to pedagogy, being more vocal in multi-agency meetings, having greater involvement in multi-disciplinary work, feeling greater passion for work with young people and being more professional (including having a stronger understanding of evidence on what works). There were no reports of adverse effects on young people, and various aspects of Transition Hub support were identified by staff and stakeholders as working well. These included the trusting relationships that learning mentors developed with young people, the connecting role that the Transition Hub could play in liaising with stakeholders supporting young people, the provision of pre-teaching (particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) and the emphasis on consistency.

Some elements of the Transition Hub did not work as well as anticipated. One of these was the inreach element. This was impractical for some young people because they were placed too far away from the physical hub. It also forced some young people into a 'double transition': first into the Transition Hub and then into school.

Quantitative data in the pilot indicated that Transition Hub participants had a lower level of social-emotional need than the general population of children looked after. This may be because entry to the Transition Hub is based on young people's status of being in transition (moving home, placement or school) rather than their level of social-emotional difficulties. There was little evidence of promising change in quantitative measures (the PASS, school attendance and the SDQ). However, the evaluation was not designed to measure impact, and with no counterfactual we cannot know whether the Transition Hub improved young people's social-emotional skills and educational engagement.

Evaluation challenges faced during the pilot again included the low level of recruitment for interviews, despite targeted efforts to address this. Completion of outcome assessments also proved a challenge, with complete data for 69% for the SDQ and 52% for the PASS. YEF has opted not to proceed with further evaluation.

Introduction (feasibility and pilot phases combined)

The Transition Hub aims to support young people aged 11 to 17 (school years 7 to 13) who are making the transition into care or experiencing a placement transition. By the end of the programme a young person should have a greater sense of stability in their school and home placements and be making progress academically and socially.

The evaluation described in this report was one study with two phases. The first (feasibility) phase aimed to assess the feasibility of delivering the Transition Hub. The second (pilot) phase aimed to assess the promise of the Transition Hub in terms of improving educational and social-emotional outcomes for young people. Both phases sought to consider lessons for further research into the Transition Hub model. This section introduces both phases, and subsequent sections focus on each phase one at a time – first feasibility, then pilot.

Background

There are approximately 70,000 children looked after in England, three-quarters of whom are in foster care. Children looked after tend to do worse than their peers on a range of educational measures (O’Higgins et al., 2015; Sebba et al., 2015; Jay and McGrath-Lone, 2019). The year-on-year Department for Education (DfE) routine data reports indicate that the average achievement of children looked after in England at Key Stage 4 is much lower than that of all pupils. For example, in the years 2018/19 to 2021/22, the average Attainment 8 score for all pupils ranged from a low of 46.7 to a high of 50.9, compared with a range of 12.7 to 16.7 for children looked after for less than 12 months and 19.0 to 23.2 for children looked after for 12 months or more.¹

The educational disadvantage experienced by children looked after intersects with other vulnerabilities and poor outcomes, which place children looked after at risk of academic ‘failure’ (Berridge et al., 2008; Jackson, 2010; Sebba and Berridge, 2019). Specifically, they are more likely to have experienced early trauma, mental health difficulties, early parenthood and exclusion from school and are over-represented in the criminal justice system as perpetrators and victims (e.g. Meltzer et al., 2003; Dixon, 2008; YJB, 2015). Those who enter care in adolescence and experience multiple or disrupted placements are most at risk of poor outcomes. In turn, youth involved in offending and antisocial behaviour have poor outcomes; for example, they are more likely than their peers to misuse drugs, lack qualifications, be unemployed, develop mental health disorders and physical illnesses, be involved in crime as adults (e.g. Maughan et al., 2014) and generate significant costs for society (e.g. Snell et al., 2013).

Multiple reasons for the education attainment gap between children looked after and their peers have been identified, including pre-care experiences (e.g. abuse/neglect), an elevated rate of special educational needs (SEN) and transitions between placements and schools (Drew and Banerjee, 2019). Children looked after do

¹ 'Attainment 8' measures the average achievement of pupils in up to 8 qualifications at Key Stage 4 level. More details can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england#dataBlock-2aad588b-fceb-4175-861a-16eea1e8ff3f-tables>

no worse educationally than children in need (CiN),² suggesting that it is not care per se that contributes to poor educational outcomes (Sebba et al., 2015). Rather, key factors include school exclusion, changes in care or school placements and behavioural or emotional difficulties (which contribute to exclusions or school transfers) (Sebba et al., 2015; Drew and Banerjee, 2019). Barriers to improving educational outcomes for children looked after include placement and school instability, a lack of training for carers in how they can support education, limited or no catch-up opportunities following missed schooling and poor joint working between frontline workers and local authority officers in different departments (Jackson, 2010).

That said, it is important to note that not all young people in care are the same with respect to education. Many care-experienced young people often display considerable resilience and motivation in pursuing their education but face significant emotional and practical challenges (Driscoll, 2011). It is therefore important to provide a flexible and sensitive response to these young people's needs (Driscoll, 2011) and help foster carers support children with their behaviour and social-emotional development (Sebba et al., 2015). Similarly, Berridge (2017) found that young people in care are more likely to engage with learning if other problems in their lives are being managed and that there are some differences between sub-groups in terms of their engagement with learning. For example, those with unstable care careers and ongoing difficulties with birth parents seemed overwhelmed, with major consequences for their education and welfare, whereas others in stable and permanent families had accessed support and were doing well at school. The study identified the importance of individualised support with children's education, helping them to be happy where they are living and dealing with emotional issues.

In order to address the issues identified, the Children and Families Act 2014 required each local authority to establish a virtual school to champion the education of children looked after in their care. However, provision is patchy, especially for children in transition between placements or schools. For example, a recent survey in England showed that while virtual school heads provide emotional and mental health support for children looked after, they could do more to support foster carers in the education domain (Drew and Banerjee, 2019). Little is known about whether and how virtual schools contribute to improving outcomes (Sebba and Berridge, 2019). There is also a broader lack of evidence for what works to improve the educational outcomes of children looked after. Systematic reviews have found little robust evidence of the effectiveness of interventions to support children looked after in school (Liabo et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2017). A more recent re-analysis of data from 63 randomised controlled trials funded by the Education Endowment Foundation identified 10 educational interventions that appear to have larger positive effects for young people with social care experience,³ although it advises that findings are not conclusive owing to small sample sizes for this sub-group (Sanders et al., 2020).

Thus, there is a need for interventions that can address the barriers identified above and support young people in care with their education, working with foster carers, social workers and schools (especially designated teachers [DTs]). The Transition Hub, which is the subject of the evaluation reported here, offers one such approach.

² A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled.

³ Defined as children who have been a Child in Need, subject to a Child Protection Plan, or Looked After in the last six years.

Intervention

Overview

The Transition Hub for Children Looked After offers a personalised programme of education and support to young people aged 11-17 years who are new to care or experiencing a change in their care or school placement or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). (In the feasibility phase of the project, the Transition Hub targeted young people aged 11-15, but this changed to 11-17 in the pilot phase.) It does this through a multi-disciplinary team that provides support to children and young people, their carers and schools (via DTs). An overview of programme content and timing is given in Appendix 1.

Depending on the young person's situation, they either receive:

1. 'Inreach' support (in a physical hub) for up to six weeks, followed by five months of 'outreach' support in their school:
 - a. Young people who are new to care and where a school change takes place (who live within the borough or close enough to travel to the physical hub)
 - b. Young people already in care but who experience a school change (who live within the borough or close enough to travel to the physical hub)
 - c. Young people who are UASC
2. Outreach support only (six months):
 - a. Young people who are new to care but there is no school change (within the borough or within sufficient travel distance)
 - b. Young people who are new to care and where a school change takes place but who live out of the borough (and within sufficient travel distance)
 - c. Young people whose foster care placement changes but with no school change (within sufficient travel distance)

Further information about the Transition Hub is provided below and in Appendix 1 (which includes a visual representation of the Transition Hub model). Additionally, more information about the model can be found on the Transition Hub website: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/areas/education-and-teaching/transition-hub/welcome.aspx>

Target group

The programme targets young people aged 11-17 years who:

- (1) are going into care for the first time or
- (2) are in care and have experienced a school placement change or
- (3) have experienced a care placement change and/or
- (4) are UASC

Integral to the programme is support for the carers, DTs and form tutors of the young people in the aforementioned groups. The young person may be located within the borough where the Transition Hub is located or out of the borough if it is deemed feasible to conduct outreach visits with that young person.

Activities

The programme is co-produced with and provides personalised support for young people, carers and DTs. However, support follows a broad pattern, as follows:

- During their time in the Transition Hub, young people take part in lessons focusing on academic skills (literacy and numeracy), pre-learning on topics they will be studying in schools (English, Maths, Science, History, Geography) so that young people can begin their classes in school confidently, social-emotional development, sport and performing arts.
- There are also transition-specific activities, such as planning and practising routes to school, meeting new staff, tours of the school and eventually visits to and taster sessions in school.
- Once in their (new) school, visits by the young person's key worker focus on continued support with each young person's targets, as set out in the 'Journey Planner' tool. The Journey Planner is completed by Transition Hub learning mentors in collaboration with young people, foster carers and the DT. The Journey Planner is a planning and assessment tool specifically written for the programme and based on the 6 Cs of Positive Youth Development (PYD; Geldhof et al., 2015). Targets relate to a range of issues, such as school attendance, core curriculum subjects, homework, friendships and extra-curricular activities. For older students, it might include assistance with choosing the right college course and with writing college applications.
- School staff and carers receive support and training focused on transitions in adolescence:
 - DTs receive a resource pack and tailored one-to-one support to identify the appropriate transition programme for each student in the Transition Hub programme and to identify how practice in relation to transition could be developed across the school.
 - DTs also receive learning and development opportunities on more general topics, such as resilience, changes in adolescence, attachment theory, special needs and strategies to support dealing with emotional school avoidance.
 - At the beginning of the programme, joint sessions are held for carers, run by the educational psychologist (EP) and covering similar topics, and Transition Hub teams focus on making every interaction with carers a training opportunity (if relevant).
- There are also individual and group activities during all school holidays except Christmas and Easter (e.g. cooking sessions, canoeing courses and weekly tea parties in the physical hub).
- The tailored programme is informed by detailed and ongoing assessment and monitoring (including Transition Hub staff interactions with social workers in inter-agency meetings, notably those specifically focused on children's education, i.e. personal education plan [PEP] meetings).⁴

⁴ These are typically attended by the child, foster carer, designated teacher and social worker.

- At six months, a reflection meeting (attended by the student, carer, DT, social worker, learning mentor and lead teacher) is held to: celebrate the achievements of the student, carer and school; decide when the young person will exit and agree; and put in place actions to support that exit and full handover to the virtual school.
- All students formally graduate from the Transition Hub.

Location

There are currently two programme delivery sites: London Borough of Barnet (LBB) and Achieving for Children (AfC; Kingston, Richmond, Windsor and Maidenhead).

Delivery takes place in multiple settings:

- **Physical hubs:** there are two physical hubs – one in each programme delivery site. These are classrooms in secondary schools with adjoining space for staff and breakout sessions. The hubs are hosted in two secondary schools, one in each of LBB and AfC. The primary activities that take place in the hubs are young people receiving education and other relevant support. Carers and staff in the young person’s new school are invited to meetings.
- **Young people’s homes and schools:** Transition Hub staff visit carers and young people at their homes and visit the young person’s new school.
- **Offsite provision:** there is also offsite provision for extracurricular activities for young people.

Frequency and dosage⁵

In the inreach phase, daily lessons take place during the school week. In the outreach phase, school visits by the learning mentor take place weekly for the first six weeks and monthly for the remaining four months (unless the young person requires more support, in which case more frequent visits are made). The learning mentor checks in weekly with home and school.

The programme lasts approximately six months (potentially longer if the young person’s needs require it and subject to agreement between the young person, foster carer and Transition Hub).

- During the inreach phase (six weeks), young people take part in lessons from 9 am to 3 pm. During this time, visits to the new school will be built up over time. If a student is ready to attend their new school full-time before the six weeks, this is supported.
- During the outreach phase (up to six months, depending on the young person’s situation), school visits by learning mentors typically last one hour. Outreach lasts for a full six months for young people who only receive outreach support.

⁵ Subject to variation according to personalisation.

Format

The programme is delivered to young people face-to-face and includes both individual- and group-based sessions. The delivery team also works face-to-face with the school and carer and delivers outreach sessions to young people while they are in school or at home.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, content was delivered online. This covered the periods 20 March 2020 to June 2020 and 4 January 2021 to 8 March 2021. This included assessments, academic lessons, the holiday programme and meetings with carers, DTs and other professionals.

Providers

The programme is delivered by multiple staff in each Transition Hub (full-time unless stated otherwise):

- Lead teacher – role includes: day-to-day leadership and management of the Transition Hub team and provision; discussing and agreeing on referrals with the virtual school; leading in planning and teaching the core curriculum; managing a student caseload allocation; providing schools, carers and external professionals with guidance, training and support; and monitoring and evaluating data on the impact of Transition Hub provision.
- Senior learning mentor – role includes: managing a student caseload allocation; planning and delivering the extended and holiday curricula; line managing learning mentors; supporting inreach teaching activities; supporting the lead teacher in providing training and support to schools, carers and external professionals; and ensuring information for the student database is up to date.
- Two learning mentors – role includes: managing a caseload allocation; supporting the planning and delivery of the extended and holiday curricula; supporting inreach teaching activities; supporting the provision of training and support to schools, carers and external professionals; and ensuring information for the student database is up to date.
- EP (one in AfC and two in LBB) one day per week – role includes: supporting the Transition Hub team with the initial assessment of each student; helping to develop a shared understanding of a student's needs and creating a stabilised environment to help them feel safe and experience a successful school placement; providing training and supervision to the Transition Hub team to support caseload management; providing training and support to foster carers and schools (based on student need); and supporting the measurement of impact/outcomes of Transition Hub provision.
- Business support officer/administrator – role includes: maintaining the student register and database; producing resources for Transition Hub provision and teaching activities; and liaising with the Transition Hub team, carers and external links regarding transition arrangements.
- Project coordinator – role includes overseeing all aspects of Transition Hub provision and supporting staff in fulfilling their roles.

The Transition Hub team seeks to establish strong working relationships with key partners in the local authority, notably the virtual school team, host school head teacher and social care. The Transition Hub teams come under the employment and leadership of the virtual schools at the respective sites.

Training and quality assurance

All Transition Hub staff must have significant experience of working with vulnerable children/young people. The lead teacher should have at least six to eight years' experience working with vulnerable children or young people, the senior learning mentor should have at least five years' experience working with vulnerable children or young people and the outreach learning mentors should have at least two to three years' experience working with vulnerable children or young people.

In addition to relevant experience (as described above), Transition Hub staff are required to complete the following essential training:

- Safeguarding course (Level One)
- Understanding social care
- How a virtual school works
- The role of the DT
- Understanding transitions
- Trauma-informed practice
- Pre-teaching and learning
- Key worker
- Programme delivery (the Transition Hub model/approach)

Regular continuing professional development (CPD) meetings are held to ensure ongoing learning. These are shaped by the needs of the Transition Hub staff and can include such topics as:

- Literacy and numeracy teaching
- Teaching young people with special educational needs
- Building relationships with carers

The Transition Hub EP provides supervision for Transition Hub staff on both an individual (monthly) and group (fortnightly) basis and provides some of the CPD. The project lead meets with the Transition Hub lead teachers weekly, and Transition Hub staff also receive line management.

Materials

There is a programme manual to support activities (available on request from Dr Catherine Carroll, programme developer). Key materials include:

- The Journey Planner (planning and assessment tool, mapped against the PYD framework with sections for the student, carer and school): individual targets are set at the start of the programme for each section, and progress is monitored each month and rated red, amber or green. Precise

targets depend on the starting point of the young person but would always be SMART,⁶ for example, to achieve an 80% or 95% attendance rate (translated into days per week for the young person).

- User guide for the Journey Planner
- Assessment tools (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire [SDQ, self-completion 11-17] and Pupil Attitudes to Self and School [PASS])
- A bespoke social and emotional learning curriculum
- Resources for DTs and carers, specifically written materials explaining the purpose and nature of Transition Hub support, how the Transition Hub works with DTs and carers and advice on how they can support the young person's transition
- Welcome letters and information (including a privacy notice)
- Keeping to the programme fidelity checklist completed in Transition Hub staff team meetings with the project lead.

Logic model

A visual representation of the logic model used at the start of the project (Autumn 2019) can be found in Appendix 2. This was developed by the evaluation team based on information provided by the programme developer via the YEF and later refined following the feasibility phase of the project (see p.49). The following narrative explains the components and links.

Ultimately, a long-term (distal) outcome (1) is preventing or reducing the risk for violence, crime and anti-social behaviour (thereby reducing young people's involvement in the youth justice system).⁷ Medium-term outcomes (2, 3) are increased stability in education and living arrangements. Short-term outcomes for the young person are (4) achieving targets, including improved attendance, reduced exclusions, settling or progressing at school, and for the foster carer are (5) improved knowledge and understanding of how to support their young person through transitions and greater confidence and competence in doing so. A short-term outcome for the school is (6) improved transition practice at the teacher, tutor and whole school levels. In essence, the programme has three elements. The first element of the programme, for the young person (7), is based on a personalised transition plan and starts in the physical hub but transitions over time into the young person's new school (reducing to weekly then monthly monitoring visits partway through). It includes support with literacy and numeracy, curriculum catch-up, transition and well-being (behaviour), as well as planned recreation. The second element is for carers (8) and involves learning mentor visits and training in support of the young person's transitions. The third element is for schools (9) and involves training for DTs in supporting the young person's transitions.

The programme is underpinned by three principles:

⁶ Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

⁷ This is the primary focus of the YEF, which funded both the delivery and evaluation of the Transition Hub.

1. Transition (and change) is not a one-off event but an on-going process that requires tailored support before, during and after a placement move.
2. Successful transition requires all to prepare and be ready: in the programme, it is called 'student ready', 'carer ready' and 'school ready'.
3. Every interaction and every relationship matters.

The structure and delivery of the programme is based on the four stages of transition (McLellan and Gatton, 2015):

1. Preparation stage (before the young person starts the programme)
2. Initial school encounters (first six weeks)
3. Adjustment phase (months three to four)
4. Stabilisation (months five to six)

The programme is also informed by the PYD framework (Geldhof et al., 2015). This is based on research suggesting that certain protective factors can help young people succeed. According to this research, young people may be better prepared for a successful transition to adulthood if they have a variety of opportunities to learn and participate at home, at school, in the community and in their neighbourhoods. It is premised on a strengths-based approach and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships and providing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths. All elements of the Transition Hub programme and activities have been designed to incorporate all of the six Cs of the PYD Framework: connection, confidence, character, competence, contribution and caring.

Ethical review

The Faculty of Health Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth approved the ethics submission for the feasibility phase of the evaluation (Ref: 19/20-1301, dated 17 December 2020). An ethics amendment for the pilot phase of the evaluation was submitted to the same committee for the Chair's Action (Ref: 21/22-3071, dated 20 October 2021). Additionally, we obtained approval from the AfC Research Board. Participant information sheets and consent forms are available in Appendix 3.

Ethical considerations were kept live during the study through regular reflection in evaluation team meetings. Particular attention was paid to ensuring informed consent and that Transition Hub staff, carers and young people did not feel overburdened or harassed by data collection requirements.

Data protection

Legal basis

The legal basis to collect and process personal and sensitive information for this project was 'public task', i.e. research carried out in the public interest. In the UK, Section 8 of the Data Protection Act 2018 says that the public task basis can cover processing that is necessary for, among other things, 'the exercise of a function of the Crown, a Minister of the Crown or a government department'. This project was funded by the Home Office (via the YEF) in the exercise of their statutory powers to assist victims, witnesses or other

persons affected by offences. On this basis, the YEF recommended the use of public task as the lawful basis for all evaluations of their grantees.

Confidentiality

Each participant was assigned a pseudo-ID known only to the evaluation team. The master index linking pseudo-IDs to personal identifiers (first name and family name) was stored in a file separate from the evaluation data on the secure, shared drive hosted at the University of Plymouth.

It is a requirement of the funding that limited identifiable data be shared with the DfE for the purposes of data archiving (in line with the [YEF data archive procedure](#)). Specifically, the evaluation team must share a dataset containing the following data: child's name, date of birth, gender, unique pupil number (UPN), level of participation in the programme (e.g. sessions completed) and outcome data (pre/post). Once this reaches the DfE, it will be pseudonymised. YEF policy requests that evaluators store data for at least three months after the first submission in case of issues with the original upload. After confirmation that the dataset with identifiable data has been securely transferred to the DfE, we will delete it.

Anonymity

For young people and their parents or carers, no real names or other identifiers/distinguishing features of participants are used in this report; the same will apply to future presentations or papers. Discussions with the Transition Hub teams did not contain specific details of cases but focused on issues raised to preserve anonymity.

Regarding data in the data archive, no one who looks at information in the archive will know the identity of the participants.

Data quality

Procedures for collecting routine programme data (outcomes and implementation) as part of service delivery were overseen by the Transition Hub project coordinator. In practice, this included providing staff with training in (i) how to administer measures to minimise bias and (ii) how to enter data into the Transition Hub data management system.

Young people were given copies of the measures to read and complete. They could ask questions if there were words or phrases they did not understand. Interpreters were used for UASC, or the young person was given a copy in their own language (if available). Training was provided by EPs.

Those administering the measures were told not to influence the responses in any way and that it did not matter what the responses were. Data were analysed monthly, and any issues were identified so that they could be rectified as quickly as possible. Regarding primary data collected by the evaluation team, staff had previous experience of using such methods and received additional training on the specific tools.

Data sharing and storage

Data were shared with the University of Plymouth by the respective sites according to data sharing agreements. Primary data were stored in password-protected files on the University of Plymouth's secure server (on Microsoft Sharepoint) and accessible only from a University of Plymouth password-protected computer. Data were only accessible to evaluation team members. Hard copy data (e.g. consent forms) were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office on the University of Plymouth property.

On research completion, a dataset containing outcome data (pre/post), the level of participation in the programme and identifying information (child name, gender, date of birth and UPN) will be transferred securely to the DfE for deposit (in pseudonymised form) in the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service.

Project team and stakeholders

Delivery team

Dr Catherine Carroll (project lead, St. Mary's University, Twickenham) – project oversight, staff training and support, programme design and adaptation, and liaison with the evaluation team

Neil Marlow (Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, Barnet Education and Learning Service) – oversight of project delivery in LBB

Suzanne Parrott (Executive Headteacher, Associate Director, Education Standards, Children with a Social Worker, (AfC)) – oversight of project delivery in AfC

AfC Transition Hub

Affan Malik (Project Administrator) – administration of the project, including data management

Lauren Allen (Lead Teacher) – leadership of the programme in respective hubs, including staff support and liaison with the host school and virtual school

Kelly Holloway (Senior Learning Mentor) – recruitment and support of young people and liaison with DTs in new schools

Tarquinn Reid-Albert (Learning Mentor) – delivering the hub curriculum and supporting young people in their schools

Susan Cambridge (Learning Mentor) – delivering the hub curriculum and supporting young people in their schools

Dr Sara Freitag (Education Psychologist)

Dr Amanda Gaukroger (Education Psychologist)

LBB Transition Hub

Affan Malik (Project Administrator) – administration of the project, including data management

Hassan Sufi (Lead Teacher) – leadership of the programme in respective hubs, including staff support and liaison with the host schools and virtual school

Amy Wight (Senior Learning Mentor) – recruitment and support of young people and liaison with DTs in schools

Nathanael Ribas (Learning Mentor) – delivering the hub curriculum and supporting young people in their schools

Jhana Mills (Learning Mentor) – delivering the hub curriculum and supporting young people in their schools

Samuel Okine (Learning Mentor) – delivering the hub curriculum and supporting young people in their schools

Dr Amy Gibb (Educational Psychologist)

Dr Chenelle Collins (Educational Psychologist)

Dr Emma Sagzan (Educational Psychologist)

Evaluation team

Nick Axford (Co-Principal Investigator, University of Plymouth) – evaluation oversight, including design, liaison with YEF and sites, qualitative analysis, and write-up

Vashti Berry (Co-Principal Investigator, University of Exeter) – evaluation oversight, including design, liaison with YEF and sites, overseeing quantitative data analysis, and write-up

Lynne Callaghan (Project Manager, University of Plymouth) – ethics, data management, liaison with sites, overseeing qualitative data collection and analysis, and write-up

Kate Allen (Research Fellow, University of Exeter) – recruitment, qualitative data collection and analysis, and write-up

Sarah Rybczynska-Bunt (Research Fellow, University of Plymouth) – recruitment, qualitative data collection and analysis

Becky Bates (Research Assistant, University of Exeter) – recruitment and qualitative data collection

Jane Horrell (Research Associate, University of Plymouth) – recruitment, qualitative data collection and analysis

Lucy Cartwright (Research Assistant, University of Plymouth) – recruitment, qualitative data collection and analysis

Kristin Liabo (Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement [PPIE] Lead, University of Exeter) – consultation with young people and carers

Feasibility phase

Research aims

The feasibility phase of the study had three aims:

- The first aim was to test the feasibility of delivering the Transition Hub, with particular attention to understanding of the model (among staff, stakeholders, foster carers and young people), the extent to which it met demand and need, participant engagement, acceptability, fidelity and adaptation, implementation, and considerations for sustainability and system fit.
- The second aim was to explore the promise of the Transition Hub in terms of the perceived impact on young people, carers and other stakeholders.
- The third aim was to identify lessons about methods for use in further research on the Transition Hub.

Success criteria and/or targets

The feasibility phase of this research was designed to explore the degree to which the programme can be implemented as designed and is acceptable to providers and users. The aim was for this information to be used to make any necessary revisions to the programme. There were no explicit predefined progression criteria. Rather, it was agreed at the outset that evidence of feasibility (primarily) and perceived impact (to a lesser degree) would be used to assess feasibility and decide whether it was appropriate to proceed to a pilot outcome evaluation. Lessons about the evaluation were to inform the design of future research on the Transition Hub.

Methods

Participant selection

Young people were recruited to the programme by the respective organisations involved in the project, namely AfC and LBB. Participants were eligible for the Transition Hub if they were (i) entering foster care for the first time or (ii) in care and experiencing a change in placement or school. Any young person receiving the programme was eligible to be involved in the quantitative and qualitative research.⁸

The original target number was 80 young people to be recruited to the programme between February 2020 and May 2021. Recruitment to the Transition Hub was slower than anticipated, at least partly due to Covid-19 but also due to lower-than-predicted numbers of children coming into care. To meet the requirements of the evaluation, the recruitment period and rate of intake were reprofiled in agreement with the YEF in Spring 2021. The reprofiled figures involved recruiting 40 young people in the feasibility phase (between February 2020 and July 2021) and another 40 in the pilot phase (September 2021 to December 2022).

There were three other groups of participants who were eligible for participation in the qualitative research:

- Foster carers for young people involved in the Transition Hub⁹
- Practitioners involved in delivering the programme, i.e. Transition Hub staff:
 - Lead teachers (n=2)¹⁰
 - Senior learning mentors (n=2)
 - Learning mentors (n=4)
 - EPs (n=2)
 - Project manager (n=1)
 - Business support officer/administrator (n=1)
- Other relevant stakeholders:
 - Virtual school heads (n=2)
 - DTs¹¹
 - Host school heads (n=2)

⁸ All young people receiving the Transition Hub were eligible for the research – there were no exclusions. However, not everyone decided to participate in the research. Qualitative data collection was independent and not gathered as part of the intervention.

⁹ At least one foster carer per young person.

¹⁰ Numbers in brackets refer to how many of each staff type were involved in the intervention overall across the two sites at the point of selecting participants.

¹¹ Each young person with a named school would have had a DT, but some young people in the Transition Hub may have been in the same school, in which case a DT would be responsible for more than one young person.

- Social workers¹²

All members of these groups were eligible for participation in the qualitative research. We recruited from each category using simple pragmatic target quotas to ensure a mix of all groups and a spread across both sites: young people (n=5 to 8), foster carers (n=5 to 8), lead teacher (n=2), senior learning mentor (n=2), learning mentor (n=2 to 4), EP (n=1 to 2), support officer (n=1), virtual school head (n=2), host school head (n=1 to 2), DT (n=2 to 4), social worker (n=1 to 2) and project lead (n=1).

Data collection

Quantitative data collection involved obtaining access to routine programme data collected by the Transition Hub on the following issues: referral rate, eligibility, acceptance rate, length of engagement, number of contacts and rate of completion of the outcome measures. Summary data were provided to the evaluation team for analysis by the Transition Hub.

Four outcome measures were collected routinely by the programme, and these were considered by the evaluation team during the feasibility phase as candidates for the later outcomes study. They are as follows:

- The SDQ (www.sdqinfo.org) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about children and young people aged 2-17 years, comprising five sub-scales: conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour. Each sub-scale is scored out of 10, and four sub-scales (conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems) combine to produce a total difficulties score out of 40. In addition, the SDQ contains an impact supplement, which measures the extent/chronicity of social impairment and burden on others. Students completed the 11-17 years self-report version and an adult who knew the respective young person well (foster carer or teacher) completed the 4-17 years version. In both cases, the SDQ was completed on paper and copies of the original forms were shared with the evaluation team. Responses were entered into a research database for analysis.
- The PASS (<https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/assessments/pass/>) is a short self-evaluation survey capturing feelings about self and school that may help to detect barriers to learning. It has nine dimensions: 1) feelings about school, 2) perceived learning capability, 3) self-regard as a learner, 4) preparedness for learning, 5) attitudes to teachers, 6) general work ethic, 7) confidence in learning, 8) attitudes to attendance and 9) response to curriculum demands. Students completed the PASS on an independently hosted platform (see <https://www.gl-assessmengt.co.uk/assessments/pass/>), and Transition Hub teams were provided with individual reports for each student, with benchmarking (percentile scores) against UK norms. These reports were shared with the evaluation team, and original percentage scores and percentile ranks were re-entered for analysis.
- The Global Assessment of School Functioning (GASF; Maerlender et al., 2020) is intended to capture a global metric of a student's academic, social and general behavioural functioning within a school. It covers several domains associated with school behaviour: work completion, work quality, peer

¹² Each young person would have had a social worker but some young people in the Transition Hub may have had the same social worker, in which case a social worker would be responsible for more than one young person.

relationships, adult relationships, disruptive behaviour and attendance. The person completing the GASF (typically a teacher) assigns a single numerical score that best describes a student's current functioning, informed by 10 ordinal categories, ranging from 1-10 ('unable to benefit from structured academics or academic instruction beyond purely functional skills') to 91-100 ('meets all academic and social expectations; a model student. Superior functioning day in and day out. No attendance or truancy problems').

- The Journey Planner is a planning and assessment tool used to set individual goals for young people and monitor young people's progress (see pp.16-17 for details)

Qualitative data were collected by semi-structured interviews, focusing on these topic areas:

- Understanding of the Transition Hub model
- Demand for the Transition Hub
- Match between the Transition Hub model and young people's needs
- Engagement of young people and foster carers by the Transition Hub
- Fidelity and adaptation of Transition Hub model delivery (including the use of the Journey Planner tool)
- Regular existing service provision regarding the education of children in care
- Transition Hub staff recruitment, training and supervision
- Role of the project lead
- Facilitators of and barriers to delivering the Transition Hub model
- Contribution of the Transition Hub to joint working between agencies
- Considerations for the sustainability of the Transition Hub model and its fit in the service system
- Impact of Covid-19 on Transition Hub delivery
- Acceptability of the Transition Hub model (to young people, carers, staff and stakeholders)
- Perceived impact of the Transition Hub on young people, carers, staff and stakeholders

The focus of interviews naturally varied according to participant type (see Appendix 4).

Table 1. Methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Routine programme data, including referral rates, eligibility, acceptance rates, length of engagement, number of contacts and outcome measure completion rates	Data shared with the evaluation team by the Transition Hub team	Young people (n=40), key programme delivery data	Descriptive statistics	(1) How feasible is Transition Hub delivery, with particular attention to (b) demand and need and (c) engagement?
Qualitative data collection via interviews	Interviews with Transition Hub staff and other stakeholders	Transition Hub staff (n=12) and stakeholders (n=8)	Domain summaries	(1) How feasible is Transition Hub delivery, with particular attention to (a) understanding of the model, (b) demand and need, (c) engagement, (d) acceptability, (e) fidelity and adaptation, (f) facilitators of and barriers to delivery and (g) sustainability and system fit?
Qualitative data collection via interviews	Interviews with Transition Hub staff and other stakeholders	Transition Hub staff (n=12), stakeholders (n=8), carers (n=3) and young people (n=1)	Domain summaries	(2) What is the perceived impact of the Transition Hub on young people, foster carers and stakeholders?

Analysis

For the quantitative data, aggregate descriptive analyses (means and percentages) were conducted using STATA version 17 to explore the demographics of the sample, recruitment rate, length of intervention and outcome data completeness. We did not analyse change over time (programme promise) due to the low number of young people with both pre- and post-data (<5) and the lack of individual item-level data, i.e. we could not validate outcome measure scores.

For the qualitative data, interviews were transcribed, organised using NVivo version 12 and analysed to develop domain summaries designed to help answer the specific research questions. This was deemed pragmatic and proportionate, given the clear focus on a series of questions related to feasibility. It involved several phases: (i) data familiarisation, (ii) coding, (iii) generating initial domain summaries, (iv) reviewing and refining domain summaries and (v) writing up. A deductive coding framework based on the priority areas of the feasibility phase was constructed, and inductive coding was conducted within and outside the deductive framework. The analysis team met regularly to review and agree on codes and domain summaries.

Timeline

The feasibility phase timeline can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Timeline

Date	Activity
December 2019	Project start
November 2020	Ethics approval
February 2020 to November 2021	Programme delivery
February 2020 to June 2021	Quantitative data collection
May 2021 to June 2021	Data analysis and write-up
June 2021	Feasibility results shared with the YEF
July–October 2021	Discussions about the pilot phase
June 2023	Report submitted (consolidated with pilot phase results)

Findings – quantitative findings

To be included in the feasibility study, young people must have (i) been referred to the Transition Hub, and (ii) been accepted onto the programme, and (iii) completed baseline measures before June 2021. Young people who were accepted onto the programme or who completed baseline measures from June 2021 onwards were incorporated into and analysed as part of the pilot outcome phase of the study.

Participants

A total of 50 young people were referred to the Transition Hub in the feasibility phase, 19 in LBB and 31 in AfC (Table 3). Of these, 40 accepted a programme space and completed the baseline measures within the required time period in order to be included in the feasibility phase (16 in LBB and 24 in AfC).¹³ This was, for the most part, split equally between girls and boys.

All participants were new entrants to care, i.e. there were no young people referred for within-care placement or school transition, even though these were included in the eligibility criteria, and the majority were in care under the legal provision of Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (i.e. voluntary accommodation where birth parents/carers retain parental responsibility).

Table 3. Demographics of the sample

Demographics	Total n (%)	
	Referred (n=50)	Accepted (n=40)
Boys	25 (50%)	21 (53%)
Girls	25 (50%)	19 (48%)
New entry to care	50 (100%)	40 (100%)
Section 20	30 (60%)	25 (63%)
UASC	7 (14%)	6 (15%)

Intervention feasibility

Demand

Demand for the Transition Hubs is defined here in terms of whether the number of young people entering the Transition Hub matched expectations. Recruitment to the programme was slow in the first six months of the feasibility phase (February to July 2020) but maintained a steady pace into the second half of 2020

¹³ Three additional young people were referred to the Transition Hub in June 2021, making the referral total n=53; however, they had not accepted a place before June 2021, so they are excluded from the data tables.

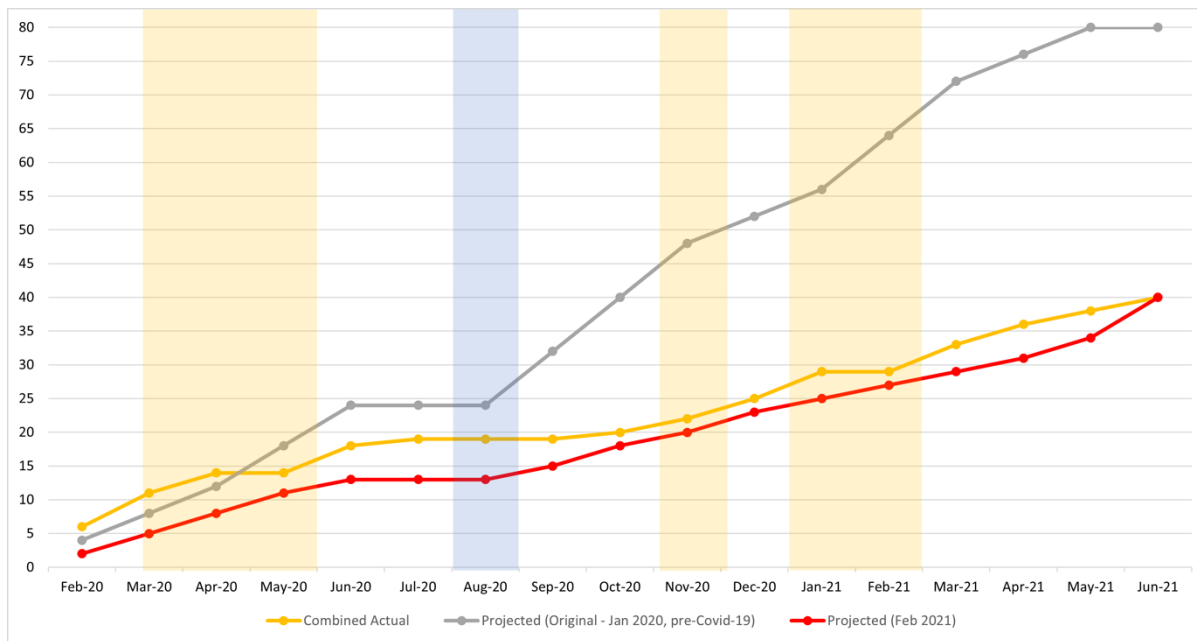
and the first half of 2021 (Table 4 and Figure 1). As mentioned above, the final recruited sample in the feasibility phase was 40 young people, which met the reprofiled target of 40.

Table 4. Number of young people recruited by month

Month	Total (n=50)	
	Number referred	Number accepted
Feb 20	11	6
Mar 20	5	5
Apr 20	3	3
May 20	0	0
Jun 20	4	4
Jul 20	3	1
Aug 20 [^]	-	-
Sep 20	0	0
Oct 20	1	1
Nov 20	2	2
Dec 20	3	3
Jan 21	4	4
Feb 21	0	0
Mar 21	5	4
Apr 21	3	3
May 21	4	2
Jun 21	2	2
Total	50	40

[^] Transition Hub closed for the summer holiday, and, therefore, no referrals took place.

Figure 1: Projected and actual recruitment rate over time



NB. Yellow columns represent national UK Covid-19 lockdown periods where programme delivery was restricted to online; the blue column represents the programme closure period over the summer holidays.

Of the 50 young people referred, nine were ineligible for the programme for the reasons detailed below (Table 5) and one refused the invitation to take part in the Transition Hub.

Table 5. Number of ineligible young people following referral

	Total (n=50)
Total number ineligible	9
Attended other Transition Hub	1
No destination school	3
Specialist child sexual exploitation provision	1
Went home (i.e. Child in Need)	1
Lived too far away	1
Virtual school declined (confidential issues)	2

Engagement with the programme

Of the 40 young people who were eligible and accepted a place at the Transition Hub, 10 did not receive the programme (or partially received it) due to a change in circumstances that rendered them ineligible for the programme after accepting it (six young people) or because they dropped out or failed to engage (four young people) (Table 6).

Table 6. Number of eligible young people who disengaged from the programme

	Total (n=40)
Number ineligible following acceptance	6
Care status changed (i.e. Child in Need)	4
Specialist Child Sexual Exploitation provision	1
Moved to a therapeutic home	1
Number who dropped out or failed to engage	4

Programme completion was subjectively determined by the programme team but typically involved engagement over a period of two or more school terms, culminating in an exit/closure meeting and graduation. Those who engaged with and completed the programme did so, on average, for six to seven months. The shortest period a young person engaged for was four months, and the longest period was nine months. While the Transition Hub programme inreach and outreach elements were designed to last approximately six months, this six-month duration was not fixed, and the length of engagement was tailored to meet the needs of individual young people. Young people who dropped out of the programme did not do so immediately but after an average of three to four months (see Appendix 5).

Young people’s engagement can be measured through the number of contacts they had with the Transition Hub throughout the period in which they participated in the programme. Contacts include any form of interaction with the young person, including phone calls, text messages, emails and in-person meetings. Outreach young people experienced 20 contacts, on average, with the Transition Hub. There was only one inreach young person in this project period, and they accounted for 137 contacts. Contacts (Table 7) were related to generic transition support and attendance, academic support and social and emotional support. Holiday provision (p.13) was generally well attended (Table 8).

Table 7. Average number of contacts received by those who completed the inreach and outreach provision

Contacts	Total (n=14) n (range)
Inreach	1 [^]
Outreach	13
Child	22.7 (0 - 42)
Carer	10.1 (7 - 32)
School	10.3 (5 - 20)
Social worker	2.45 (0 - 8)

[^]data on contacts not reported due to low numbers

Table 8. Holiday provision uptake

Holiday	Total n (%)
Half term Feb 20	-
Half term May 20	0/6 (0)
Summer 20	13/18 (72.2)
Half term Oct 20	10/18 (55.6)
Half term Feb 21	1/17 (5.9)
Half term May 21	7/19 (36.8)

Blue cells – Transition Hubs only just opened; orange cells – Covid-19 lockdown

Evaluation feasibility

To inform a future outcome study, we tracked completion rates in the two main outcome measurement instruments (SDQ and PASS) at both pre- and post-intervention, as well as two other measures (Global Assessment of School Functioning [GASF] and the Journey Planner) that were being tried and developed as programme assessment tools.

Baseline completion rates were low to moderate ($\leq 55\%$) for all outcome instruments except for the Journey Planner, which was completed for three-quarters (75%) of young people (still arguably low given that it was

a fundamental part of the programme). It should be noted that the Transition Hub team decided early in the feasibility phase not to continue using the GASF.

Post-intervention outcome measure completion rates can be seen in Table 9. They were higher for those who completed the intervention.

No post-test data were collected on young people who dropped out of the programme. This can be a limitation of designs that make use of routine programme data, leading to biased findings. However, we subsequently used the evaluation as an opportunity to work with the programme team to refine and improve practice around data collection (with some success).

Table 9. Programme outcome data collection rates

Outcome measures	Total n (%)
SDQ (young people self-report)	
Baseline	22/40 (55%)
Post	9/14 (64%)
SDQ (adult report)	
Baseline	20/40 (50%)
Post	9/14 (64%)
PASS	
Baseline	16/40 (40%)
Post	7/14 (50%)
GASF	
Baseline	8/40 (20%)
Post	3/14 (21%)
Journey Planner	
Baseline	30/40 (75%)
Post	14/14 (100%)

Findings – qualitative findings

Participants

Table 10 shows the number of interviews completed in the feasibility phase per participant type across the two delivery sites.

Table 10. Interviews completed

Role	AfC	LBB	Total
Transition Hub staff			
Project lead	2		2
Lead teacher	1	1	2
EP	1	1	2
Learning mentor	2	2	4
Support officer	1	1	2
Stakeholder			
Virtual school head	1	1	2
Host school head	1	1	2
DT	1	1	2
Social worker	1	1	2
Carer	1	2	3
Young person	1	0	1
Total			24

Intervention feasibility

Results are presented here under each of the domains that are outlined in the research questions.

1a. Understanding of the Transition Hub model

Participants generally had a good high-level understanding of the focus and nature of the Transition Hub model. This applied especially to Transition Hub staff and, slightly less so, stakeholders and carers, reflecting their respective closeness to and involvement in the Transition Hub. For example, a DT explained how they were aware of the individual work the Transition Hub was doing with a young person but not familiar with the overall aims and objectives of the project.

‘I've never, sort of, been sat down and told what the Hub as a whole is, but I have had really good introductions from two colleagues from the Hub, from them as an individual about [what] they want to do with the specific young person they're allocated to. So, I think I've got a decent understanding of them as individuals and their roles with that young person but probably a more limited understanding of the Hub as an organisation and as a body’. [Stakeholder 8]

Similarly, a carer reported that there wasn't a formal introduction to the Transition Hub, but they understood that it was intended to support the young person in their transition.

The following elements of the Transition Hub were recognised by one or more participants:

- **The focus on supporting young people through transitions of school or placement and helping them to achieve stability** (e.g. getting them on track educationally and helping them to move to independence)
- **The focus on young people’s social-emotional outcomes to enable and support academic success** because this is harder for the school to focus on (arguably reflecting contrasting priorities between the Transition Hub and school)
- **The emphasis on ‘pre-learning’** or preparing young people academically for their transition into a new school so that they are ready for learning and not needing to play catch-up
- **The collaborative work with four partners**, namely young people, foster carers, schools and social workers, with Transition Hub staff acting as a bridge to help get all of them ready and relieve the strain they may feel
- **The attention on assessing young people’s needs and strengths** and tailoring support accordingly, both in the Transition Hub and the school. Allied with the more formal assessments is the opportunity for Transition Hub staff to get to know young people
- **The effort to amplify the voice of the young person** so that it can shape the service offer to better meet their needs
- **The focus on bringing people and services together** to fill gaps in existing services

No participant mentioned all of these, and there was no mention of the intended impact on youth crime, violence or antisocial behaviour, even though these are the primary targets of the YEF.

1b. Need and demand for the Transition Hub

How the Transition Hub model compares with regular existing service provision

There was a strong sense that the Transition Hub fills an important gap in service provision and offers much more than services as usual. Often, there is little support for young people, foster carers or schools, and the support offered can be rushed and unplanned, leading to young people’s education being disrupted. For example, high caseloads commonly prevent virtual school staff from building deep relationships with young people, meaning that their input usually entails some multi-agency work and intermittently checking in on the young person. School staff, meanwhile, typically have limited knowledge of children looked after (as a group but also as individuals, i.e. in terms of their background and needs), are under pressure to focus on academic attainment and tend to be responsible for many students, leaving insufficient time to pay close attention to any one student.

‘So we have to constantly remind DTs that although the education and the academics are really important, what’s more important now is this young person’s mental health and this young person’s emotions’. [Hub staff 3]

‘Secondary schools are so overcrowded in London, you know? They teach. They don’t have time to tailor, to just pay close attention to one particular child, one particular student. There are schools right here with thousands of students’. [Hub staff 10]

By contrast, the support offered by the Transition Hub is more intensive and tailored. It can do what the virtual school, teachers and social workers lack the time, capacity, training or methods to do. Specifically, it involves individualised, one-to-one academic and pastoral support for young people:

‘It's very bespoke. It's very difficult to say, “We do this, that and the other,” because it very much depends on that child and that child’s needs, and I think from the children that we've worked with so far, they're all incredibly different, and their stories are all incredibly different. So it's building a relationship with them and then providing them with what they need’. [Hub staff 4]

This is driven by close attention to each young person’s needs and preferences:

‘And this is from the words of the young people I’ve worked with: “You’re making my voice be heard more than it would have normally”, and it’s just making sure that all their needs are met’. [Hub staff 5]

The Transition Hub also supports foster carers and stakeholders, helping to connect services:

‘We've almost become like something that pulls everything else together...so the social workers, the designated teachers, the foster carers, working with them all and bringing it all together, and, therefore, communication is easier and for the good of the child’. [Hub staff 4]

‘Looking back, it’s almost like I feel like the purpose of the Hub [is to fill] in the gaps that we didn’t know we had in the system. So it’s, kind of, bridging the gap between relevant professionals that are working with the young person in question. In the reflection meetings that I’ve had once I finish working for young people, all the DTs have said that the Hub actually connects all the dots with all the professionals that work with the young people’. [Hub staff 5]

The Transition Hub also offers the young person a key adult who is separate from home and able to work with the young person long-term on transitions. This key adult role is not necessarily available through school, or at least only to a limited degree, or the virtual school:

‘I think the virtual schools are more outreach, and they visit the child in school, and they're dealing with a number of young children. They're also in charge of many, many other things, such as PEPs. I think, with the Transition Hub, it's more intense and it's more focused on the young person to a certain extent. We don't just facilitate; that's what the virtual schools do. We mentor, and we, sort of, see what's been overlooked’. [Hub staff 3]

Number and suitability of referrals

Young people entered the programme throughout the recruitment period, although neither Transition Hub came near to reaching capacity. For most of the time, the number of children entering care in the respective sites was lower than in previous years and somewhat unpredictable, due in part to the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects. This changed in the last three months of the feasibility phase when the number of young people entering the Transition Hub did match what was predicted based on previous years, namely, three young people per month.

Referrals to the Transition Hub were deemed appropriate insofar as they involved young people in transition, for example, owing to loss of placement or moving between schools. However, the intake also included an unexpectedly large number of young people in Section 20 voluntary care. It seemed unethical not to include them because they experience many, if not all, of the same challenges as young people on a

full care order. However, their inclusion presented unforeseen challenges. For instance, as it is voluntary, the parent/carer may change their mind, meaning that the young person can move to and fro between care and home, and family contact can remain, which may be destabilising for the young person.¹⁴ There was also a sense that some young people who could benefit were missing out. For example, young people were mostly new to care even though the model is intended also to include young people already in care but experiencing a placement or school transition. These represent a larger proportion of the social care caseload compared to those newly coming into care, and one stakeholder questioned whether the Transition Hub was catering for them adequately:

‘So, I suppose I knew from my role that there were so many children moving placements and having complex transitions that weren't just new into care. And I remember at the beginning thinking, “Can we focus a bit more on that?” And we didn't’. [Stakeholder 4]

Part of the reason for this issue was that virtual schools took a long time to realise that this group could be included; another was that during Covid-19 lockdown, no changes in placement were allowed, so entrants to the Transition Hub were new to care.

Another participant suggested that some young people coming into the Transition Hub did not really need it, or at least needed it less than others who were ineligible but might benefit more:

‘Then you've got another child, you know, getting good grades. And the only thing is that they're in care, but they're not emotionally in [need]...they're okay...they need the Transition Hub, but they don't need it as much as the other person who is ineligible...because they're going through hell right now, but we can't help them...So I think definitely prioritising...that's something that needs to be considered’. [Hub staff 3]

Reasons given for potential beneficiaries missing out included: being younger or older than the target group; not having a named school to go to; being placed out of area; having particular needs, such as autism; not being referred by the social worker; and not being in care. For instance, it was suggested that the Transition Hub could potentially work with any child in care or even with CiN, although it was acknowledged that the latter would require work with the birth family and an adaptation of the logic model.

Young people mostly needed outreach because they did not meet the criteria for inreach. For example, some young people in one site – particularly UASC – were placed out of the area, making inreach impossible for practical reasons. To one of the Transition Hub staff, this felt at odds with the emphasis in the model on inreach, although they felt outreach was mostly appropriate.

1c. Engagement of young people and foster carers

Young people

Young people's engagement with the Transition Hub offer was regarded as generally being good, accepting that it varies by individual and circumstances. For example, a young person might feel tired after school or

¹⁴ By the time the pilot phase started, Virtual Schools had responsibility for this group of children, so Transition Hub staff were able to work with them in the same way as long as parents agreed (many did and welcomed the support).

feel that the Transition Hub does not fit with their life and friendship network. It can also be affected by the match with a mentor or relationships with adults generally:

‘For some Hub members [staff], they may be less experienced, and the young people sense that. And so that doesn't leave them feeling perhaps safe, or they just think, actually, I don't click with you...I don't want this. For some young people, they've had so many adults come in and out of their lives. They really struggle with trusting others...for them, that's really, really daunting’. [Hub staff 8]

Young people might also engage with some elements of the Transition Hub offer but not others, reflecting their own interests and preferences, and engagement can also change over time:

‘Within the first couple of times with us, he seemed to be fine; it was okay. But then, as it, kind of, ticked over, then, just doing Zoom all the time. And once he got into the new school as well, the interest had kind of gone. But I think it's understandable to some extent as well. He wanted to move on’. [Foster carer 3]

Engagement was harder during Covid-19 lockdown because of virtual-only contact between Transition Hub staff and young people. This took more time and could lack emotion, energy and enthusiasm. Some young people were clearly wary of adults or turned their cameras off. Key aspects of in-person communication, such as body language and eye contact, were lost. Technical problems, for instance, a weak internet signal, did not help. It was particularly hard to start with, improving with persistence and creativity:

‘It's becoming normal; it is becoming something that we're getting used to, but at the beginning, it was really, really strange. You know, seeing the young person on the other side of the screen, trying to do their SDQ or the PASS survey from a computer. And, you know, it was really, really challenging’. [Hub staff 3]

Even once it became possible to meet in person, engagement could still be challenging:

‘It still felt a bit restrictive. And that's just because it was having to meet them in the garden or having to meet them outside. The young people wouldn't want to meet me outside because it's cold’. [Hub staff 5]

In some cases, however, engagement during Covid-19 lockdown was easier:

‘I think for those of us that knew our students before lockdown, and that rapport was already there, to some degree, it's been a lot easier’. [Hub staff 4]

Foster carers

There were challenges in communication with some foster carers, notably asylum-seekers or those with English as an additional language (EAL). Further, the involvement of several providers meant that carers were sometimes unsure where to seek academic support (i.e. Transition Hub, school or virtual school) and less likely to engage with the Transition Hub as a consequence:

‘For other carers, it's felt like it's just one extra kind of provision...extra phone calls and paperwork that we have to fill out on top of lots of other demands that carers naturally have. I think we're in the early stages of the Hub roles, and what the Hub was for wasn't necessarily clear. And so, for a while, some carers [had] lots of confusion about the Hub and didn't necessarily see the value of it’. [Hub staff 8]

1d. Acceptability of the Transition Hub model

Young people

There is evidence that young people liked the Transition Hub, although it varied between young people. It is also important to stress that only one young person was interviewed. This young person reported enjoying spending time with their mentor and the fun activities offered by the Transition Hub:

‘I just like seeing them. I just like having a chat with them. We went kayaking and paddle boarding recently with [learning mentors]; yeah, and that was pretty fun’. [Young person 1]

Other data on young people’s views of the acceptability of the Transition Hub come mostly from staff and carers. Young people were reported to trust their respective mentors and appreciate having their voice heard more than it would be normally. This was somewhat dynamic, though. In one case, for instance, the young person’s relationship with their mentor was perceived less positively towards the end of the programme; in another, the support relationship worked better in person than online; and in another, the young person expressed wanting to ‘move on’ from old relationships – including with the Transition Hub – once he started his new school.

Concerns were particularly expressed about the acceptability of inreach for young people. Reasons given included young people just wanting to start school and not wanting the intermediate process, the high adult:child ratio, feeling different and segregated from normal school, a lack of opportunities to socialise with other young people and it being too intense and daunting, for example, because of the need to build a relationship with someone unfamiliar. However, staff and stakeholders also acknowledged that inreach was helpful for some young people, notably those who had not been in education before, UASC or those for whom the host school was the young person’s designated school.

Foster carers

Foster carers expressed positive views about the Transition Hub, again with the same caveat about the number of participants (three were interviewed). They liked the mentors and the level and nature of support:

‘I think [young person] enjoys the discussions with [learning mentor]. They’ve helped her a lot. I would say...she enjoys that because she did catch up a lot. I liked it because it gives [young person] something to focus on’. [Foster carer 1]

‘So, the visit became quite special, and, like, you know, the boys were...everyone was excited, so rather than just bringing sort of games for [young person], she’d bring games for everyone...That kind of emotional support, and just sort of being there, was an important part for us, and we definitely felt that support’. [Foster carer 2]

However, confusion about the role of the Transition Hub relative to other support for children in care meant that some carers did not necessarily see its value (see above).

Transition Hub staff

Transition Hub staff views were mixed but generally positive. Positive comments focused on the work being rewarding, the varied nature of the role, the joint work with others and the team:

‘Our team has people that genuinely have the children’s best interest at heart...We always make sure that, you know, we’re working closely with the children and the young people, the foster carers and just everyone involved. And it’s nice to know that everybody in the team is on the same page’. [Hub staff 5]

Aside from frustrations about the downside of inreach (see above), staff expressed two other concerns. One was about needing to complete measures that inform service delivery and research at the expense of direct work with young people, even if there was an appreciation of why this was needed:

‘So [project lead] really wanted lots of data to be collected and lots of record-keeping and real focus on the Journey Planner, which is very different to what the [site] Hub team sees their role, and which is just working one-to-one with the young person and building up a relationship and just enjoying spending time with them...So that's created tensions at times. That's changed, and it's lessened, but that's been something I think that's really impacted the Hub’. [Hub staff 8]

The other was the fit between the Transition Hub and the virtual school and host school:

‘So, there's lots of different management structures...which makes things quite messy. So I think if everyone sat under one clear management structure and we were following an outreach model, I think that would be really helpful moving forward’. [Hub staff 8]

Stakeholders

Stakeholders were generally positive about the Transition Hub. One social worker commented how they had a good relationship with the learning mentor and valued their skills and knowledge of the young person’s needs. They appreciated both the positive narrative associated with the Transition Hub compared with the more negative narrative around pupil referral units (PRUs) and the multi-agency approach whereby the Transition Hub worked well with a wider professional network. They also reported seeing how the tutoring benefitted the young person and appreciated the potential for the Transition Hub to reduce their (social worker’s) workload and stress.

There was some initial hesitancy or scepticism on the part of DTs:

‘Initially, we found DTs quite reluctant. Mainly, they just thought this was another extra service in the child's life and, therefore, in their lives. They didn't understand the project. I think at the beginning, we weren't able to clear[ly] enough demonstrate what we could offer’. [Stakeholder 10]

However, this changed as they became more aware of the service and its benefits:

‘It’s probably one of the best providers for looked after children that I’ve come across. Usually, I’m just dealing with the social worker and then they’ll refer to some other services, you know? And maybe some emotional support. It just feels like it’s much more personal, and there’s much more wraparound support for the children’. [Stakeholder 7]

1e. Fidelity and adaptation of Transition Hub model delivery

The programme developer suggested that the core of the programme, including the logic model, broadly stayed the same during the feasibility phase and was subsequently firmed up in a handbook. She stated that adaptations made around the core were variously part of the programme journey (e.g. creating new assessments and resources), a response to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions (e.g. online or blended delivery)

and a tailoring of provision to help meet the needs of individual young people and foster carers. This is illustrated by this Transition Hub staff member:

‘With these young people, there’s days where they won’t be responding too well towards the lesson...So sometimes, as an intervention, we’ll go for a walk, we’ll have a talk, you know, do a bit of exercise, get some fresh air...so that they’re more engaged within the lessons...I don’t think anything’s changed too much, but depending on the child, we’ll tailor the curriculum for them, you know. If they’re a UASC student, we’ll do more English lessons. If they’re quite good with computers, we’ll probably do more project work. It just depends on the child’. [Hub staff 7]

The Journey Planner tool was acknowledged as being key to providing personalised support, although it took time to realise its potential, as the quantitative usage data demonstrate (see above). Some Transition Hub staff found it confusing to start with and either used it more from a sense of compliance or forgot to use it because they were more focused on the work they could do with an individual. DTs used it less than Transition Hub staff. However, over time and with additional training, it was used more, especially in one-to-one support for young people and ahead of reflection or PEP meetings. Identified benefits included that it gave work with young people a clear focus, notably through setting goals and actions for young people, carers and the school and individualising input to identified areas of need; made progress tangible; supported reflection on what has and hasn’t worked; and could be shared with the foster carer, teacher and social worker. As this Transition Hub staff member said:

‘You’ve got the targets that are on the Journey Planner, and you’re recording essentially against the targets that are on the Journey Planner because those are the perceived priorities for that young person. And your monthly report is on how well you’ve achieved those targets. That’s a much better sort of recording system, operating system than I’ve seen [in] working with young people like this. Because you’re prioritising, you’re acting on those priorities and you’re measuring how well that your actions are working, all in one go kind of thing’. [Hub staff 2]

1f. Facilitators of and barriers to delivering the Transition Hub model

Participants identified several factors that made it easier or harder to deliver the Transition Hub offer.

Location and space

The Transition Hub’s location in a school setting had advantages:

‘I think it had worked quite well...So it was a bit more familiar; you could mimic that then. Every secondary school setup will be different. But it’s [being] able to say, actually, when that young person does transition, these might be some of the similarities or this is what it might look like when you go there’. [Stakeholder 4]

It also helped Transition Hub staff, for instance by enabling easy access to training, IT, licenses, resources and social events, with mutual benefits for the school in terms of sharing well-being or pastoral support resources:

‘So it means they [Hub staff] get invitations to our staff meetings and obviously any training we run, twilights, anything like that, any meetings...So they are part of the school team...They’ve got access to Google Drive and any other resources that we’ve got in the school. Again, mutually, the idea there

was that if the Hub bought anything, we might be able to make use of it, and that's certainly been the case'. [Stakeholder 6]

However, the physical location of the Transition Hub was a barrier to some young people accessing it for inreach because it was too far away or just hard to get to.

Staff team

The Transition Hub staff team was largely stable, although the loss of staff – including the lead teacher in one Transition Hub – meant the loss of specialist knowledge. Individuals had good job security, although there was some uncertainty about the future owing to the short-term project.

Transition Hub staff were regarded as playing an essential role in engaging young people. This involved tailoring support to young people's needs and preferences, showing genuine care, demonstrably having their interests at heart and being a consistent presence:

'I think they actually realise, "Okay, this person actually does want to help me; this person does care about me". Because a lot of the time, these young people in care have met so [many] different professionals...They're not always there to, sort of, stay long-term...And it's just, you know, do a few sessions and leave. But with us, because we have that consistency, and they see that consistency, students, children love consistency; they definitely see...this is the real deal, and it's going to help, so why not? [Hub staff 3]

Having a culturally diverse staff group in the Transition Hub also helped:

'We've had two young girls who've never had an experience of being in an education setting before. It was a kind of a nice introduction for them, and they really valued getting to know the staff, and some of the staff had shared cultural backgrounds, which was a really positive experience for them'. [Hub staff 8]

There was regular assessment and reflection as a Transition Hub team, focusing on what was and wasn't working, with adjustments made accordingly to improve the service. There was some collaboration between the two Transition Hubs to discuss challenges and work out solutions and a positive team dynamic supported by team events:

'We had a day together, which was really, really helpful. So it was with both Hubs, and we did a PATH activity. It's a person-centred way of working where the focus was on the Hub as, like, a whole big organisation. And we used that time together thinking about our ideal Hub, what that would look like, a little bit of blue-sky thinking. And it gave really clear direction, helped build, kind of, the relationships across both teams and gave everyone a real sense of, like, hope and enthusiasm'. [Hub staff 8]

However, the available EP time was regarded as insufficient, particularly given how useful that support was perceived to be (see below).

Leadership

Leadership was identified as a factor enabling delivery. Specifically, there was support and engagement from the host school head, lead teacher, virtual school heads, and, critically, time for these roles. It helped to

have lead teachers who were strong and experienced, with good communication skills and empowered to come up with ideas and involve staff:

‘And I think as well, times and things have gone really well when developments for the Hub have been done jointly involving everybody. So people have felt much more empowered and understand, kind of, where we're moving forward, whereas at times when maybe tasks have just been given to people...that's caused people to maybe push back a bit or not value certain things’. [Hub staff 8]

Relationships and communication between stakeholders

The Transition Hub maintained good relationships and communications with foster carers, schools and local authority social workers. Triangulation between the young person, carer and school helped to build a coherent picture of the young person's situation. It was seen as a significant advantage if Transition Hub staff knew the schools they were working with, for instance, in terms of making communication and processes quicker. Transition Hub staff were seen to be amenable and helpful, and mentors were perceived to be flexible about when to come into school to see a young person.

Expectations and accountability

Differing expectations among stakeholders and tensions regarding accountability presented another barrier to delivery. A good example is the virtual school and Transition Hub having different views about eligibility for inreach and flow into the project. Another is the host school in one site wanting to use the time of Transition Hub staff to work with their students and exerting influence over Transition Hub expenditure:

‘I won't say anything's got in the way [of delivery]. I think we've had to navigate around situations [...] because we are part of this school, there are certain expectations or certain things that they want from the Hub, you know, and they sort of feel it's owed...I think it just wasn't established enough that this is separate from the school that we're working at’. [Hub staff 6]

Resources

The availability of resources was an enabler of effective delivery. These included those in the Transition Hub itself (e.g. materials on the computer drive), the administrative role (e.g. providing data and analysis) and support from the host school, project lead and EP:

‘In the school, departments are helping us with English curriculum...We talk to the EAL [English as an Additional Language] department...they're giving us extra tips to help the kids that are struggling with their English...And [project lead] is sending us emails – read this book, read that book. The EP,...she'll ask us, “What do you guys feel like you haven't got enough of?” So we'll say, you know, “We're struggling with a behaviour of a child”. So she'll give us resources or a CPD behaviour management for the children’. [Hub staff 7]

Participant engagement

Variable participant engagement, as described above, could also hinder delivery. Specifically, young people and carers could sometimes choose not to engage:

‘I feel like a lot of times, the programme gives a lot of responsibility...in the hands of the young people and the carer, to the point that...they can make decisions that can literally hinder our work. And let's say if the young person says, “You know what? Thank you. I know it's been three days. Things are

going well. I don't feel like coming to you guys anymore.” Or “Let the work be [conducted] virtually. I know I'm supposed to come. I don't want to come.” And they can just put their foot down. And so I feel like we don't have [as] much power as possibly [a] school would have’. [Hub staff 10]

Impact of Covid-19 on Transition Hub delivery

Transition Hub delivery in the feasibility phase lasted from February 2020 to March 2022. As such, it was affected by the national Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in place at various points and with varying degrees of strength between March 2020 and March 2021. The first lockdown was acknowledged to be the hardest because mentors could not see young people or deliver sessions in schools, and in later lockdowns, there was some familiarity with what was needed, although in-person contact was still hindered by mask-wearing and social distancing:

‘I think the first lockdown put the Hub into quite a bit of a spin because it was at such early stages as a project...And it was as if we had to completely...not go fully completely but redesign the way that we were working, and I think that had a really big impact for the Hub, for everyone to figure out what their role was because we couldn't be doing those roles in a traditional way. And that influenced some of the work that was taking place, the relationships within the Hub and the team's, kind of, individuals'...sense of identity. And as well, it really impacted on building those connections with young people and in ways with carers in some of the schools because...everything was being done remotely, so building up trusting relationships is taking so much longer’. [Hub staff 8]

An immediate effect of lockdown was that the number of young people being referred to the Transition Hubs was lower than expected. This was because fewer young people were identified as being at risk, and, therefore, fewer were entering the care system. (Research suggests this reflects changes in monitoring opportunities and how risks were recognised rather than a reduction in actual risk [e.g. Driscoll et al., 2021].)

For those who were in the Transition Hub, there was a move to remote services. Young people were given equipment to engage with this and received in-person visits if there were concerns about their well-being. The main delivery challenges, especially during the first lockdown, were delayed inreach – because the physical Transition Hub couldn't be used – and learning mentors and other Transition Hub staff not being able to meet young people in person or engage with schools or outside agencies providing activities. Some young people were particularly affected. Specifically, those not used to the culture of a school environment – notably UASC – missed the opportunity to get used to being in school. It was noted that some young people in the Transition Hub programme were eligible to go into school but preferred to work at home. The Transition Hub offer went online, but it was harder for staff to engage young people (see above).

That said, there were some reported marginal benefits of lockdown. One was that it became easier to involve some professionals because they could engage virtually:

‘If you try and get half a dozen professionals in a room to talk about the children, you can guarantee that one of them won't be there, or two of them won't be there, or three of them won't be there. So actually, the remote interviewing that we could do, you know, meant that the Ed. Psych. or the SENCO or whoever it was, speech and language therapy, whichever therapist we needed to get hold of or whichever social services person we needed to get hold of, we actually got them’. [Stakeholder 6]

Another marginal benefit of lockdown was that it gave providers an opportunity to slow down after a hectic start to the project and think about psychology, methods and tools in relation to the Transition Hub offer. Further, the necessary adaptation consequent of the move to remote provision helped with the development of a more blended curriculum offer. Finally, some young people could be matched to a school based more on their needs rather than geography.

1g. Considerations for Transition Hub sustainability and system fit

Staff recruitment

Transition Hub staff were generally considered to be appropriate for the role, although, as noted below, this is contingent on the right training being offered. Participants stressed the importance of finding staff with knowledge of the care system and experience of working with children in care. Key qualities identified for the learning mentor role include being passionate, wise and a good communicator:

‘In the first one or two months, they may have difficulties communicating with social workers [and] communicating with designated teachers. So you need to be able to talk to people in general and be a people person. Otherwise, you’re going to struggle because it’s a lot about communication within this role, and not just with young people, with adults as well’. [Hub staff 7]

Staff training and support

Training for Transition Hub staff covered the following topics: the Transition Hub model, safeguarding, data protection, working with UASC, assessments, attachment and trauma and working with schools, social workers and carers. Some of this was planned prior to delivery, while other training and CPD were led by issues arising. Training involved input from professionals with experience of working in the care system. More informal training and support included EP peer supervision and half-termly meetings for EPs with the project lead for updates and problem-solving. Some staff had their own line management, supervision and CPD arrangements, which could cover topics related to their Transition Hub work. There was also lots of communication and support within and across the Transition Hubs.

Certain aspects of training and supervision were viewed very positively by Transition Hub staff. Input from EPs was deemed to be very valuable. This included regular group supervision, which involved supporting staff with the personal and mental aspects of the work, giving staff an opportunity to share challenges and ideas and offering individual supervision for those who wished:

‘I’ve built a really good relationship with my EP to the point where something happened with one of my young people yesterday, and I just emailed. I was like, I know we just had our supervision on Monday, but I really need your help. And within five minutes, she’s just like, yeah, jump online, and we literally spoke for an hour...Anytime I’ve got, like, a situation or an idea, the EP always makes it...she flips it and makes it ten times better’. [Hub staff 5]

Otherwise, views on the adequacy of the amount and focus of training received reflected staff members’ previous experience. For example:

‘I felt prepared for the role, but I think I’ve got to take into context all the information I knew before...I’d worked in the virtual school since its creation, so I understand all the systems and structures and what that might look like on the side. If I’m honest, if I didn’t have that history, I think

it would have been incredibly confusing walking in on the first day knowing what that would have been about'. [Hub staff 9]

Initial training was regarded as insufficient both in quantity and coverage, particularly for less experienced staff:

'I think what was missing is that one day wasn't enough at all. Because it was such a brand-new project, it, kind of, wasn't really going into the day-to-day role...And there are quite a few members...of the team who are very early in their careers and hadn't necessarily had any, kind of, awareness of really important psychological frameworks and models and, like, attachment and trauma and how that can impact on it and play into the work that we're doing. And so there's been a lot of catch-up that we've had to do since then'. [Hub staff 8]

Other topics identified as requiring additional coverage were the Journey Planner, the care system, assessments, remote or virtual delivery of services, roles and expectations, and dealing with changing government policies and guidance. It was suggested that professional supervision is needed for staff dealing with traumatic issues and to support their well-being.¹⁵ There was also a sense that direct observation of how the Transition Hub operates – which was not possible under lockdown – is the best way to understand how it works.

Some stakeholders, notably social workers and DTs, reported that they did not receive any training on the Transition Hub model. This is reflected in their generally weaker understanding of the Transition Hub model (see above).

Role of the Transition Hub project lead

Not everyone interviewed knew who the project lead was or what she did. This included DTs and social workers; foster carers and young people were not asked. However, there was a consensus among other participants regarding the importance of the project lead role and the many strengths of the person fulfilling this role in the feasibility study.

It was clear that the role is substantial, fulfilling a wide range of roles, including:

- Providing leadership and direction
- Overseeing the set-up and ongoing evolution of the programme, including ensuring that implementation and delivery work for the context
- Providing quality assurance and ensuring alignment of activities with the project goals and logic model
- Delivering or arranging staff training, management and support; offering investigative and analytic capacity
- Overseeing data collection and analysis for service delivery, research and monitoring purposes
- Acting as a 'bridge' or liaison with the funder, evaluation team, schools and the respective virtual schools.

¹⁵ Staff received supervision from the EP (discussed elsewhere), which was intended to cover a range of issues, including providing emotional support. Our interpretation of the comment by the respondent is that they thought more support, particularly with emotional issues, would be helpful.

The qualities of the individual in this role were recognised as being very important for the successful delivery of the Transition Hub. This included strong passion and motivation, genuine care about the project and young people, and a variety of softer skills, such as listening to and involving Transition Hub staff in decisions, providing feedback and managing relationships between different stakeholders. The role as practised by this individual was very hands-on:

‘[Project lead] is the engine of this programme. She is a person who makes things happen. She oversees, yet she’s vitally integrated; she’s vitally involved in every aspect of the programme. For instance, she’s the person who created the Transition Hub programme manual. She creates all the documents. But she is also the person who is there on a weekly basis, meeting with us, touching base with us, checking, ensuring that things are working, what is not working and giving feedback...She’s also the analyst. She’s analysing; she’s looking for everything that possibly could be going wrong...She meets with the lead teachers,...the business supporters,...the learning mentors,...the top managers who are over her. And then she finds the best way to channel the information to us’. [Hub staff 1]

It was acknowledged that while the project lead’s role was important in the initial set-up and delivery, namely in a discrete project supported by external funding, for replication or roll-out in the context of the regular practice the role would need to be fulfilled by others sitting in a virtual school, possibly in a joint appointment with social care. It was noted that for this to work, those involved would need to know what the role entails and recognise the particular qualities of the person who has fulfilled the role to date (see above).

Virtual school and local authority

The Transition Hub model has the potential to be popular in virtual schools. The approach was said to sit well with the ‘moral purpose’ of virtual schools,¹⁶ and the fact that one site involved three local authorities was cited as evidence for the model’s potential reach:

‘Virtual schools will love this. Virtual schools will utterly understand what we're trying to do’. [Stakeholder 1]

That said, local authorities considering hosting a Transition Hub would need to look at the numbers of children in care locally – sustainability needs a constant flow of referrals – and also have a good relationship with their virtual school. It was also acknowledged that each local authority has different arrangements for aspects of work with children in care that would need to be considered, for instance, regarding funding, PEP meetings and the role of the virtual school.

Once a Transition Hub is in place, there is a need to market it or raise awareness among a variety of stakeholders, notably the virtual school, fostering services, DTs and social workers, with an emphasis on how it will benefit them and the young people they work with. This is partly to increase the responsiveness of staff in agencies working with the Transition Hub. There needs to be clarity at the start about the

¹⁶ The participant did not elaborate on what they meant by ‘moral purpose’ but our interpretation is that they were referring to the general purpose of virtual schools, namely, to support young people to fulfil their potential in all stages of their education and give them the best chance to be successful in their adult lives.

Transition Hub model and way of working, the different roles and resources required (e.g. demands on the head teacher's time) and the training and support plan.

Host school

The physical Transition Hub was identified as being suitable for some but not all schools, suggesting the importance of assessing host school suitability beforehand:

'It's not going to work in a school that has silent corridors and zero tolerance, for a start, because these kids are not going to be able to cope with that. So I think the school has got to have an ethos of restorative practice really and being prepared to give children a second chance...So I suppose any school that's done some work with trauma, some work with resilience, they would be the flags that I would be looking at if I was talking to another local authority'. [Stakeholder 6].

Other important factors identified in this respect were motivation and having a strong special educational needs department with the necessary infrastructure and leadership to support children with social and mental health needs. Host school heads need to acknowledge it will take some of their time, and DTs also need time set aside, for example to arrange meetings and mentor school visits.

Once in a host school, it was suggested that the Transition Hub should be integrated but still autonomous. Integration requires that the host school plays an enabling role in facilitating the smooth operation of the Transition Hub, for instance, by providing suitable space, logistics, IT, communications support and so on. But the budget should be held by the virtual school, not the host school, and the Transition Hub needs to be reasonably self-sufficient to minimise unnecessary bureaucracy and delays.

Governance

Getting governance right was also identified as important for sustainability and system fit. An individual needs to have strategic oversight of the Transition Hub within any given area. This would effectively be the role played by the project lead in this project (see above) but located within the virtual school. Transition Hub staff would ideally work as direct members of the virtual school in a team within social care. The virtual school head needs to have a good understanding of the Transition Hub and be on the same page as the Transition Hub's lead teacher, with clarity about accountability structures. It was also noted that it needs to be clear who owns the Transition Hub model, with due attention paid to issues such as intellectual property. An executive head noted that having a Transition Hub involves lots of strategic work at the executive head level, for example working with the local authority, schools and partners.

2. Perceived impact of the Transition Hub

Young people

Based mostly on reports from professionals and carers, the impact of the Transition Hub on young people was perceived to be generally positive. Observed benefits related to three main areas:

- Education, for example improved attendance or engagement (including those who had never attended school before), getting 'school ready', catching up with academic work, hitting predicted grades, making a successful transition to and integrating into their new school, moving on the Journey Planner from red to amber or amber to green, retaining their place in their new school and enjoying school

- Peer relationships, such as interacting with other students and making friends
- Well-being and mental health, including greater confidence and reduced anxiety

These were often connected. For example:

‘One lad in particular, you know, “I put my hand up in class because I already knew, you know, like, what an equivalent fraction was before he'd explained,...so I could do it.” So I can see the value in that, not just in learning maths, but in how he felt about himself when he got home that day’. [Hub staff 2]

That said, a cautionary note was sounded about detecting the impact on young people’s lives at this stage. Moreover, interviewees noted that assessing impact needs to consider the complexity of young people’s needs, experiences of hurt they may have had in childhood and the degree of their engagement:

‘I think it really depends on how much the young person wants to engage. With one of them, I think sadly, as brilliant as [worker] seems to be, I don't think we're going to get very far with it because they don't want to work with professionals, and they don't want people to know they're looked after. For the other young person, I think it's going to be a gradual journey, but I think it is going to reap rewards’. [Stakeholder 8]

Foster carers

The perceived impact on foster relates to emotional support and guidance on how to deal with or support the young person in their care:

‘From our side, just an emotional support. It's been just really helpful to have another group of people that we know are helping us make this work’. [Foster carer 2]

Contribution of the Transition Hub to joint working between agencies

The Transition Hub was felt to have played a valuable role in enabling better inter-agency working:

‘For me, we've almost become like something that pulls everything else together...So the social workers, the designated teachers, the foster carers, working with them all and bringing it all together, and, therefore, communication is easier, for the good of the child’. [Hub staff 4]

That said, evidence of joint working was mixed. In some cases, for instance, there was regular contact between the learning mentor and social worker, informing each other’s work with the young person. On the other hand, agencies were not always as responsive as desired, in some cases, pointing to a need for a better introduction to the Transition Hub and its potential benefits:

‘A lot of these boroughs and a lot of schools within [site] are not aware...at least when we started over a year ago, they were not aware of the Transition Hub...Almost everybody knows what the virtual school is nationwide, but they don't know about the Transition Hub. Transition Hub is new. A lot of them were asking, “Who... who are you guys? Transition Hub? What do you mean?” So they were a little bit hesitant, you know? Sceptical...hesitant in working with us’. [Hub staff 10]

Logic model development

Although programme theory development was not a central aim of this study, findings from the feasibility phase of the evaluation did inform several changes and additions to the structure and components of the initial Transition Hub logic model (outlined on pp.17-18). The key changes are summarised below and detailed in the diagram in Appendix 6.

First, the way in which outcomes are described has been amended. The initial model centred around educational outcomes (captured in the PASS measure), but it is clearer now that target outcomes for young people include social-emotional development and peer relationships (captured in the SDQ measure) and, for foster carers, a sense of being supported emotionally. These were inherent aims of the programme before, but the feasibility phase drew out their importance.

Second, the diagram has been re-arranged and elaborated to posit several theorised mechanisms of change. Impacts on the carer, teacher and school contribute to change for the young person. Change for the young person, meanwhile, includes feeling understood and supported and having stability (in their living/schooling situation), increased confidence and self-efficacy and increased 'voice' or the ability to express their needs appropriately.

Third, a new section on inputs has been added. This captures key factors identified as contributors to the effective delivery of the various strands of the Transition Hub model, such as strong leadership, appropriate training and good relationships with social workers and DTs.

Finally, a new section on assumptions has been added, for example, the need for a constant flow of referrals, other key practitioners and agencies (e.g. social workers) being enabled to engage with the Transition Hub, young people being able to access the physical hub in the case of inreach and the physical hub being integrated into the host school but with a high degree of autonomy.

Conclusion

Table 11. Summary of feasibility phase findings

Research question	Finding
<p>1. How feasible is hub delivery, with particular attention to:</p> <p>(a) understanding of the model (b) demand and need (c) engagement (d) acceptability (e) fidelity and adaptation (f) facilitators of and barriers to delivery (g) sustainability and system fit</p>	<p>(a) Interview participants generally had a good understanding of the focus and nature of the Transition Hub model.</p> <p>(b) There was a strong sense that the Transition Hub fills an important gap in service provision. Demand for the Transition Hub was disrupted by Covid-19 owing to a lower number of young people entering care than in previous years. However, recruitment picked up pace throughout the delivery period. The Transition Hub offer was generally deemed to be appropriate for young people’s needs, supported by the flexible, trauma-informed and personalised approach. However, concerns were expressed that some young people who would benefit from the Transition Hub offer were missing out because they did not meet eligibility criteria (a subject for further research).</p> <p>(c) Young people engaged with the Transition Hub for six to seven months on average, which was positive given the expected length of the programme (see above), and engagement was regarded as generally being good. Engagement became more challenging online during Covid-19 lockdowns (especially the first ‘stay at home’ lockdown in March to June 2020).</p> <p>(d) The model seemed to be broadly acceptable to all parties, although concerns were expressed about some aspects, including the inreach element and data collection burden for staff.</p> <p>(e) The Transition Hub model, supported by the logic model, broadly stayed the same during the feasibility phase. A manual was produced during the feasibility phase to add more clarity to the model and support consistent delivery. The main adaptations were in response to Covid-19, leading to a blended offer (in-person and online delivery). The Journey Planner tool was core to the individualised model, and staff understanding, appreciation and use of it increased over time.</p> <p>(f) Facilitators of successful delivery included the Transition Hub’s physical location (embedded in schools in the community), the diversity and dedication of the Transition Hub staff team, staff training and support, project lead input, resources, and good relationships with foster carers and stakeholders. Barriers included physical access difficulties for some young people, tensions around Transition Hub accountability and autonomy (involving Transition Hub leadership, schools and virtual schools), insufficient EP time, online delivery during Covid-19 lockdown and not enough staff training at the start (addressed as the project progressed).</p> <p>(g) The Transition Hub has the potential to be popular in virtual schools, but possible sites for a Transition Hub need to be mindful of key requirements for delivery, and host school suitability needs to be assessed. Once in place, it is necessary to raise awareness of the Transition Hub among relevant stakeholders. The project lead needs to sit in the virtual school with strong links to social care.</p>
<p>2. What is the perceived impact of the hub on young people, foster carers and stakeholders?</p>	<p>Quantitative measures were not used to assess impact or evidence of promise in the feasibility phase owing to issues with data quality and completeness for outcome measures. The focus of the analysis was on completion rates for measures. The outcomes measures assessed were the SDQ, PASS, GASF and Journey Planner.</p> <p>Based on the qualitative interview data, the impact of the Transition Hub on young people was generally perceived to be positive, with benefits reported for young people’s education, peer relations, well-being and mental health. Caution is needed in interpreting these data owing to the nature of the feasibility phase design, specifically, the lack of quantitative data or a control group.</p>

	<p>In terms of wider impacts beyond young people, carers reportedly valued emotional support and guidance from mentors. The Transition Hub helped DTs and social workers focus on young people’s needs and reduced workload and stress. The Transition Hub was deemed to help, enabling better joint working between services and ‘joining the dots’ in relation to services working with any one family.</p>
<p>3. What lessons are there for further research into the Transition Hub model?</p>	<p>Two main challenges were identified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first challenge concerned using programme data as evaluation data, with measurement completion rates lower than would be desired. This likely reflected issues with staff training and getting a new programme up and running, compounded by Covid-19 and the associated challenges for Transition Hub staff of completing measures with young people remotely and needing to focus on adapting programme content and delivery. • The second challenge was the difficulty of obtaining interviews with foster carers and young people, again partly due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and the need for remote contact but also the evaluation team’s reliance on busy Transition Hub staff to broker contact and an arguably convoluted process for doing this (even if, at the time, it seemed necessary and was devised with the best intentions). <p>Nevertheless, with adjustments to the research design to address these issues and following discussions with the YEF, it was deemed appropriate to proceed to a pilot outcomes evaluation given the promising evidence on feasibility and perceived impact.</p>

Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

1a. Is there a good understanding of the Transition Hub model among those delivering, supporting and receiving it?

Interview participants generally had a good understanding of the focus and nature of the Transition Hub model. This applied especially to Transition Hub staff and, less so, stakeholders and carers, reflecting their respective closeness to and involvement in the Transition Hub. Among key elements of the programme recognised by one or more participants were:

- The focus on supporting young people through transitions of school or placement and helping them achieve stability
- The collaborative work with young people, carers, schools and social workers
- The tailoring of support to young people’s needs.

1b. Does the Transition Hub fill an important gap in provision and, in so doing, help meet demand and unmet needs?

There was a strong sense that the Transition Hub fills an important gap in service provision and offers much more than services as usual as regards the education of children in care. Several participants noted that the Transition Hub does what the virtual school, teachers and social workers lack the time, capacity, training or methods to do.

Demand for the Transition Hub was disrupted by Covid-19 owing to a lower number of young people entering care than in previous years. However, recruitment picked up pace towards the end of the feasibility phase, when the number kept pace with predicted figures, which meant that the reprofiled target of 40 young people was met.

Referrals were appropriate insofar as they involved young people in transition (mostly new to care); although there were some questions over eligibility criteria (notably age, specifically whether it should extend lower and/or higher), the suitability of some young people for inreach vs outreach and location (inreach not always being practical owing to young people living too far away). There was a high acceptance rate of referrals, indicating their suitability. There were many more Section 20 cases than anticipated, which presented unforeseen challenges for delivery, including the parent/carer changing their mind, leading to the young person moving to and fro between care and home, and family contact possibly proving destabilising for the young person.

The Transition Hub offer was generally deemed to be appropriate for young people's needs, supported by the flexible, trauma-informed and personalised approach. However, concerns were expressed that some young people who would benefit from the Transition Hub offer were missing out because they did not meet eligibility criteria. Specifically, they were too young or old, did not have a designated school or were CiN but not in care (included in the ineligible cases that were referred). Further research is needed to explore the number and needs of young people who might benefit from the Transition Hub or similarly intensive support with education, for example, through a systematic analysis of social care case files.

1c. Do young people engage with the Transition Hub offer?

Of the 50 young people referred to the programme, nine were ineligible, one declined the offer and 40 accepted a place. Of the 40, four subsequently dropped out or failed to engage, and six did not receive the programme (or partially received it) due to a change in circumstances that rendered them ineligible for the programme.

Young people engaged with the Transition Hub for six to seven months on average. The four young people who did not complete the programme engaged for an average of two to four months. Young people in outreach had 20 contacts on average; the one young person in inreach had 137 contacts. Holiday provision was well attended.

Young people's engagement with the Transition Hub offer was regarded as generally being good, accepting that it varies by young person and circumstances. This was assisted by:

- The Transition Hub's informal feel (compared with regular services)
- Its personalised approach
- The work of Transition Hub staff to build trusting relationships with young people

Engagement was harder during Covid-19 lockdown, especially when only virtual contact was permissible.

1d. Is the Transition Hub model acceptable to those delivering, supporting and receiving it?

There was evidence that young people liked the Transition Hub, trusting their mentor and enjoying extracurricular activities, although this varied between young people and was dynamic through the course

of the programme. However, concerns were expressed about the ‘double transition’¹⁷ for young people implicit in inreach, which also left some young people feeling segregated from their peers.

Carers appreciated the support offered by the Transition Hub, especially when they were struggling with the emotional burden of caring for the young person in their care, comparing it favourably to the usual provision from social care and education. There could be confusion, however, about whom they should communicate with regarding the education of the young person in their care, namely the Transition Hub, school or virtual school. Some carers with EAL did not understand key information.

Transition Hub staff views were mixed but generally positive, with comments about the work being rewarding and the strong, friendly and united team. Some frustration was expressed about (i) the administrative burden associated with completing measures that inform service delivery and research at the expense of direct work with young people and (ii) differences of view between the virtual school and Transition Hub regarding eligibility for inreach and flow into the project.

Wider stakeholders, which included virtual school heads, host school heads, social workers and DTs, were also generally positive about the Transition Hub. Social workers and DTs reported good relations with Transition Hub staff and observed benefits for young people and themselves (including reduced stress and workload). That said, social workers and DTs could sometimes be slow to engage with the programme, at least initially, arguably due to a lack of knowledge about or familiarity with the Transition Hub. This changed over time as they came to see its benefits.

1e. Is the Transition Hub model delivered as intended, with suitable adaptations where necessary?

The Transition Hub model is multifaceted and fluid but, together with the logic model, broadly stayed the same during the feasibility phase and was firmed up in a manual. The adaptations made along the way were primarily:

- To respond to Covid-19
- To tailor the offer to individual young people’s needs and preferences
- To develop new assessments and resources.

Reflecting both Covid-19 restrictions and the needs and circumstances of young people entering the Transition Hub, provision during the feasibility phase mostly involved outreach, with only one young person receiving inreach support.

The Journey Planner was core to the individualised model, and staff understanding, appreciation and use of it increased during the feasibility phase (supported by training).

1f. What are the key facilitators of and barriers to the successful delivery of the Transition Hub offer?

Several factors were identified by participants as making it easier or harder to deliver the Transition Hub programme well.

¹⁷ This refers to young people needing to make two transitions – the first on entering the Transition Hub inreach component and the second on moving from inreach into their named school.

- Geographical and physical location: It was seen to be positive that the Transition Hub was geographically in the heart of the community and physically located within a school (which had mutual benefits in terms of resources and expertise). However, it was hard for some young people to access the physical hub owing to its location. There were also downsides to integration in a school, notably conflicting pulls on Transition Hub staff time and reduced autonomy for the Transition Hub.
- Transition Hub staff team: The Transition Hub staff team was largely stable and benefited from representing mixed cultural backgrounds (which supported relationships with young people), varied skills and interests and a positive dynamic. It was felt that the right people were recruited to work in the Transition Hub. The training received was generally thought to be helpful, especially the EP input, and there was good topic coverage (which was largely needs-led). Some staff also reported receiving other forms of support, both informal and formal (line management). This said, there was a general sense that more training was needed, especially at the start, on some topics (e.g. trauma and attachment), for some staff (those who were less experienced) and for some stakeholders (e.g. so that DTs and social workers were more aware of and engaged with the Transition Hub).
- Short-term funding: The short-term nature of the funding created some uncertainty, however, and the lead teacher departed in one site.
- EP input: This was highly valued, but the EPs' available time for the Transition Hub was insufficient.
- Resources and data collection: Staff appreciated the resources at their disposal, although some frustration was expressed about the administrative burden associated with data collection for service delivery and evaluation purposes.
- Relationships management: The staff generally had good relationships with foster carers and stakeholders, although challenges arose from the expectations of different stakeholders (notably the host school and virtual school) and associated tensions regarding accountability.
- Covid-19: The pandemic presented a series of challenges for the delivery of the Transition Hub. These were most marked in the first lockdown. Restrictions required a rapid redesign of the essential offer, moving to a remote model. This meant restricted face-to-face contact, with online interactions between mentors and young people impairing communication and resulting in relationships taking longer to build. Some young people were disproportionately disadvantaged by this, notably those not used to the culture of a school environment (e.g. UASC), as they missed the opportunity to get used to being in school. Marginal benefits of lockdown included the development of a blended offer and the greater ease of involving EPs.

The project lead role was widely regarded (primarily among Transition Hub staff and virtual school personnel) as being critical and multifaceted, for example, involving leadership, motivation, problem-solving and quality assurance. The impressive individual qualities of the person in that role were highlighted. In the long term, this role would need to be filled by someone sitting in a virtual school, possibly in a joint appointment with social care.

1g. What are important considerations for the sustainability of the Transition Hub offer, including its fit in the wider service system?

The Transition Hub has the potential to be integrated into virtual schools and could be an appealing offer, given the shared goals. Doing so would support the sustainability of the Transition Hub model. Possible sites

need to be mindful of key requirements, such as having a suitable flow of referrals and aligning with relevant local authority arrangements for work with young people in care. There is also a need to assess host school suitability, as hosting a Transition Hub would be suitable for some but not all schools. A set of criteria would need to be developed to capture key requirements for host schools.

When promoting the Transition Hub to potential host schools, it is necessary to communicate the right message in the right way. This would include recommendations from fellow head teachers and the opportunity to observe a Transition Hub in action, as head teachers are more likely to buy in on this basis. Consideration would also need to be given to geography and the physical location of the Transition Hub, as well as to the governance and practical arrangements (ensuring that integration within a host school is not at the expense of Transition Hub autonomy).

Once a Transition Hub was in place, integrated into a virtual school, the following considerations would be important:

- It would be necessary to raise awareness of the Transition Hub among relevant stakeholders, notably fostering services, DTs and social workers.
- It would be important to get the right mix of staff, taking into account knowledge of the care system, personal qualities and cultural backgrounds.
- Staff training would need to cover key issues (see above).
- The Transition Hub would need to be overseen by someone in the virtual school working closely with social care, ensuring good alignment with the Transition Hub lead teacher and providing clarity about accountability.
- Other issues with a bearing on system fit and sustainability are mostly discussed elsewhere in this report and include the following: possibly adjusting the eligibility criteria (e.g. a wider age range, inclusion of CiN or dropping the requirement for a named school prior to entry), considering the potential for creating a 'mobile inreach' or an 'outreach-only' model, having a shared communications portal for use by all Transition Hub staff members and coordinating Transition Hubs across several local authorities to facilitate knowledge exchange and mutual support.

2. Promise of the Transition Hub

2a. What is the perceived impact of the Transition Hub on young people, foster carers and other stakeholders?

We did not analyse quantitative outcome data in the feasibility phase owing to issues with data quality and completeness.

Qualitative data indicated that the impact of the Transition Hub on young people was generally perceived to be positive. In particular, staff and stakeholders felt the Transition Hub had a positive impact on education and placement stability for some young people, as well as their education, peer relationships, well-being and mental health. However, caution is needed in interpreting the qualitative data: this is based largely on third-party perspectives, there is no counterfactual and benefits for young people varied both between individuals and during their journey on the programme. It was also noted that assessing impact needs to consider the complexity of young people's needs and that it is arguably too early in the participating young people's lives to be seeking to detect the impact.

In terms of other areas of impact, carers were reported to value the emotional support and guidance received from mentors, while DTs and social workers were helped to focus on young people's needs and benefitted in terms of reduced workload and stress. The Transition Hub was also reported to play a valuable role in enabling better joint working between services and 'joining the dots' in relation to services working with any one family.

Interpretation

Findings about intervention feasibility are generally positive, indicating that the Transition Hub potentially fills an important gap in provision. In particular, it helps to address clear barriers to young people's educational progress identified in the literature, including placement or school instability, a lack of catch-up for missed schooling and insufficient support for foster carers (e.g. Sebba and Berridge, 2019).

Also, in line with the literature, support is personalised and involves a strong emotional support element (Driscoll, 2011; Berridge, 2017). The support seemed broadly acceptable to participants, with mostly good engagement from foster carers and young people, and positive effects on education, placement stability and well-being were observed (notwithstanding individual differences, again reflected in previous research [e.g. Berridge, 2017]).

There is also clearly useful learning to help optimise the Transition Hub offer, aside from refinements to the logic model (see above). In formulating recommended changes, we took into account the fact that a number of the challenges faced were arguably due to, or compounded by, Covid-19 restrictions and it would be remiss to make changes on the basis of these exceptional circumstances. Thus, recommendations for optimising the Transition Hub offer were as follows, and the programme was refined as a result of the learning partnership and captured in the programme manual by the developer.

- First are considerations around the target group. Ineligible cases included CiN, who, since September 2021, would qualify for the virtual school (as part of their extended role to support *all* children and young people with a social worker) and, thus, in principle, the Transition Hub. The age range for the Transition Hub was extended following feedback. If the Transition Hub were to widen the target group to serve CiN,¹⁸ this would require further – potentially significant – adjustments to the logic model, with a greater focus on stability rather than transition.
- Second, strong aspects of delivery need to be consolidated. These include continuing the good work observed in terms of engaging young people and sharing lessons between Transition Hubs and staff within them about engaging young people by phone or online. The programme handbook should be kept up to date with useful adaptations and efforts made to ensure staff use it and help to develop it.
- Third, aspects of the offer that were highlighted as problematic need to be addressed. The most obvious one here concerns inreach, suggesting a need to consider the relative merits and drawbacks of mobile inreach or an outreach-only model. It may be that, in line with the Transition Hub ethos and literature, a very personalised approach to this should be adopted (i.e. the level and type of contact would be personalised to each young person, given their needs and circumstances). Another

¹⁸ CiN were not included in the Transition Hub, either in the feasibility or the pilot phase.

challenge involves the need to consider how the programme (and its benefits) can be communicated as clearly as possible to all stakeholders (especially social workers, DTs and foster carers), which would help address the challenge of poor joint working identified in the literature (e.g. Jackson, 2010). Related to this, foster carers need to be helped to understand with whom they should communicate in relation to the education of the young person in their care (i.e. the Transition Hub, virtual school or host school).

- Fourth, the resourcing of the Transition Hub needs attention in order to optimise the offer. This requires more training (targeting key staff as appropriate) on issues such as the Journey Planner (focusing particularly on its importance and practising how to complete it), the nature and functioning of the care system, the value of standardised assessments, how best to complete those assessments with young people and how to use the results to inform provision. Optimising the offer would also require securing more time from EPs, whose input support was identified as particularly valuable.
- Finally, structural and governance arrangements can be optimised to support Transition Hub delivery. This requires considering how to replicate the project lead role within a virtual school (which would be essential for any future roll-out/integration into virtual schools) and developing clear expectations and lines of accountability between the Transition Hub, virtual school and host school. The integration of the Transition Hub into virtual schools would provide an avenue for virtual schools to do more to support foster carers in the education domain, a gap identified in the literature (Drew and Banerjee, 2019).

Limitations

The feasibility phase of the evaluation had several limitations. First, some routine programme data were collected by the Transition Hubs for service delivery purposes but were not analysed due to data sharing difficulties and time resources. These data included administrative records (e.g. attendance, exclusion and placement stability) and bespoke instruments (e.g. targets and goals).

Second, there are limited data presented on the components of the model and which ones were completed by or delivered to young people. This was primarily a casualty of Covid-19 and associated lockdowns, which not only disrupted the delivery of the programme but also meant that the attention of the delivery and evaluation teams was directed towards adapting to challenging circumstances. That said, we were able to report the length of engagement, number of contacts and uptake of holiday provision.

Third, standardised measures were collected routinely by Transition Hub staff and not independently by the evaluation team. While EPs trained staff in how to minimise bias when doing this, it was not possible to assess the extent to which risk of bias materialised in this study. The fact that completion of measures is higher for those who complete the intervention in evaluations that rely on programme data leads clearly to bias (those who complete measures are more likely to have engaged and done well). We recognise the importance and value of independently collected data in evaluations, but we support (and would advocate) the use of existing programme data to evaluate intervention feasibility and early indications of promise. More should be done by funders and researchers to leverage the use of routine programme data to evaluate interventions in this field. This is in part because the value of independent data collection needs to be balanced against the data burden on participants, and in that respect, it made sense to use data routinely collected as part of service delivery, given that it mapped onto key constructs of interest. A further

consideration is that the SDQ is a core measure of the YEF¹⁹ and is included in most YEF-funded evaluations; it did not make sense – and indeed would have been unethical – to duplicate collection of the SDQ, since it was collected by Transition Hub staff as part of programme delivery (i.e. apart from the evaluation). Further, in this phase, the focus was on intervention feasibility not outcomes, so we did not propose adding outcome measures besides those already used by the Transition Hub.

A final limitation of the feasibility phase was the low number of interviews with foster carers and young people in care, possible solutions to which are identified in the next section.

Implications for the pilot phase

3a. What lessons are there for further research into the Transition Hub model?

Several challenges were identified.

- The first challenge concerned using programme data (which is routinely collected by Transition Hub staff) as evaluation data. For the reasons stated above, it did not make sense for the evaluation team to collect that data independently. However, it meant that the evaluation team had less influence over data collection. There are probably several reasons for the low rates of outcome measure completion, including Transition Hub staff feeling concerned that asking sensitive questions might impede efforts to build trusting relationships with young people, particularly at the outset. It is likely that improving rates of completion requires additional training and support for Transition Hub staff. If they are asked to help collect evaluation data using additional measures (besides those collected routinely to inform programme delivery), they will need extra support. This could take the form of honorary contracts for research staff or embedded researchers.
- Second, it was difficult to obtain interviews with foster carers and young people. Covid-19 restrictions clearly played a role here, but even outside of Covid-19 lockdowns, this remained challenging. Building trust and rapport with prospective participants would be easier if researchers could be located in a Transition Hub or school or conduct home visits.
- Third, the process for contacting foster carers and young people for primary data collection needed to change to reduce the burden on Transition Hub staff. Specifically, we needed to move away from Transition Hub staff acting on our behalf to obtain consent to participate in the evaluation from carers and young people and instead simply request that they pass on carers' contact details so that we could make initial contact.
- Fourth, a significant proportion of young people are likely to be in voluntary care (Section 20), meaning that opt-out permission from birth parents is required for contacting young people about interviews (affecting project timelines because of the need to allow a birth parent four weeks to opt their child out before the foster carer is contacted).

¹⁹ See the YEF outcomes framework and database: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/outcomes/>

Nevertheless, with adjustments to the research design to address these issues, it was deemed appropriate to proceed to a pilot outcomes evaluation, given the priority of this population, the evidence of feasibility and the perceived impact.

Pilot (pre-/post-test) phase²⁰

Research questions

The pilot outcomes phase of the evaluation had three aims:

1. To build on the feasibility phase, in particular by examining the level of need of participants on entry to the Transition Hub
2. To test whether the programme has promise in terms of the proximal outcomes, i.e. the potential to contribute to desired outcomes, in particular, young people's engagement in education and their social-emotional development (see the refined logic model in Appendix 6)
3. To inform decisions about future programme implementation and development and a next-stage evaluation

Success criteria and/or targets

The pilot phase aimed to report against the following criteria (no specific targets were set):

- The number of participants (young people) recruited by site and their characteristics
- The percentage of programme participants who consent to taking part in the research
- The completeness of the outcome assessments collected by the Transition Hub teams

In addition, we examined pre- and post-test change as an indicator of the potential promise of the programme.

²⁰ The plan for the pilot phase can be accessed on the YEF website at <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/YEF-Transition-Hub-Pilot-study-plan-FINAL.pdf>

Methods

Participant selection

This was the same as for the feasibility phase, with the exception of the wider age range in the pilot phase.

Young people and their carers were recruited to the programme by the respective organisations involved in the project, namely AfC and LBB. Participants were eligible if they were aged 11-17 years,²¹ living in the borough or local authority (or out of area but close enough for outreach visits) and either (i) entering care or foster care for the first time, or (ii) in care and experiencing a change in placement or school or (iii) a UASC.

All participants in the programme were eligible to participate in the evaluation, including both qualitative and quantitative research.

- Quantitative research: At the point of entry to the Transition Hub, the carer of each young person was given a privacy notice and asked if they agreed to their contact details being shared with the evaluation team. For those who agreed, the evaluation team sent carers an information sheet and consent form for them and the young person in their care (so that they could be research participants) and arranged either for (a) the carer and young person to complete and return it to the evaluation team or (b) a call (online or via phone) during which the evaluation team could obtain verbal informed consent from the carer and assent from the young person. The target number of young people to be recruited to the programme during the pilot phase was 40, which was met, as 42 were recruited (38 of whom signed the privacy notice).
- Qualitative research: The plan was to interview ~five young people and ~five foster carers using changes in the SDQ youth self-report total difficulties scores between baseline and follow-up to select young people with differing trajectories (increase, no change or decrease) and their carers. In the event, we contacted all participants who consented to be contacted. Despite the evaluation team's best efforts, it proved impossible to interview any young people, and we only managed to secure interviews with three foster carers (explained further in the Limitations section on pp.86-88). Consequently, we supplemented these data with interviews with Transition Hub staff and stakeholders.

Data collection

We adopted a mixed-methods approach to data collection, combining quantitative routine programme data (which includes outcomes assessments) with primary qualitative data collected by the evaluation team.

Routine programme data were obtained from the Transition Hub teams in summary form, i.e. already scored. The outcomes assessments included:

- The SDQ: This is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire measuring social-emotional development and includes five sub-scales: conduct problems, emotional symptoms,

²¹ As a result of learning about demand and need for the intervention during this feasibility phase, the Transition Hub eligibility criteria were changed to include 16- and 17-year-olds (up to Year 13).

hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour. Each sub-scale is scored out of 10, and four sub-scales (conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems) combine to produce a total difficulties score out of 40. Higher total difficulties scores indicate greater difficulties. In the pilot phase only the youth self-report (11-17 years) version was used.

- The PASS: This is a measure of young people's attitudes to self and school. The PASS has nine dimensions: 1) feelings about school, 2) perceived learning capability, 3) self-regard as a learner, 4) preparedness for learning, 5) attitudes to teachers, 6) general work ethic, 7) confidence in learning, 8) attitudes to attendance and 9) response to curriculum demands.

These two outcome assessments were also collected as part of the feasibility phase of this study.²² For more detail on these measures, see p.24.

In addition to the summary data that were obtained from the Transition Hub team, the original questionnaires completed by the young people were obtained, and the individual data items were entered into STATA (version 17). This allowed us to score and aggregate the questionnaires for the analyses (i.e. independent from the Transition Hub team).

School attendance data were obtained by the Transition Hub programme teams where it was available (these data were not independently validated). School attendance is also considered a key outcome measure because it is an indication of education engagement and stability in the young person's life, which are central to the programme's theory of change. In addition, the Transition Hub programme team captured school and foster placement moves, which we present alongside for context.

Qualitative data were collected by semi-structured interview (via telephone or video call), focusing on the following subject areas:

- Impact of the Transition Hub on young people
- Impact of the Transition Hub on foster carers
- Impact of the Transition Hub on staff
- What worked well or contributed to positive effects
- What worked less well or did not contribute to positive effects
- Adverse effects
- Other influences on outcomes besides the Transition Hub

The focus of interviews naturally varied according to participant type (see Appendix 7).

²² Some outcome measures that were included in the feasibility phase of this study were not included in the pilot evaluation, including the GASF and Journey Planner. The decision was made to focus on the SDQ (youth self-report only) and PASS in the pilot outcomes study because these measures aligned best with the intended outcomes specified in the logic model and produced reliable data across time points.

Table 12. Methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Routine programme data	Dataset shared with the evaluation team	Self-completed questionnaires (SDQ and PASS) and key programme delivery data (school attendance, school placement moves and foster placement moves)	Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses	(1) Whether outcomes improved during the intervention (i.e. between baseline and follow-up) (2a) Delivery of key aspects of the programme
Interviews	Interviews with foster carers, Transition Hub staff and other stakeholders	Foster carers (n=3), Transition Hub staff (n=6) and stakeholders (n=3)	Thematic analysis	(2b) The degree to which participants perceive the intervention to be helpful (why/why not), and what aspects of the intervention contributed to this

Analysis

Data from the pre-post measures (SDQ and PASS) were analysed descriptively using STATA version 17. Missing data were imputed for missing individual items on the SDQ, where possible (i.e. where at least three of the five sub-scale items had responses). Paired t-test, McNemar test for paired nominal data and Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used to estimate change over time and promise of the programme on these measures.

For the SDQ analysis, Bonferroni correction was used to set 0.007 as the threshold for defining statistical significance at the 5% level. Bonferroni correction is considered a conservative method to account for multiple testing (Bland and Altman, 1995) and was suitable in this context, as we conducted multiple tests on the SDQ data (examining total difficulties scores, subscale scores and impact supplement). Adjusting the alpha to 0.007 did not affect the findings.

Interviews were transcribed, organised using NVivo version 12 and analysed using thematic analysis. Unlike the feasibility phase, which focused on domain summaries (summarising the responses of participants), the analysis in the pilot phase moved this on further by exploring shared meaning in relation to participants' understanding of the impact of the Transition Hub through the development of themes. We conducted a hybrid approach using both deductive and inductive coding, using priority areas of the pilot phase of the study – including impact on young people, foster carers and Transition Hub staff, and contributors to impact – as the basis of a deductive coding framework. The evaluation team met regularly to review and agree on codes and theme generation.

As a mixed methods study, findings from both strands of analysis were considered together to inform a recommendation about the need for and value of further programme development and evaluation. Specifically, for each research question we discussed what the respective data sources were indicating and then summarised this, being clear (i) which data sources contributed to the answer (some questions are only explored using one type of data) and (ii) if different data sources suggested different answers and why this might be.

Timeline

Table 13 lays out the timeline for the pilot study.

Table 13. Timeline

Date	Activity
October 2021	Project start
December 2021	Ethics approval
October 2021 to December 2022	Delivery of the programme
October 2021 to December 2022	Quantitative (routine) data collection
June 2022 to January 2023	Qualitative data collection
January 2023 to June 2023	Data analysis and write-up
April 2023	Preliminary results shared with YEF
June 2023	Report submitted (consolidated with feasibility phase results)

Findings – quantitative findings

Participants

A total of 42 participants were recruited to the programme during the pilot phase. Table 14 outlines the number of participants with complete SDQ, PASS and school attendance data at baseline and follow-up. Four participants did not sign the privacy notice and, therefore, did not provide any demographic data, baseline outcome data or follow-up outcome data. One participant signed the privacy notice but did not provide any baseline outcome data or follow-up outcome data. This left a sample of 37 who provided some form of pilot phase data.

Table 14. Number of participants with complete data

Data complete	Total
Overall number of participants – N (%)	42 (100%)
Data on baseline SDQ – N (%)	35 (83%)
Data on follow-up SDQ – N (%)	29 (69%)
Data on baseline attendance – N (%)	24 (57%)
Data on follow-up attendance – N (%)	33 (79%)
Data on baseline PASS – N (%)	35 (85%)
Data on follow-up PASS – N (%)	22 (52%)
Any complete data – N (%)	37 (88%)

Table 15 details the demographic characteristics of the sample that provided at least some form of data (n=37). The mean age of participants was 14 years, and most participants were female (57%) and subject to Section 20 care orders (78%).

Table 15. Baseline demographic data for the complete sample

	Complete sample (n = 37)
Age – mean (SD)	14.27 (1.57)
Female – N (%)	21 (57%)
Care status – N (%)	
Section 20	29 (78%)
Interim care order	4 (11%)
Full-care order	4 (11%)
UASC – N (%)	9 (24%)
SEN support – N (%)	8 (22%) [^]

SD = Standard deviation. [^]data missing on three participants

Of the 37 participants detailed above, the majority completed the programme (n=33, 89%; Table 16). Programme completion was subjectively determined by the programme team but typically involved engagement over a period of two or more school terms, culminating in an exit/closure meeting and graduation. While the duration of the programme varied between participants, on average, participants remained part of the programme for five to six months. The duration of the programme did not vary between sites.

Table 16. Number of participants who completed, dropped out or did not engage in the programme, and duration in the programme

Status	Total	
	N	Duration in Hub mean months (range)
Completed	33	5.86 (4.7 - 6.67)
Dropped out	2	5.64 (5.23 - 6.05)
Did not engage	2	6.02 (6.02 - 6.02)

Baseline outcomes data

Baseline SDQ total difficulties scores, subscale scores and impact scores are described in Table 17. The highest levels of difficulty were evident on the hyperactivity/inattention sub-scale, followed by emotional symptoms. Females had higher levels of difficulties compared to male students, particularly in the hyperactivity/inattention and emotional symptoms sub-scales.

Table 17. Baseline SDQ total difficulties, subscale and impact scores by gender (n=35)

SDQ subscale	Female (n=19) Mean (SD)	Male (n=16) Mean (SD)	Sites combined (n=35) Mean (SD)
Total difficulties	18.42 (4.71)	13.75 (5.76)	16.29 (5.65)
Emotional symptoms	5.63 (2.03)	3.00 (2.07)	4.43 (2.42)
Conduct problems	2.74 (1.66)	2.75 (2.65)	2.74 (2.13)
Hyperactivity/inattention	6.79 (2.07)	4.88 (2.90)	5.91 (2.63)
Peer relationship problems	3.26 (2.05)	3.13 (1.67)	3.2 (1.86)
Prosocial behaviour	7.75 (1.65)	7.56 (1.97)	7.51 (1.77)
Impact [^]	2.83 (2.60)	1.5 (2.21)	2.25 (2.49)

[^]For impact subscale: female n=18; male n=14; combined n=32.

In addition to examining continuous total difficulties and subscale scores, we also categorised SDQ scores in line with the three-band solution. The three-band solution involves categorising participants into one of three categories; 'normal', 'borderline' and 'abnormal' according to cut points derived from UK population-based surveys. Table 18 provides the number of participants falling into each of these three categories at baseline. Just under a third (29%) of young people met the criteria for abnormal/high levels of difficulty in global functioning; this compares with 5% in the general population of 11- to 15-year-olds in England (Youth*in*mind, 2014). However, just under half (43%) of the sample met similar thresholds for hyperactivity/inattention difficulties, and over half (53%) reported very high levels of impact/burden because of their difficulties.

Table 18. Baseline SDQ three-band difficulty division for the sample with some complete data (n=37[^])

SDQ subscale	Normal N (%)	Borderline N (%)	Abnormal N (%)
Total difficulties	16 (46%)	9 (26%)	10 (29%)
Emotional symptoms	25 (71%)	3 (9%)	7 (20%)
Conduct problems	26 (74%)	1 (3%)	8 (23%)
Hyperactivity/inattention	15 (43%)	5 (14%)	15 (43%)
Peer relationship problems	21 (60%)	10 (29%)	4 (11%)
Prosocial behaviour	31 (89%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)
Impact	13 (41%)	2 (6%)	17 (53%)

[^]Missing data for n=2 on all subscales and n=5 on impact supplement

Baseline PASS scores and PASS percentiles can be found in Tables 19 and 20, respectively. The PASS dimensions are as follows:

- PASS1 reflects participants' feelings about school
- PASS2 reflects participants' perceived learning capability
- PASS 3 reflects participants' self-regard for themselves as a learner
- PASS4 reflects participants' perceptions of their preparedness for learning
- PASS5 reflects participants' attitudes towards teachers
- PASS6 reflects participants' general work ethic
- PASS7 reflects participants' confidence in learning
- PASS8 reflects participants' attitudes towards attendance at school
- PASS9 reflects participants' response to curriculum demands.

At baseline, students had average or lower-than-average scores on all dimensions of PASS (range 52% to 78%), putting them in the middle or lower quartiles for most dimensions (Tables 19 and 20). The lowest scores (lower quartiles) were for PASS3 (self-regard as a learner) and PASS9 (response to curriculum demands).

Table 19. Baseline PASS scores for the whole sample (n=34[^])

PASS subscale percentages	N	Mean % (range)
PASS 1 feelings about school	34	71 (34 - 100)
PASS 2 perceived learning capability	34	71 (52 - 93)
PASS 3 self-regard as a learner	34	52 (25 - 79)
PASS 4 preparedness for learning	34	73 (42 - 100)
PASS 5 attitudes towards teachers	34	78 (38 - 100)
PASS 6 work ethic	34	72 (55 - 90)
PASS 7 confidence in learning	34	60 (31 - 94)
PASS 8 attitudes towards attendance	34	65 (35 - 100)
PASS 9 response to curriculum demands	34	56 (35 - 85)

[^]PASS subscale percentages missing for one participant.

Table 20. Baseline PASS percentile scores for the whole sample (n=35)

PASS subscale percentiles	N	Median (IQR)
PASS 1 percentile	35	49.3 (67.4)
PASS 2 percentile	35	43.3 (56.1)
PASS 3 percentile	35	14.1 (31.5)
PASS 4 percentile	35	35.3 (68.2)
PASS 5 percentile	35	82.1 (53.5)
PASS 6 percentile	35	42.9 (67.7)
PASS 7 percentile	35	50 (68.6)
PASS 8 percentile	35	28.6 (54)
PASS 9 percentile	35	18.2 (41.9)

IQR = interquartile range.

Tables 21 and 22 outline students' school attendance and school exclusions in the year prior to starting the programme. At baseline, students for whom there were available data had, on average, 68% attendance at school. School exclusions ranged from 0 to 2 (mean=0.31).

Table 21. Percentage school attendance in the year prior to entering the Transition Hub by gender

Attendance	Female		Male		Whole sample	
	N	Mean % (range)	N	Mean % (range)	N	Mean % (range)
Attendance	17	71 (0 - 100)	7	62 (0 - 99)	24	68 (0 - 100)

Table 22. Number of school exclusions prior to entering the Transition Hub, by gender

Exclusions	Female		Male		Whole sample	
	N	Mean (range)	N	Mean (range)	N	Mean (range)
Exclusions	19	0.32 (0 - 2)	7	0.29 (0 - 1)	26	0.31 (0 - 2)

Evidence of promise

SDQ

A total of 29 students provided data at both pre- and post-test time points to allow for an estimate of change. These students were not significantly different in age compared to those not contributing data to this estimate; however, those without data were more likely to be female, to be subject to section 20 care orders and to demonstrate higher levels of baseline need on the SDQ total difficulties score (Table 23).

Table 23. Baseline demographics for participants with or without data at pre- and post-test

Demographics	Data at both time points (n=29)	Data at one/no time points (n=8)
Age – mean (SD)	14.10 (1.65)	14.88 (1.13)
Female – N (%)	14 (48%)	7 (88%)
Care status – N (%)		
Section 20	21 (72%)	8 (100%)
Interim care order	4 (14%)	0 (0%)
Full care order	4 (15%)	0 (0%)
UASC – N (%)	9 (31%)	0 (0%)
SEN support – N (%)	6 (21%)	2 (25%)
SDQ total difficulties score – Mean (SD)	15.97 (5.86)	17.83 (4.58) [^]

[^]n=6

Paired t-tests on SDQ total difficulties and sub-scale scores indicated no significant change over time except for hyperactivity/inattention, where there was a reduction in self-reported difficulty levels ($p < 0.007$; Table 24).

Table 24. Paired t-tests on SDQ total difficulties, subscale and impact scores (n=29)

SDQ subscale	N	Pre-intervention mean (SD)	Post- intervention mean (SD)	Mean difference (95% CIs)	Effect size [†] (95% CIs)	t-score	p-value [^] (two-tailed)
Total difficulties score	29	15.97 (5.86)	14.83 (8.08)	-1.14 (-3.62 - 1.35)	-0.19 (-0.62 - 0.23)	-0.94	0.36
Emotional symptoms	29	4.1 (3.2)	4.28 (3.06)	0.17 (-0.75 - 1.09)	0.05 (-0.23 - 0.34)	0.38	0.70
Conduct problems	29	2.66 (2.29)	2.97 (2.51)	0.31 (-0.56 - 1.19)	0.14 (-0.24 - 0.52)	0.73	0.47
Hyperactivity/ inattention	29	5.76 (2.69)	4.45 (2.9)	-1.31 (-2.14 - [-0.48])	-0.49 (-0.8 - [-0.18])	-3.25	0.003*
Peer relationship problems	29	3.45 (1.8)	3.14 (2.18)	-0.31 (-1.09 - 0.46)	-0.17 (-0.61 - 0.26)	-0.82	0.42
Prosocial behaviour	29	7.41 (1.88)	7.83 (1.93)	0.41 (-0.41 - 1.24)	0.22 (-0.22 - 0.66)	1.03	0.32
Impact	29	1.92 (2.45)	2.1 (2.55)	0.15 (-0.86 - 1.17)	0.06 (-0.35 - 0.48)	0.31	0.76

CI = Confidence intervals. [^]Significance was determined based on a Bonferroni corrected alpha level of 0.007. [†]Cohen's D.

Similarly, McNemar tests on the SDQ scores categorised into two groups, including 'abnormal or borderline' and 'normal', displayed no evidence of promising change in membership of the group over time (Table 25). In other words, there was no evidence that the programme moved students out of the 'abnormal' or 'borderline' levels of functioning – on any dimension – to within the 'normal' range or vice versa. Effect sizes have not been included in the table, as differences in percentages were considered a more useful measure to allow the reader to judge whether the effect was small/large in this particular measure/context.

Table 25. McNemar tests on the SDQ three-band difficulty division groups

SDQ subscale	N	'Abnormal or borderline' group pre-intervention n (%)	'Abnormal or borderline' group post-intervention n (%)	Difference: Post minus pre (95% CIs)	p-value [^]
Total difficulties score	29	16 (55)	12 (41)	-14% (-36% - 8%)	0.29
Emotional symptoms	29	7 (24)	10 (34)	10% (-11% - 31%)	0.45
Conduct problems	29	7 (24)	10 (34)	10% (-11% - 31%)	0.45
Hyperactivity/inattention	29	15 (51)	12 (41)	-10% (-36% - 15%)	0.55
Peer relationship problems	29	13 (44)	10 (34)	-10% (-36% - 15%)	0.55
Prosocial behaviour	29	4 (14)	4 (14)	0% (-20% - 20%)	1.0
Impact	26	13 (50)	16 (62)	12% (-12% - 35%)	0.45

[^]Significance was determined based on a Bonferroni corrected alpha level of 0.007.

Analyses restricted to those students who met the threshold for 'abnormal' levels of difficulty with functioning at baseline (n=10) also did not reveal significant change on any of the sub-scales (Table 26).

Table 26. Paired t-tests on SDQ total difficulties, subscale and impact scores restricted to students who met the threshold for 'abnormal' functioning at baseline (n=10)

SDQ subscale	Pre-intervention mean (SD)	Post-intervention mean (SD)	Mean difference (95% CIs)	Effect size [†] (95% CIs)	p-value [^]
Total difficulties	22.2 (3.77)	18.9 (9.12)	-3.3 (-9.57 - 2.97)	-0.88 (-2.54 - 0.79)	0.27
Emotional symptoms	5.9 (2.02)	5.3 (3.97)	-0.6 (-2.45 - 1.25)	-0.3 (-1.21 - 0.62)	0.48
Conduct problems	3.9 (2.47)	4 (2.4)	0.1 (-1.94 - 2.14)	0.04 (-0.79 - 0.87)	0.91
Hyperactivity/inattention	7.5 (1.84)	6 (2.21)	-1.5 (-3.47 - 0.47)	0.05 (-1.89 - 0.26)	0.12
Peer relationship problems	4.9 (1.79)	3.6 (3.06)	-1.3 (-2.69 - 0.09)	-0.73 (-1.5 - 0.05)	0.06
Prosocial behaviour	7.7 (1.77)	7.9 (1.45)	0.2 (-1.14 - 1.54)	0.11 (-0.64 - 0.87)	0.74
Impact	4.1 (2.51)	3 (2.98)	-1.1 (-2.99 - 0.79)	-0.44 (-1.19 - 0.31)	0.22

[^]Significance was determined based on a Bonferroni corrected alpha level of 0.007. [†]Cohen's D.

PASS

Paired t-tests and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests on the nine dimensions of the PASS scale indicated no significant change over time except for a percentile change on PASS 3 (self-regard as a learner; Tables 27 and 28).

Table 27. Paired t-tests on the PASS percentage subscale scores (n=20)

PASS subscale percentages	Pre-intervention mean (SD)	Post-intervention mean (SD)	Mean difference (95% CIs)	p-value (two-tailed)
PASS 1	77.13 (16.04)	73.76 (19.2)	-3.97 (-9.32 - 2.59)	0.25
PASS 2	70.5 (11.52)	70.25 (14.46)	-0.25 (-4.64 - 4.14)	0.91
PASS 3	53.55 (14.6)	59.16 (12.14)	5.62 (-0.03 - 11.26)	0.05
PASS 4	74.72 (14.68)	73.48 (17.92)	-1.24 (-7.5 - 5.02)	0.68
PASS 5	78.92 (17.56)	76.59 (20.87)	-2.33 (-9.13 - 4.47)	0.48
PASS 6	71.85 (10.61)	69.25 (10.55)	-2.6 (-7.66 - 2.46)	0.30
PASS 7	61.8 (19.49)	62.98 (18.84)	1.19 (-5.4 - 7.78)	0.71
PASS 8	70.95 (16.13)	73 (18.52)	2.05 (-3.52 - 7.62)	0.45
PASS 9	57.05 (13.17)	60 (10.64)	2.95 (-0.89 - 6.79)	0.12

Table 28. Wilcoxon signed-rank test on the PASS percentile subscale scores (n=22)

PASS subscale percentiles	z-statistic	p-value
PASS 1 percentile	0.28	0.8
PASS 2 percentile	-0.94	0.36
PASS 3 percentile	-2.08	0.04*
PASS 4 percentile	0.11	0.92
PASS 5 percentile	0.13	0.9
PASS 6 percentile	0.65	0.53
PASS 7 percentile	-0.39	0.71
PASS 8 percentile	-0.02	0.99
PASS 9 percentile	-1.64	0.10

Attendance

There was no baseline attendance data for any UASC (n=9),²³ but high attendance for this sub-group was demonstrated at post-intervention (93%; Table 29). Attendance for the remaining sample (n=21) suggests no meaningful improvement in attendance, with a slight reduction from 68% to 65% overall (Table 29). This reduction was higher for girls (Table 30).

Table 29. Mean percentage of school attendance by UASC status post-intervention

School attendance	UASC young people		Non-UASC young people		Whole sample*	
	N	Mean % (range)	N	Mean % (range)	N	Mean % (range)
Post-intervention attendance	9	93 (73 - 100)	21	65 (0 - 100)	30	73 (0 - 100)

^three additional participants not in employment, education or training (NEET)

²³ By definition they were not previously resident in the UK and therefore no school attendance data were available.

Table 30. Change in school attendance from pre- to post-intervention by gender

School attendance	Males		Females		Whole sample	
	N	Mean (range)	N	Mean (range)	N	Mean (range)
Change scores for attendance	5	-3.86 (-81.82 - 67.92)	14	-13.98 (-100 - 100)	19	-11.32 (-100 - 100)

There were significant individual differences in the sample in school and placement moves during the programme (range: 0-6) and SEND needs (20% receiving SEN support; Table 31).

Table 31. Number of school moves and foster carer moves during the programme

	Total (n = 37)
School moves – N (%)	
0	26 (70.27)
1	7 (18.92)
Missing data	4 (10.81)
Foster carer moves – N (%)	
0	22 (59.46)
1	4 (10.81)
2	0 (0)
3	3 (8.11)
4	0 (0)
5	0 (0)
6	1 (2.70)
Moved back with family	5 (13.51)
Missing data	2 (5.41)

Findings – qualitative findings

Participants

We conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with participants from a variety of perspectives. Interviews focused mainly on the impact of the Transition Hub on young people's outcomes and contributors to impact, both from the Transition Hub offer and other factors. Despite the extensive efforts of the evaluation team, no young people were interviewed in the pilot phase. The sample breaks down as follows:

- Three foster carers
- Five Transition Hub staff
 - Two lead teachers
 - One senior learning mentor
 - Two EPs
- One DT
- Two virtual school heads and one director of education
- One programme developer

Findings

Foster carer perceptions of the impact of the Transition Hub

The following section presents the perceptions of the three foster carer participants about ways in which the Transition Hub impacted on themselves and the young people in their care, as well as aspects of the Transition Hub support that contributed to this. Two themes were developed from the analysis of the foster carer interviews, showing two key aspects of the way in which the Transition Hub worked that contributed to positive change or outcomes for young people and foster carers.

Importance of two-way communication between the foster carer and the learning mentor

Foster carers spoke about the importance of communication, primarily between themselves and the learning mentor working with the young person in their care. This communication was seen by foster carers as supporting them in their role of caring for the young person. Foster carers liked to be kept aware of what the young person was doing in terms of activities and, further, in relation to their progress, including academically and in social relationships and engagement with school. The three foster carers interviewed all spoke about how useful it was to be updated regularly by the learning mentor about what the young people had been doing. This communication was viewed by foster carers as supportive of them in carrying out their role and in developing and maintaining their relationship with the young person. Further, foster carers benefited from this supportive communication when the information was developed from a good relationship between the young person and the learning mentor (the quality of the relationship between the young person and the learning mentor and the perceived impact of this are discussed in further detail below):

‘So it’s useful just to get that input from her in terms of how she thinks he’s feeling or why he’s feeling that way to feed that bit to me to get a more informed view in terms of why things were changing or what the challenges were that he was facing that were difficult for me to explore with him in terms of our relationship’. [Foster carer 1]

‘Although [learning mentor], as I say, would always...I was always included; I was always updated. Every week, [learning mentor] would update all of us, virtual school, myself and the social worker, as to what they had done, how they’ve done it and what they were going to be doing next’. [Foster carer 2]

‘Yes, it is useful...just to see what [young person] is thinking about her week, how was the week...It helps me to see how [young person] is here at home, what is she thinking because she speaks with [learning mentor]...It also, kind of, helps me as a foster carer to improve things’. [Foster carer 3]

Further, foster carers noted the importance of their own communication with the learning mentors about any issues or challenges that the young person might be experiencing at home that could be affecting how they felt and behaved at school. Two-way communication was seen as key in both supporting the foster carer in their role and providing vital information to the learning mentor to ensure that the young person received the greatest benefit from their work with the learning mentor and the Transition Hub:

‘And I was sharing with her as well feedback in terms of how the placement was going because that would have an impact. That was useful information for her to know in terms of working with [young person] on that on that basis. That she knew if we were having challenges or the things he was responding to. So there was two-way communication, and I think that’s useful and really important for you to get the benefit out of this type of work, I think, for it not to be done. As a foster carer...I know lots of professionals as well, but as a foster carer, it’s useful for me to know what’s going on and for me to work with people delivering the programme, to try to support them in terms of maximising the work that they were doing as well’. [Foster carer 1]

Quality of the relationship between the learning mentor and the young person

The three foster carers who were interviewed identified a set of features of the relationships developed by the learning mentors with the young people they were working with. Further, foster carers perceived a link between the characteristics of these relationships and a range of positive impacts on young people. For example, one foster carer valued the peer-like relationship that the learning mentor had built with the young person, which the foster carer recognised as being qualitatively different to that of the foster carer as being more like a friend supporting them. This foster carer saw the benefit in the development of that friendly relationship as having enabled stability for the young person through a period of change:

‘It’s difficult to measure these things, but I think just in terms of that kind of social relationship that [learning mentor] had developed with [young person] through those weekly sessions and beyond, a time of change. I think that’s got to be helpful, and that’s got to create some stability and help the young person manage the change. It’s difficult, I guess, for me really to identify to what extent because you don’t know if that intervention hadn’t been there, how he wouldn’t have handled that change. But I guess the way I see it is that that’s got to be helpful by someone who can have a friendly, adult relationship. A friendly adult having a relationship with a child who’s had some change in their life. Creating just a bit of stability for them is going to be useful. I think that’s probably the main thing I would say’. [Foster carer 1]

Another foster carer further attributed the quality of the relationship that the learning mentor developed with the young person as supporting change for the young person in their care in terms of increasing their confidence and self-esteem. In this example, the foster carer observed the learning mentor showing a genuine interest in the young person by supporting the young person in preparing for Prom, which the foster carer described as going above and beyond the immediate remit of the work of the Transition Hub.

‘Well, for...for [young person], you know, she always looked forward to [learning mentor] coming, which was always quite interesting because you think, well, you know, it's more work. She was doing this work after school, but she looked forward to [learning mentor] coming. And [learning mentor] was interested in [young person]; it wasn't just all about the...the work. She, sort of, really nurtured and showed an interest and built up, as I say, her confidence, her self-esteem’. [Foster carer 2]

Finally, the third foster carer observed the learning mentor working with the person in their care as being calm and developing a more informal relationship compared to other professionals working with the young person. The foster carer perceived the young person's relationship as being positive, with her looking forward to her meetings, as well as having a positive effect on her emotional well-being.

‘She's [young person] encouraged. She's encouraged to engage in activities. She's encouraged and talked to. At least there's someone she knows because the relationship between [young person] and [learning mentor] is very, very good, so every time she visits her, that's helpful for [young person] because there's such a very nice relationship between them. [Young person] always says, “I love [learning mentor]...so it's a close person to her, someone she trusts, visiting her at school once a week. That's going to bring her mood up as well, so it's helpful emotionally, I guess’. [Foster carer 3]

Staff and stakeholder perceptions of impact

This section presents themes generated from the analysis of Transition Hub staff and stakeholder interviews. Staff and stakeholders identified a range of impacts of the Transition Hub on young people, foster carers and staff. These are presented here with reference to how staff and stakeholders perceived aspects of the Transition Hub contributed to these impacts.

Relationship between the learning mentor and the young person

Stakeholders recognised the relationship between Transition Hub staff (and, in particular, the learning mentor) and the young person as key in delivering key elements of the Transition Hub and facilitating a range of impacts on young people in the Transition Hub. Relationships were perceived as being most effective when they were characterised by trust, which enabled clear and honest communication with young people, which, in the case of the following example, meant that learning mentors were able to effectively communicate challenging information and achieve and/or maintain stability for that young person:

‘Then, that's when we know, actually, we are having a real impact. So, yeah, I think the relationship building is really key in that young people can actually have someone that they trust...and it really supports their other key relationships as well. And that's where the whole stability part, I think, comes in. Once we have a really good relationship with that young person, and they trust us, when we talk about decisions that the social worker is making that maybe they don't like, hearing it from us, it's a lot easier. The same with the school, the same with the foster carer’. [Hub staff 3]

Several factors were perceived by participants as supporting the development of the relationship between learning mentors and young people. One factor was the mentor's personality, with various positive characteristics described. Another factor was Transition Hub staff having had relatable life experiences (e.g. growing up in a rough estate, being excluded from school, attending a PRU or having family members in prison), which was seen as enabling understanding and supporting relationship building. Then there was the way in which the mentor role involved being very reactive, responsive or person-centred; there was a strong sense of their activity being directed by the young person's needs and voice, as they had no pre-set agenda. It also helped that the mentor was regarded as not being part of the system in the sense that they were not a teacher or a social worker and not based in school, which meant that they could work differently, putting the young person's needs at the centre of their work. Critically, mentors were seen as having time to do things, unlike other professionals (especially teachers and social workers); they were able to do what these professionals wanted but did not have time to do. Consistency was also seen as an important element of the role of the learning mentor in building and maintaining relationships with young people, even when young people may be hard to get hold of:

'It's...it's not always plain sailing. Like if you get them, they...they can still revert back and just not talk to you for the next week. But it's about, again, consistency, consistency. And "We're still here. Hi. I'm going to keep annoying you." Or "Here...here's a motivational quote." Like in different ways...'. [Hub staff 1]

Staff and stakeholders perceived some young people as developing a level of trust with Transition Hub staff that they were unable to achieve with other professionals whom they worked with, including social workers. The following example shows how, in a crisis, a young person's trust in their learning mentor enabled them to feel that they could reach out to them for support when they felt that they had nowhere else to turn, preventing placement change and potential involvement in crime, violence and drug use:

'Before we intervened and...and...and reconciled, the young person was going missing, so there was a lot of absconding from him, and he would disappear and stuff like that. And that's what happens when he feels like you can't trust the social worker or social services... There was a specific occasion where he did go missing, and I'm the only person he reached out to to come and pick him up, and he wanted to return, and because he could trust me, he said. And then, I explained to him why these things were happening with the social workers, and he was happy to deal with the social worker. But if these things...if these reconciliations of us intervening...if the Transition Hub wasn't there, the young person would've absconded and possibly not come back. The young person would've absconded and been groomed into maybe going up to county lines or selling drugs and things like that. But he voluntarily called and said, "Come pick me up; I'm ready to come back", you know, and that was from us, that was from the Transition Hub, and I don't think that would've happened'. [Hub staff 2]

For some interview participants, the trusting and meaningful relationship that Transition Hub staff developed with young people was crucial in ensuring positive change in terms of mental health and emotional regulation. This level of support and feeling that someone cared for them was beneficial to young people, with the mentor relationship seen as being 'healing' for some:

'She speaks incredibly highly of the outreach learning mentor...how much she actually misses that key person in her life and how useful the equine therapy and just those sessions...those one-to-one sessions every week with that person really made a difference for her in terms of, as I said, feeling

contained. So, she felt that her mood was heightened; she felt that there was less self-harming, actually, so we were able to track that in some ways'. [Hub staff 4]

Further gains for young people that were attributed to the support provided by Transition Hub staff included improved mental health, increased interest in subject areas being taught, and stronger social skills, emotional regulation and identity. Again, it was clear that the relationship between the learning mentor and the young person and, additionally, the extent of the training and experience of the learning mentor were key in the extent to which these gains could be achieved:

'I think, depending on who the hub staff member is, how much, kind of, training, planning they've done, you know, how new they are, etc., etc., they can deliver really helpful interventions, whether it's helping a young person explore their identity or developing their emotional regulation skills. But I will say I don't think that that's consistent; I think some staff members maybe don't do as much as...maybe they should, but yeah, I think that's another kind of real positive impact'. [Hub staff 5]

As young people got older, the Transition Hub helped get them into or keep them involved in education, employment or training. In one instance, a learning mentor was able to use the work and relationship that they had developed with a young person as a foundation for building their feelings of competence as a new mother and providing them with much-needed support at a critical time:

'She was like, "I was meant to have my exams next week." She goes, "I still want to do them though. I want to show them that, you know, I am...I am capable. I'm really going to try. A lot...obviously, I don't know everything yet, but I'm really going to try". And she was...I've just never seen her so motivated and...devoted and...yeah. So, that...it was an extreme case, sort of thing, but I think it showed from the work that we did before, as well, she...was able to take on some strategies, and manage herself a bit better and be able to communicate and work with professionals'. [Hub staff 1]

The development of the relationship described above was also attributed to some change in the learning mentors themselves. By really getting to know the young person and understanding their goals and needs, learning mentors felt that they were able to truly advocate for them. For one learning mentor, building a trusting relationship with the young people they supported and listening to what could happen to them if they did not receive the support and care they needed gave them the impetus to speak up and communicate more in inter-agency meetings:

'I think I'd say the biggest change in my practice, although it's a different setting, so it's a...it's a little bit different...But it's the...the speaking up in multi-agency meetings and the sharing of that information weekly...I think that where we have children that are so vulnerable, and we don't know where their lives are going to end up, and...you know? Even as a...in the...in a school, when we think about safeguarding, we do often think, sort of, a worst-case scenario. But I think, seeing these children, working with them, building a relationship with them, hearing the situations that they are putting themselves in, as much as you don't like to think it...I do have a worst-case scenario a lot more at the forefront of my mind. And that...really helps me when it comes to communication.' [Hub staff 3]

Key connecting role of the Transition Hub

Another key aspect of the work of the Transition Hub perceived by participants as contributing to impact was that of the pivotal role of the Transition Hub and the work in liaising with and connecting with key

stakeholders, including young people, DTs, subject teachers, foster carers and social workers. One of the main impacts of this connecting role was the learning mentors' support of the young people and foster carers in their engagement with services. In some cases, this involved signposting and connecting the family with relevant services. Specifically, mentors would sometimes identify other support or even goods that the young person or foster carer needed and either access it for them or advocate on their behalf. This included obtaining services for UASC, such as EASL, a doctor or a therapist. The mentor might also encourage and provide support for the young person's take-up of provision, such as enrichment activities. They might also help improve a young person's or foster carer's relationships with other professionals. Part of this was helping to change other professionals' way of working with the young person so that it was more supportive and person-centred (further facilitated by the in-depth knowledge of the young person attained through the development of the relationship described above). The mentor's role as a connector or coordinator of, or link between, different services and the family, building a network around the young person, has emerged over time and was generally viewed by participants as an important aspect of the role:

'It wasn't outlined in the job description at the beginning, but you realise that we are the...the people that sort of...the in-between, and just to make sure we're consistent for all parties. And I think the social worker appreciated it because she realised she couldn't be there, you know, to support this young person. The foster carer needed a bit of a break. But in a sense, I don't think that was fully right in the way that it was done, but...yeah...It's just about, sort of, connecting those dots and letting them know that there is still a system behind them...And if we can be the friendlier side of it, to say, "Look, don't worry, you know? We're still here." Why not?' [Hub staff 1]

Further, where young people had previously or were currently experiencing negative relationships with professionals, the learning mentor's role in both relating to and advocating for the young person was seen as facilitating liaison with those professionals that the young person needed to work with, thereby supporting more positive interactions and ensuring that the needs of the young person were heard:

'So, I think one thing is the relationships that the hub staff have been able to build with the young people. And, you know, given that these are young people in care who have had difficult, kind of, life experiences, difficult relationships, that is, you know, one of the most healing things that you can do. And I think that, yeah, the way that they're able to relate to the young people, the way that they're able to then advocate for those young people in spaces where they might be viewed negatively, you know, they're always the, kind of, positive voice for that...young person in the school or...and I think also linking together professionals is often the Hub staff that are, you know, saying, "Social worker, where are you? Why aren't you at this meeting?" or informing the school, so, kind of, acting as that, sort of, liaison person'. [Hub staff 5]

Additionally, participants perceived the Transition Hub's role in liaising with schools as having supported young people's engagement with school (the majority achieved stability in their school placements and stayed in school). This included promoting school attendance, for instance, by helping to prevent exclusion through advocating for young people in multidisciplinary meetings. It also helped young people to attend lessons during the school day when they were in school, including those who were displaying challenging behaviour or were vulnerable to grooming and county lines. As a result, engagement in class was perceived by participants as better for some young people who attended the Transition Hub. The liaison work of Transition Hub staff also supported school placement stability by helping to prevent permanent exclusions:

‘I think, in terms of attendance, there's obviously attendance to school, like attending each day, obviously, but then there's attendance to lessons, and then there's also engagement in lessons, you know; you can sit there and not do anything. So, I think that often, there's some, kind of, more subtle improvements that don't necessarily show up on a specific...data if that makes sense? I definitely think that there's a couple of young people who would've been excluded a lot more times if...that's not to say they haven't been excluded, but, you know, had fixed-term exclusions. But I've definitely been in meetings where we've been able to prevent exclusion or prevent permanent exclusion’. [Hub staff 5]

Further, a DT recalled how a young person's confidence was increased through both pre-teaching and in-school support provided by Transition Hub staff. Through liaison work by the learning mentor with subject teachers and the provision of pre-teaching, the young person's confidence was increased to enable him to attend lessons that he previously felt unable to attend:

‘I think it was attainment because he was struggling with his learning because before he went in, he'd missed a lot of school with his absences and missing episodes and things, so the tutor did a really good job of pre-teaching with him, building up his confidence to go into lessons, and then was supporting him to go into those lessons as well, so would walk him up there so he knew where to go and all those kinds of things, which really helped get him back into those subjects; so, particularly English and science that he was struggling with. Science, in particular, he was absolutely refusing to go into that lesson, and so she did the pre-teaching with him and liaising with the teacher, and then actually got him back into those lessons, which was really, really good. It was just building up his confidence, so he felt able to go in, so it was excellent’. [Stakeholder 3]

In addition, this connecting role of the Transition Hub provided Hub staff with the opportunity to be involved in multidisciplinary work, giving them a greater passion for social care and a greater desire to help young people who had, for example, experienced trauma. Further, one member of staff reflected that their experience of this role at the Transition Hub had provided them space to develop their professional role and practice by testing out ideas to determine what worked most effectively in supporting young people through their liaison with stakeholders:

‘I definitely think, when I started in the Hub compared to now, I've...I think it's all around understanding what knowledge each person has, what perspective each person has, the personalities, the relationships and what works. So, I...I think it's definitely been a bit of a, kind of, trial-and-error process...’. [Hub staff 5]

Availability of and involvement in the Transition Hub is positive

In some cases, staff and stakeholders spoke about a general sense of the Transition Hub being a positive intervention when describing observations and experiences of the impacts of the Transition Hub. Stakeholders identified that support from the Transition Hub helped young people to make progress in academic subjects, especially where they were struggling. This included Maths and, especially for UASC, English. For example, as one member of Transition Hub staff reflected, Hub staff are able to support UASC to make significant gains in their learning of English, in part due to their enthusiasm to settle into school:

‘Oh, my goodness, so much. It's been amazing to watch. So, I mean, from...if we look at maybe our cohort, they have tended to be...just in the experience of working at The Hub, very hard-working, engaged, very keen to learn English. They want to settle well in their education setting and their

placement. And we've been able to really focus on their language acquisition and have seen great progress there'. [Hub staff 3]

Further, participants were aware that it was hard to measure the impact of the Transition Hub on attendance because there were no previous data for UASC, and some other young people had good prior attendance, meaning that for them, improved attendance was not one of the target outcomes for the programme.

Stakeholders spoke about the impact of their involvement in and with the Transition Hub. Staff involved in delivering Transition Hub support or supporting its delivery reported various impacts of the model on their own thinking and practice in relation to working with young people in care. One participant reported that through gaining experience and improved knowledge of working with young people in care, their pedagogy had changed. Specifically, if they were to teach in a mainstream setting again, their approach would be more differentiated according to students' needs:

'So yeah, that's changed my pedagogy completely, my delivery. You know, not just delivering a generic lesson, but, you know, making it more understandable for UASC...and...and preparing maybe a specific way of delivering this session for the UASC students, for students who are SEN, like the children of EHCP [Education, Health and Care Plan],...even...even children who are looked after. Just, you know, I think it would allow me to look at who's in my class, and whoever's in my class and their background would inform my planning. Whereas before, I believe, I would just plan a general lesson if I'm teaching'. [Hub staff 2]

Additionally, a senior educationalist commented that through the work of the Transition Hub, they had gained a greater awareness of what outreach they could be offering more generally across their virtual school and were developing plans to implement aspects of this work:

'I think that it's helped us understand what our outreach could be doing across the virtual school, and one of the things I want to do...I mean, we're only month one of the new phase, but what I'd like to be doing is any of our outreach staff to be trained up in some of the principles of the Transition Hub and for that to become a, sort of, learning hub, if you like, for the rest of the school. Almost like our own mini "what works"'. [Stakeholder 2]

Transition Hub sowing the seeds for longer-term impact

Staff and stakeholders spoke not only about the impact that they observed during the time that the Transition Hub worked directly with young people but also about impact that may start to develop while young people are supported by the Transition Hub but which may not be observable until after Transition Hub support has ended. It was also acknowledged that, owing to the lack of a counterfactual in the form of a comparison group, it is not possible to know what would have happened to young people and their foster carers in the absence of Transition Hub support. Further, it was noted that some effects as a result of the Transition Hub provision might only be evident after six months (e.g. whether young people are in education, employment or training and if they are settled in semi-independent accommodation and have

developed positive relationships with professionals) and that it would be interesting to see longer-term effects (even up to five years).²⁴ For example:

‘And I feel like that stems from that initial work that we've done here at the Transition Hub, and we're able to see that...that now. You know, you might not always be able to see it straight away or even within the six months that you're doing that work, but outside of that six months, you could see the seeds that we planted are starting to blossom’. [Hub staff 2]

One senior educationalist reflected that young people’s academic progress during or soon after receipt of support from the Transition Hub might seem less than expected. However, it was suggested that given young people’s educational history and the relatively short timescale of the Transition Hub, success should be viewed less in terms of attainment and more in terms of continued engagement in education and post-16. Attainment should, therefore, be viewed as a longer-term impact of engagement for young people receiving support from the Transition Hub:

‘So, as [colleague] said, I think the, kind of, success of it is not around educational attainment, perhaps, in terms of raw numbers but, perhaps, around their engagement in education and then post-16...It’s not that we shouldn’t be ambitious for our children; of course we should, but yeah, I think it’s just bearing in mind these are some of our most complex children again’. [Stakeholder 4]

Summary

The above sections present how foster carers, staff and stakeholders perceived Transition Hub support and elements of Transition Hub support as contributing to impact for young people, foster carers and Transition Hub staff. Key findings include:

- It is clear that foster carers, staff and stakeholders view the relationship between the learning mentor and the young person as key to a range of impacts for the young person.
- Foster carers were able to recognise particular learning mentor characteristics (e.g. being informal [not strict], peer-like and interested) as being important in ensuring a relationship that could support positive change.
- Staff and stakeholders saw a positive, effective relationship between the young person and the learning mentor as being characterised by trust and central to supporting the young person through the work of the Hub.
- Foster carers recognised the support and help provided through their two-way communication with the learning mentors.
- Staff and stakeholders further recognised the importance of the connecting role with foster carers and also in terms of liaison with schools and social workers, which was viewed by stakeholders as supportive to both young people and foster carers.

²⁴ While for some of the earlier participants in the cohort a six-month period would have elapsed since they left the Hub programme but still during the evaluation period, Hub staff and stakeholders would not necessarily be in contact with those young people or, therefore, have insight into post-intervention changes.

Conclusion

Table 32. Summary of pilot phase findings

Research question	Finding
<p>1. Building on the feasibility phase, is there further learning about the needs of young people at the point of entry to the Transition Hub?</p>	<p>Although young people in the Transition Hub in the feasibility phase were deemed to need the programme, quantitative data in the pilot phase indicated a lower level of social-emotional need than in the general population of children looked after. This may reflect the fact that entry to the Transition Hub is based on young people's status of being in transition (moving home/placement or school) rather than their level of social-emotional difficulties.</p>
<p>2. How promising is the Transition Hub in terms of impact, with particular attention to:</p> <p>(a) Potential to contribute to desired outcomes for young people</p> <p>(b) Other intended or unintended effects</p> <p>(c) Aspects of the Transition Hub perceived to contribute to desired outcomes</p> <p>(d) Aspects of the Transition Hub perceived to not contribute to desired outcomes</p>	<p>(a) Using quantitative measures, there was little evidence of promising change in educational engagement (measured by the PASS and school attendance) and social-emotional development (measured by the SDQ). Where there was a positive change (PASS learner self-regard and SDQ hyperactivity/inattention), it could reflect the Transition Hub's focus on supporting young people with confidence in learning and emotional regulation, respectively.</p> <p>Care is needed in interpreting these data for several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of young people were 'normal' or 'borderline' on the SDQ at baseline, reducing the opportunity to improve. • Meaningful individual/sub-group changes (positive and negative) may be masked by average scores (suggesting the value of exploring, in the future, whether the programme could be more effectively tailored or targeted to particular young people). • Stable profiles in social-emotional development are most common among young people entering care, so individual improvements might be consequential. • There is no counterfactual, so no negative change may be a good outcome. <p>The suggestion of valuable individual-level changes (i.e. improvements) is supported by findings from the qualitative analysis. Participants reported that Transition Hub support helped young people with education, placement stability, relationships with professionals and peers, and social-emotional development. Other influences on young people, besides the Transition Hub, worked both to contribute to and impede positive change.</p> <p>(b) The qualitative data indicated a range of further positive effects of the Transition Hub. For carers, this included feeling supported in managing young people's behaviour and helping to stop placement breakdown. Staff and stakeholders reported positive changes in their practice involvement with the Transition Hub.</p> <p>The qualitative research also explored adverse effects. There were no reports of direct adverse effects of the Transition Hub on young people. Reported indirect adverse effects included, first, social workers and DTs taking a step back owing to Transition Hub support and, second, the added complexity of adding another agency into the mix of services working with foster families.</p> <p>(c) Various aspects of Transition Hub support were identified as working well and contributing to the positive changes observed. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning mentor developing a trusting relationship with the young person (e.g. helping to improve confidence with school subjects) and having two-way communication with the foster carer • The connecting role of the Transition Hub in liaising with all stakeholders and organisations supporting young people • Inreach/pre-teaching (especially for UASC and young people not engaged in education or exhibiting emotional avoidance) • The emphasis on providing young people with consistency and stability

	<p>(d) Aspects of the Transition Hub that worked less well and didn't obviously contribute to any positive change included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inreach (impractical for some young people and forced a double transition for others) • The timing of some elements, notably assessments and the ending of Transition Hub support • The amount and timing of mentor support for foster carers • Governance arrangements.
<p>3. What lessons are there for further research into the Transition Hub model?</p>	<p>The qualitative data indicate that the Transition Hub created improvements for young people in a range of outcomes, but these were not captured in the quantitative data (the SDQ, the PASS and school attendance). Moreover, many young people did not have a high level of needs on the SDQ at baseline. Together, these suggest that neither of the quantitative measures alone is ideal for detecting the impact of the Transition Hub.</p> <p>Alternative and, arguably, more personalised quantitative approaches are needed to capture young people's progress, since average scores hide considerable variations in outcomes. The qualitative data suggest that young people may benefit from the Transition Hub to varying degrees depending on their needs and circumstances. Rather than progressing to a more rigorous impact evaluation at this stage, we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the potential to integrate the Transition Hub into the virtual school in the two existing sites • Considering lessons from this evaluation about the target group (i.e. reaching the right group of young people) and delivery (i.e. addressing key barriers) • Exploring demand for the programme in other virtual schools and delivering the Transition Hub in two new sites (to be determined), considering learning to date • Exploring suitable outcome measures

Evaluator judgement of intervention and evaluation feasibility

Intervention feasibility was mainly addressed in the feasibility phase of the study (see earlier in this report). It is worth adding that in the pilot phase, the revised criteria were largely met for programme recruitment (i.e. 42 young people accepted a place on the programme, exceeding the target of 40).

Regarding evaluation feasibility, two significant challenges that need addressing in future research on the Transition Hub presented themselves. One challenge concerned the low level of recruitment for the primary qualitative research, despite targeted efforts to address this. A future solution could involve having members of the team located in situ and able to conduct interviews in the Transition Hub, school or families' homes. Nevertheless, as others have found, undertaking primary research with vulnerable young people in care and their foster carers is challenging, and addressing the issue bears further reflection and consultation with foster carers and young people. While this happened to some degree in this project, Covid-19 lockdown restrictions prevented us from undertaking the full extent of the consultation we initially planned (see the Limitations section below, pp.86-88).

The other main evaluation challenge concerned the incomplete outcome data, which impacted the analyses we were able to conduct to assess promise or change over time. Outcome data were incomplete for a variety of reasons, including the privacy notice not being signed, young people dropping out of the programme and those in the programme not completing measures. To address this in future, we identified the potential to exploit routinely collected SDQ teacher- and carer-reported data that virtual schools/local authorities are required to gather as part of their regular measurement of the social-emotional development of children looked after. Further, and in line with conclusions from the feasibility phase, Transition Hub staff could be

more closely supported by the evaluation team to incorporate evaluation measures into routine data collection, whether through training, honorary contracts (for researchers) or some kind of embedded/researcher-in-residence arrangement.

Finally, it is likely that case note analyses of programme records on individual young people attending the Transition Hubs would have provided a more detailed understanding of programme impact at an individual level; ultimately, this was not possible within the resources of the evaluation.

Interpretation

1. Promise of the Transition Hub

1a. Does the Transition Hub show promise in terms of its potential to contribute to desired outcomes, notably young people's engagement in education and their social-emotional development?

Findings about the impact on young people are, overall, quite complex.

In relation to education engagement, no meaningful improvement in attendance was demonstrated for the sample overall, and female participants' attendance decreased. School attendance for UASC was high post-intervention, but there was no baseline data for this group. In the context of wider evidence on educational absence for social care populations,²⁵ stability in attendance may point to the beneficial impact of the Transition Hub for these young people, although this is speculative at this stage, given that the sample group appears to be somewhat different to the wider children looked after population in respect of their (lower) level of social-emotional difficulties at entry into the Transition Hub.

There was no evidence of promising pre-post change on eight out of nine PASS factors, the exception being PASS 3 (learning self-regard). Self-regard as a learner is also the dimension with the lowest scores in national samples and one that is stable over time, where this has been measured longitudinally (GLA, 2016). In that context, an improvement for the Transition Hub sample over the six-month period may suggest promise in elevating young people's self-esteem and learning confidence.

Regarding social-emotional development, there was no evidence of promising pre-post change on the SDQ total difficulties score or on four out of five SDQ subscales, the exception being hyperactivity. There was no evidence of significant change in categories of need on the SDQ and no change for a subgroup of young people with high or very high social-emotional needs according to SDQ total difficulties.

Where there was positive change over time (the PASS learner self-regard and SDQ hyperactivity/inattention), it could reflect the Transition Hub's focus on supporting young people with emotional regulation and confidence in learning, respectively.

While there was little evidence of encouraging change in educational engagement and social-emotional development on the measures adopted, the interpretation of this should take several things into account.

- First, most young people were already within the normal to borderline range on the SDQ subscales at baseline (with the exception of hyperactivity/inattention), which reduces the opportunity for

²⁵ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2021>

improvement. This arguably reflects the fact that eligibility for the Transition Hub is based on a current transition experience (moving home, placement or school) rather than current levels of social-emotional or educational difficulty. This group appear to be somewhat different to children looked after populations in the literature (e.g. McMillen et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Hiller et al., 2023), with fewer than expected meeting clinically relevant levels, i.e. having scores associated with thresholds for a mental health disorder. In similar national samples, approximately two-thirds meet thresholds for clinical relevance on the SDQ (significantly higher than in our sample).

- Second, meaningful individual change – both positive (improvements) and negative – may be masked by average group scores; the programme likely worked differently for different young people. This is supported by findings from the qualitative analysis. Participants reported that Transition Hub support helped young people with their education, including engagement in school and lessons, progress in academic subjects and remaining in education, employment or training longer-term. Transition Hub support was also credited with supporting stability in foster placements, preventing problems associated with placement breakdown (e.g. crime, violence or drug use), improving young people’s relationships with professionals and peers, and increasing young people’s mental health, confidence, self-esteem, social skills, emotional regulation and identity.
- Third, stable profiles in social-emotional development (i.e. young people who are either resilient or experience chronic difficulties over time) are most common among young people entering care, while changing profiles (i.e. either recovering from difficulties or showing delayed onset) are less common (e.g. Hiller et al., 2023). Thus, the individual improvements noted in this outcome study might be considered consequential of the impact of the programme on specific young people, despite the fact that change was not demonstrated at the group level.
- Fourth, there is no counterfactual, and a transition is likely to be different for every young person; depending on the transition trajectory, it is possible that no negative change is a good outcome (i.e. for some young people, the Transition Hub support may have flattened the dip).
- Finally, other influences on young people’s outcomes are taking place besides the Transition Hub (working both to contribute to and impede positive effects). These included the foster carer and the young person’s relationship with them, the young person’s school, other services working with the young person and the young person themselves (e.g. attitudes, actions and relationships).

1b. Does the Transition Hub show signs of having other intended or unintended effects?

Participants observed other effects of the Transition Hub. For foster carers, these included feeling supported in managing young people’s behaviour and helping to stop placement breakdown. Staff and stakeholders reported how they had benefitted from their involvement with the Transition Hub. This included a changed approach to pedagogy, being more vocal in multi-agency meetings, greater involvement in multi-disciplinary work, greater passion for working with young people and being more professional (including having a stronger understanding of evidence on what works).

The study did not gather formal reports of adverse events, but interview data do not suggest any direct negative effects of the Transition Hub on young people. However, indirect adverse effects of Transition Hub support were identified, notably, social workers and DTs taking a back step owing to Transition Hub support – according to Transition Hub staff – and the added complexity of bringing another agency into the mix of services working with foster families.

1c. Which aspects of the Transition Hub offer worked well and/or were perceived to contribute to desired outcomes?

Various aspects of Transition Hub support were identified as working well and, in some cases, at least contributing to the positive effects observed. At the core of this is the role of the learning mentor and their relationship with the young person and foster carer. This could help improve the young person's relationship with their foster carer, their confidence and enjoyment around school subjects and their – and their foster carer's – engagement with other services.

Extracurricular activities helped build the relationship between the young person and their mentor and helped them make friends, broaden their horizons and increase their aspirations. The inreach element was particularly helpful to UASC (for pre-teaching in English) and young people not engaged in education or exhibiting emotional avoidance. The preventive approach of the Transition Hub and its emphasis on providing young people with consistency and stability were also cited as contributing to positive outcomes.

1d. Which aspects of the Transition Hub offer worked less well and/or were perceived not to contribute to desired outcomes?

Participants identified aspects of the Transition Hub model that worked less well and didn't obviously contribute to any positive effect observed. The inreach element was deemed impractical for some young people because they were placed too far away, and its effect of forcing some young people to go through a double transition was regarded as contrary to the aim of the Transition Hub of promoting stability.

The timing of some elements, notably assessments and the ending of Transition Hub support, was regarded as insufficiently flexible, and there were also delays in obtaining the required support (CAMHS and EP) for some young people. Concerns were raised in two cases about the amount and timing of mentor support for foster carers, and governance arrangements were sometimes deemed as impeding effective service delivery.

Limitations

The pilot phase of the evaluation had several limitations. First, as with the feasibility phase, complete outcome assessments were not collected by the Transition Hub team for all young people. There was some form of quantitative outcome data on most young people (88%) across baseline and follow-up, although rates varied across the measures and at different time points (individually, the levels of baseline and follow-up data for the SDQ, PASS and attendance were lower than this). Further, owing to lower follow-up responses, there were only complete data (baseline and follow-up) for 69% of the sample for the SDQ and 52% of the sample for the PASS. This impacted the analyses we were able to conduct to assess promise or change over time.

Second, while the majority of participants agreed to the privacy notice, which allowed the Transition Hubs to share individual- or item-level data with the evaluation team for validation and analysis, the number of programme participants who consented to take part in the primary research interviews was very low (three foster carers and zero young people). In response to feedback from the Transition Hubs in the feasibility phase, the evaluation team took a more direct role in contacting foster carers in the pilot phase, working hard to address recruitment challenges through a combination of being persistent, liaising closely with the project lead and adapting the process for contacting and recruiting participants for interview. Unfortunately, these efforts bore little fruit. High social worker workload and turnover were a factor here, as were delays

in getting responses from them, which affected gaining birth parent agreement for Section 20 young people. Further, changes in placement and some young people's placement in supported living rather than foster care compounded challenges with recruitment.

Third, there was no counterfactual, making it hard to interpret outcome trajectories. The study was also not powered to detect change, although we did correct for multiple comparisons (using Bonferroni) to reduce the likelihood of Type 1 errors. It is possible, for instance, that little or no change in the outcomes measured quantitatively suggests that the programme does not have measurable effects. As part of the qualitative data collection, we inquired whether positive changes observed by participants might be attributed to other developments in the young person's life besides the programme. While this was not always easy for participants to do, we contend that it is a helpful corrective to assuming uncritically that positive change is caused by the programme.

Fourth, reliance on the two measures used as part of programme delivery (the SDQ and PASS) and group-level average scores potentially means that important changes in participating young people's lives attributable to the Transition Hub may have been missed. The quantitative data suggest that some young people improved over time (and that some got worse) despite no change at an average/group level, while the qualitative data also suggest benefits to participants of participating in the Transition Hub. In advance, it did not seem appropriate or necessary to add new measures beyond what the Transition Hub was already collecting:

- Use of the SDQ is stipulated by the YEF in the evaluations they fund, and in our judgement, it was also adequate for collecting information about young people's social-emotional development (a key target of the programme).
- Similarly, the PASS measure was deemed suitable for measuring young people's school engagement and learning (alongside data on school attendance).

That said, based on the results, we suggest that neither quantitative measure alone is ideal for detecting impact and that other measures should also be considered in future evaluations. These include more personalised approaches to capturing young people's progress, recognising that meaningful individual or subgroup differences may be masked by average scores (Jensen and Corralejo, 2017; Wolpert, 2017). Understanding for whom the Transition Hub works (and for whom it doesn't) is an important aspect of refining and developing the programme at the next stage, and future research should explore this to determine whether the programme could be more effectively tailored or targeted to particular young people. We also acknowledge that reliance on routinely collected programme data is a limitation regarding informing a control group evaluation, where, in some cases at least, the routine programme data will not be available for the control group.

Fifth, it is possible that the impact on outcomes will be seen later, that is, beyond the timescale of the project. This reflects a wider problem in the fields of social and educational research, where evaluation timelines are often out of kilter with the kinds of effect we are likely to see. This is particularly the case, arguably, with universal preventive interventions (e.g. Greenberg and Abenavoli, 2017), which, by design, avert problems from developing in the future. While this programme is targeted at a traditionally high-need group, suggesting that improvements might be seen more quickly, it is notable that the majority of young people in the pilot phase were in the 'normal' or 'borderline' categories of the SDQ at baseline, reducing the opportunity to improve.

Sixth, recruitment for interviews with foster carers and young people was extremely disappointing. The main problem was not receiving a response to attempts to contact participants, whether at the first stage (initial contact) or subsequent stages (to obtain consent and/or conduct data collection). We tried various strategies to address this, working closely with the Transition Hub project lead, but unfortunately, with limited effect. The consultation with young people in foster care to inform the evaluation was, unfortunately, curtailed by Covid-19 restrictions, so it is possible that if this had been more extensive, alternative and possibly more successful approaches to recruitment might have been identified.

Future research and publications

What lessons can be learned to inform the future evaluation of the Transition Hub?

As mentioned above, several of the impacts on outcomes identified by qualitative data were not captured by changes in the SDQ or PASS. Moreover, most of the young people eligible for the Transition Hub did not have a high or 'abnormal' level of need on the SDQ at baseline. Together, these suggest that neither the SDQ nor the PASS is the best measure in isolation for detecting the impact of the Transition Hub. Future research could explore using additional measures of these and other constructs in the logic model.

There is a need to capture individual-level change, for example, using a form of patient-reported outcome or experience measure commonly found in health care, the Journey Planner, goal attainment scaling or a well-being measure, possibly designed specifically for children looked after (Wood and Selwyn, 2017). Additionally, in any future impact study, the use of a stability index that takes into account the individual's experience of the care system itself should also be considered, for example, capturing changes in placement, school and social worker (Children's Commissioner, 2017). More analysis would be required to appraise the suitability of these measures, including sharing them with suitable stakeholders and assessing their match with the programme logic model.

There are also valuable lessons from the evaluation about involving young people in research of this kind. This project aspired to facilitate the involvement of young people in shaping the evaluation, in particular, by reviewing the approach to the evaluation (project information and consent forms) and interpreting the results. There was initially good interest in AfC and LBB to facilitate this. The evaluation involvement lead had email communication and online/phone meetings with the executive heads of the virtual schools, who connected her with people in their In Care Councils, as well as Transition Hub staff, in April and May 2020. Unfortunately, intentions to facilitate meetings with young people only resulted in one meeting in July 2020, where the evaluation involvement lead shared information about the evaluation and discussed the Transition Hub in more general terms with a group of young people in the In Care Council of one authority. The virtual heads explained that the lack of follow-up at later meetings was due to the Covid-19 pandemic putting pressure on staff. The engagement with services was, therefore, strong, and there was a clear interest in enabling involvement, but the conditions were simply not there due to system pressures.

Nevertheless, we had some involvement by young people through facilitation by Transition Hub staff. Specifically, in both AfC and LBB, young people commented on evaluation documentation (participant information sheets and consent forms), and in one council, they commented on the interview questions. Young people's feedback enabled the researchers more clearly to understand the barriers to participation in research due to the heavy information load needed in information sheets and consent forms. This is particularly an issue for young people but is likely to similarly be an issue for adults who are not primarily interested in research or who do not know much about it.

Although there was limited involvement in the evaluation from young people, efforts to initiate it did give the study team the opportunity to explain the evaluation to more members of staff and a wider group of people within the local authorities than might otherwise have been the case. These conversations highlighted small needs for further information or misunderstandings from previous meetings.

Reflecting back on our endeavours to engage young people in this project, it is clear that efforts to enhance participation in research among under-represented populations would need a more embedded approach than what was possible due to Covid-19 lockdowns.

Recommendations

We do not think that a rigorous impact evaluation is a sensible next step for evaluating the Transition Hub (a progression which would be in line with the pipeline model of intervention development and evaluation developed by the EIF and adopted by the YEF). Instead, we recommend the following:

1. Explore the integration of the Transition Hub into the virtual school in the two existing delivery sites and explore to what extent implementation is sustainable in that context, considering lessons from this evaluation about the target group and delivery
2. Explore demand for the programme in virtual schools across the country and deliver/test the Transition Hub in two new sites (selected to explore implementation in different contexts), again considering learning to date
3. Explore a range of suitable outcome measures informed by children looked after as research collaborators

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Transition Hub description

Entry

The Virtual School Team identifies young people aged 11-15 years who are suitable for the programme. This includes young people who:

- i. are new to care
- ii. are changing care placement
- iii. are unaccompanied asylum-seekers

These children are then referred to the Transition Hub team.

Pre-hub phase

Transition Hub staff host visits in the hub for:

- Foster carer and the young person in their care
- Designated Teacher (DT) and child's tutor at the child's new school

Transition hub staff additionally make visits to:

- Young person's carer
- DT in child's new school

The purpose of these visits is to:

- Build relationships
- Assess the child's needs to inform personalisation

Journey Planner starts.

Young people are allocated to one of two tracks:

- inreach → outreach → endings
- outreach → endings

Inreach

This lasts 6 weeks and takes place primarily in the hub (located in a host school), with extracurricular activities taking place offsite, some visits to the young person's new school and support for the carer at home. It comprises two stages:

Stage 1: "Preparation" (Week 1)

Development of an in-depth profile of the young person using the Journey Planner. This informs the "Transition Plan".

Stage 2: Initial school encounters” (Weeks 2-6)

Young people take part in a “core curriculum” (9-3pm) structured as follows.

Mornings:

- academic skills (literacy and numeracy)
- pre-learning

Afternoons:

- social-emotional learning (SEL)
- sport
- performing arts

Extracurricular activities take place from 4 to 5.30pm (term time)

In addition, there are transition activities (with the carer and/or DT) and training/support for the carer (to build their knowledge, competence and confidence).

In weeks 4-6 there is a build-up of time for the young person in their new school.

During school holidays there is personalised activity (local activities).

Outreach

This lasts 18 weeks and takes place primarily in the young person’s new school. It comprises two stages:

Stage 3: “Adjustment in new school” (Weeks 7-11)

Young people learn in their new school. An Outreach Learning Mentor makes *weekly* monitoring visits to the school and to the child’s carer in their new home.

The Journey Planner is used to set objectives and agree school/carers activities.

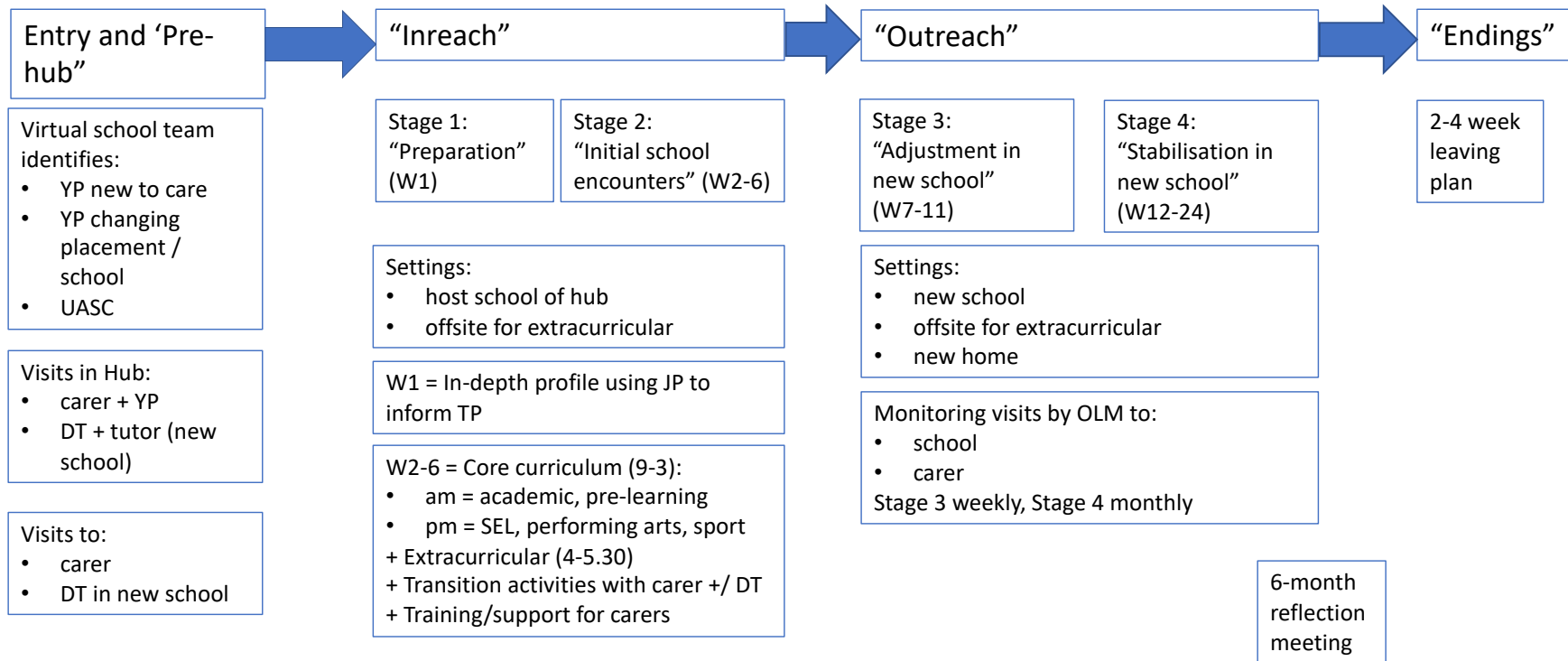
Stage 4: “Stabilisation in new school” (Weeks 12-24)

Young people learn in their new school. An Outreach Learning Mentor makes *monthly* monitoring visits to the school.

A six-month “reflection meeting” takes place involving hub staff and the young person. This is informed by the Journey Planner and other evidence. An assessment is made to determine whether (a) it is suitable for the young person to leave the programme, or (b) extra weeks would be beneficial.

Endings

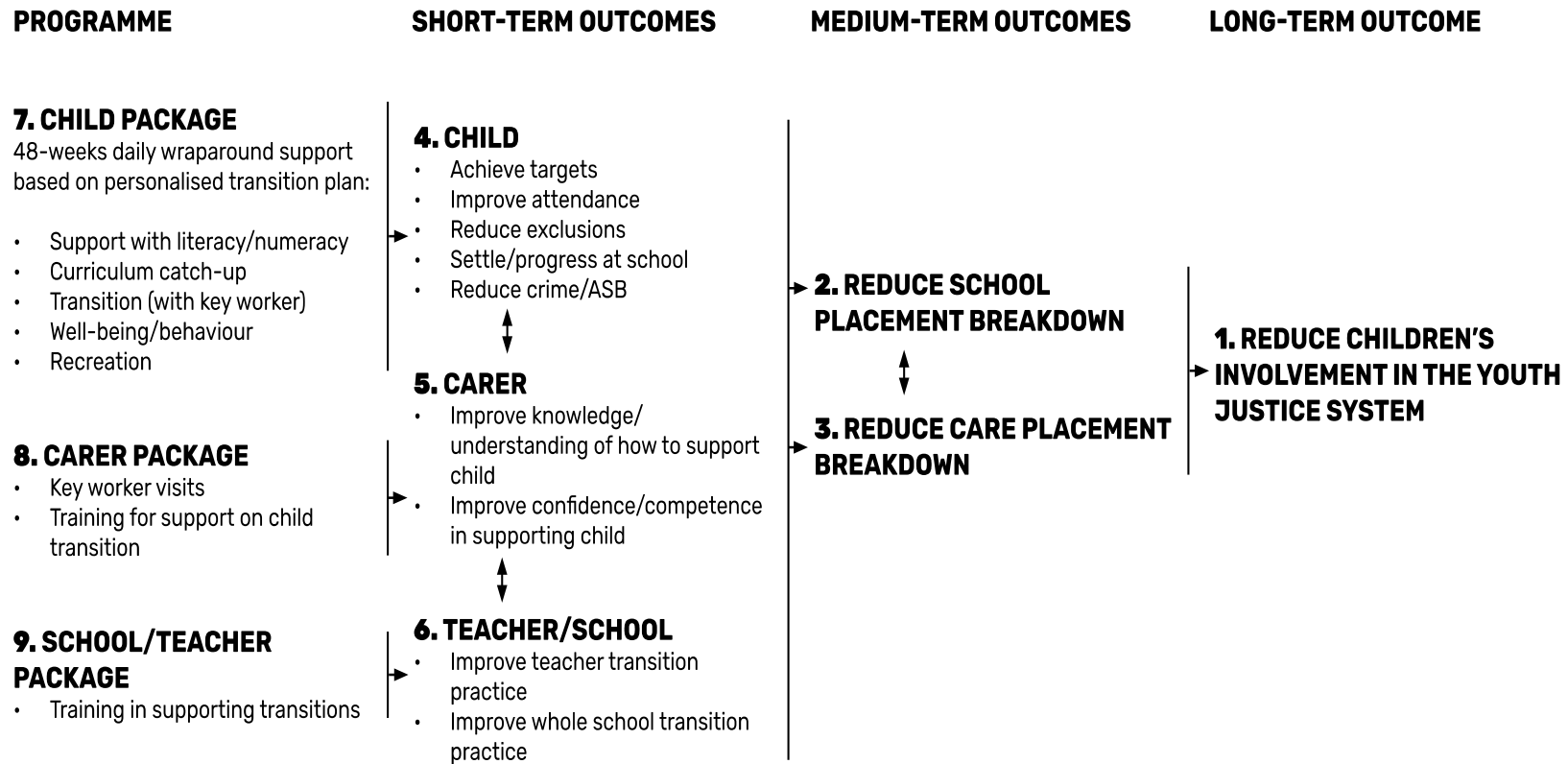
This phase lasts 2-4 weeks and involves a “leaving plan”.



Team: Virtual School Head, Lead Teacher in hub, Senior Learning Mentor, Outreach Learning Mentor, Education Psychologist, Administrator, Coordinator, Designated Teacher (DT) in new school, Tutor in new school

Appendix 2: Transition Hub logic model (from the start of the project, Autumn 2019)

TRANSITION HUB LOGIC MODEL



Appendix 3: Participant information sheets and informed consent forms

Feasibility phase (pp.98-121)

Foster carers

Young people

Routinely collected data

Interviews

Staff and stakeholders

Pilot phase (pp.122-140)

Foster carers

Young people

Staff and stakeholders

FEASIBILITY PHASE

Foster carers

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Carer Information Sheet

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

This information sheet is for carers who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex.

It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by a team led by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to indicate that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to participate.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with other professionals from the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter and Dartington Service Design Lab to try out a new way of supporting the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub that a young person in your care is attending is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if there is anything that can be done to improve it. Based on information provided by carers, young people and staff at the Hub and other organisations, we will provide recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub to decide if it can be run on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because a young person in your care is attending the Transition Hub. As well as the young people themselves, we are also asking foster carers to participate in the evaluation. It is important that we understand the experiences of different groups of people involved in the project.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, a member of the evaluation team will contact you to arrange a time to interview you about your experiences of the Transition Hub. Most of these interviews will take place using Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp or over the phone, although some may take place in person. The evaluator will ask you some questions about your experience of the Transition Hub and the perspectives of your family. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you will be given time to talk about issues that are important to you and the young person in your care.

How long will it take?

The evaluation interview will take approximately 45 minutes and you can take breaks during this time if you wish. We may ask to interview you again at a later point so that we can see if and how your experience changes.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no consequence. You and the young person in your care will still be able to attend and receive the support of the Transition Hub. If you decide to withdraw your information after you have finished the interview, you can do so up to 4 weeks later by emailing the contact for the evaluation project (details below).

What data or information will be collected?

All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. We will take notes and audio recordings will be transcribed (in full or part) so that the evaluation team have a typed record of what was said during the interview. All of your information will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or in a locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be assigned a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

We will analyse data from your interview and interviews with other carers so that we can identify common themes to contribute to the evaluation of the Transition Hub. The Transition Hub may be further developed based on what we find. Your interview data will not be shared with staff from the Transition Hub. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and be made publicly available. We may use direct quotes from interviews in the report and subsequent publications, but your name will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Transition Hub. Your name and other identifying details will not be attributed to any quotes or feedback about the Transition Hub, unless you explicitly give us permission to do so.

Normally no-one will be told anything about you personally. The only exceptions are if you disclose that: (a) you are currently being abused, (b) the young person in your care is currently exposed to violence or abuse at home, or (c) you are a danger to yourself or others. In these cases we have a duty to follow the safeguarding procedures of the Transition Hub. They will contact you to talk about what they are going to do.

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

University of Plymouth contact:

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out please contact the Research Administrator to the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth (hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Carer Consent Form

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my access to any current or future services, or access to current or future services by the young person in my care; | Yes / No |
| 3. | If I ask the evaluation team to withdraw my data within 4 weeks of taking part in an interview, the data that I have asked to be withdrawn will be removed and deleted; | Yes / No |
| 4. | If already included in the analysis or archived, my anonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. | The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken | Yes / No |
| 6. | The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be retained in secure storage and only the evaluation team will have access to them; | Yes / No |
| 7. | The data collected in the study about me and the young person in my care will be anonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 8. | The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 9. | The project researchers may contact me at a later date; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

Your contact details:

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Young people (routinely collected data)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Young Person Information Sheet [Routinely collected data]

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

For the attention of carers: This information sheet invites the child in your care to take part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub. If the child agrees to take part in the evaluation, you can indicate on the consent form if you agree to provide permission for their participation.

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to take part.

This information sheet is for young people who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership with Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex. It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by a team led by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to indicate that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to take part.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with other professionals from the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter and Dartington Design Lab to try out a new way of supporting the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub that you are about to attend/are attending is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if there is anything that can be done to make it better. Based on information provided by young people, their carers and staff at the Hub and other organisations involved in the project, we will make recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub and if it can be run and tested on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because you will be/are attending the Transition Hub. Other people being invited to take part in the evaluation include young people's foster carers, Transition Hub staff, school teachers and other people involved in the Hub.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, we will use some information about you, including results of assessments collected by the Transition Hub, the Virtual School and your Designated Teacher, and ask you to fill in the consent form at the end of this information sheet. If you would like help to complete the consent form this can be provided. You do not need to provide any new information now. We are interested in your experiences as you take part in the Hub. We are asking you for your permission to use the information that is being collected about you while you are in the Hub. Please take some time to think about your decision and talk about it to a trusted adult if you want. This could include your foster carer, school tutor or social worker. We would also like to contact you (through your carer) later in your journey through the Hub to ask if you would like to take part in a discussion with us about your experiences in the Hub.

How long will it take?

This stage of the evaluation will not take any of your time after you have filled in the consent form. The next stage of the evaluation will take approximately 45 minutes to take part in an interview with a member of the evaluation team.

Can I change my mind?

You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no impact on you or services you may receive. Any information about you that has already been analysed will remain in the evaluation but we will not collect any new information about you if you decide to withdraw. You will still be able to attend and receive the support of the Transition Hub.

What data or information will be collected?

Information about you is collected by the Hub, the Virtual School and your Designated Teacher. You are also/will be completing assessments during your time at the Hub. With your permission, the Hub will share this information with the evaluation team so that we can use it for the evaluation. All of your information will be transferred to the evaluation team securely and will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be assigned a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

The information gathered from all young people will be grouped together to evaluate the Transition Hub. The Hub may be further developed based on what we find out. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and made publicly available. Your name and other identifying details will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Transition Hub.

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

University of Plymouth contact:

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out please contact the Research Administrator to the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth (hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Young Person Consent Form [Routinely collected data]

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my access to any current or future services; | Yes / No |
| 3. | The data [information about me and assessments] will be kept in secure storage and only the Transition Hub and evaluation team will have access to them; | Yes / No |
| 4. | If already included in the analysis or archived, my anonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. | All data about me collected in the study will be anonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 6. | The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 7. | The evaluation team will re-contact me at a later date to invite me to take part in an interview about my experience of the Transition Hub; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

TO BE COMPLETED BY CARER

I have read and understood the accompanying information sheet and consent form and give permission for the child (named above) to take part in the evaluation.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

Your contact details (evaluation team will make contact with the child using your details):

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Sign below for researcher completed permission

“I [researcher name] have read this information sheet and form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally providing permission for the child named above to take part in the evaluation.”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant

Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Young people (interview)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Young Person Information Sheet [Interview]

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

For the attention of carers: This information sheet invites the child in your care to take part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub. If the child agrees to take part in the evaluation, you can indicate on the consent form if you agree to provide permission for their participation.

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to take part. This information sheet is for young people who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex. It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by a team led by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to show that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to take part.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with other professionals from the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter and Dartington Design Lab to try out a new way of supporting the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub that you are attending is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if anything can be done to make it better. Based on information provided by young people, their carers and staff at the Hub and other organisations, we will provide recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub and decide if it can be run on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because you are attending the Transition Hub. Young people's foster carers are also involved in the Transition Hub and are being invited to take part in the evaluation, as are staff working at the Transition Hub or related organisations.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part a member of the evaluation team will contact you to arrange a time to talk to you about your experiences of the Transition Hub in an evaluation interview. Most of these interviews will take place using Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp or over the phone, although some may take place in person. The evaluator will ask you some questions about your time with the Transition Hub. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you will be given time to talk about issues that are important to you about your experience of the Hub. We just ask that you are as honest as possible; we are interested in what you think. Please take some time to think about your decision and talk about it to a trusted adult if you want. This could include your foster carer, school tutor or social worker.

How long will it take?

The evaluation interview will take approximately 45 minutes and you can take breaks during this time if you wish. We may ask to interview you again at a later point so that we can see if and how your experience changes.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no impact on you or services you may receive. You will still be able to attend and receive the support of the Transition Hub. If you decide to withdraw your information after you have finished the interview or filled in the questionnaire, you can do so up to 4 weeks later by emailing the contact for the evaluation project (details below).

What data or information will be collected?

All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. We will take notes and audio recordings will be transcribed (in full or part) so that the evaluation team have a typed record of what was said during the interview. All of your information will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or in a locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be given a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

The information gathered from all young people will be grouped together to evaluate the Hub. The Transition Hub may be further developed based on what we find out. Your interview data will not be shared with staff from the Transition Hub. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and made publicly available. Your name and other identifying details will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Transition Hub.

Normally no one will be told anything about you personally. The only exceptions are if you tell us that: (a) you are currently being abused, (b) you know of someone else who is exposed to violence or abuse at home, or (c) you are a danger to yourself or others. In these cases we have a duty to follow the safeguarding procedures of the Transition Hub. They will contact you to talk about what they are going to do.

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

University of Plymouth contact:

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out please contact the Research Administrator to the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth (hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Young Person Consent Form [Interview]

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy about this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request more information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my access to any current or future services; | Yes / No |
| 3. If I ask the evaluation team to withdraw my data within 4 weeks of taking part in an interview, the data that I have asked to be withdrawn will be removed and deleted; | Yes / No |
| 4. If already included in the analysis or archived, my anonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken; | Yes / No |
| 6. The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be kept in secure storage and only the evaluation team will have access; | Yes / No |
| 7. The data collected in the study about me will be anonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 8. The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 9. The project researchers may contact me at a later date; and I give them permission to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

TO BE COMPLETED BY CARER

I have read and understood the accompanying information sheet and consent form and give permission for the child (named above) to take part in the evaluation.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

Your contact details (evaluation team will make contact with the child using your details):

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Sign below for researcher completed permission

“I [researcher name] have read this information sheet and form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally providing permission for the child named above to take part in the evaluation.”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant

Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Staff and stakeholders

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Staff and partner organisations Information Sheet

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

This information sheet is for school teachers/Transition Hub staff/staff from partner organisations who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex.

It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by a team led by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to indicate that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to participate.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with other professionals from the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter and Dartington Service Design Lab to try out a new intervention to support the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if and how it can be improved. Based on information provided by carers, young people and staff at the Hub and other organisations, we will provide recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub to decide if it can be run on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because you work in the Transition Hub/ you are a teacher at a school of a young person who attends the Hub/ you are employed by a partner organisation that works with the Hub [delete as appropriate]. It is important that we understand the experiences of all stakeholders.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, a member of the evaluation team will contact you to arrange a time to interview you about your experiences of the Transition Hub. Most of these interviews will take place using Google

Meets, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp or over the phone, although some may take place in person. The evaluator will ask you some questions about your experience of working in/with the Transition Hub. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you will be given time to discuss issues that you believe to be important.

How long will it take?

The evaluation interview will take approximately 45 minutes and you can take breaks during this time if you wish. We may ask to interview you again at a later point so that we can see if and how your experience changes.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no consequence. Your employment/professional relationship with the Transition Hub will not be affected. If you decide to withdraw your information after you have finished the interview, you can do so up to 4 weeks later by emailing the evaluation team (details below).

What data or information will be collected?

All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. We will take notes and audio recordings will be transcribed (in full or part) so that the evaluation team have a typed record of what was said during the interview. All of your information will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or in a locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be assigned a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

We will analyse data from your interview and interviews with other people as part of the project so that we can identify common themes to contribute to the evaluation of the Transition Hub. The Hub may be further developed based on what we find. Your interview data will not be shared with staff from the Transition Hub. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and be made publicly available. We may use direct quotes from interviews in the report and subsequent publications, but your name will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Hub. Your name and other identifying details will not be attributed to any quotes or feedback about the Hub, unless you explicitly give us permission to do so.

Normally no one will be told anything about you personally. The only exceptions are if you disclose that: (a) you are currently being abused, (b) a young person in your care is currently exposed to violence or abuse, or (c) you are a danger to yourself or others. In these cases we have a duty to follow the safeguarding procedures of the Transition Hub. They will contact you to talk about what they are going to do.

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

University of Plymouth contact:

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out please contact the Research Administrator to the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth (hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk)

Feasibility and pilot evaluation of a transition hub for looked after children and those on the edge of care

Staff and partner organisations Consent Form

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my professional relationship with any current or future services; | Yes / No |
| 3. | If I ask the evaluation team to withdraw my data within 4 weeks of taking part in an interview, the data that I have asked to be withdrawn will be removed and deleted; | Yes / No |
| 4. | If already included in the analysis or archived, my anonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. | The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken; | Yes / No |
| 6. | The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be retained in secure storage and only the evaluation team will have access to them; | Yes / No |
| 7. | The data collected in the study about me will be anonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 8. | The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund, but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 9. | The project researchers may contact me at a later date; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

Your contact details:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

PILOT PHASE

Foster carers

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children Information for Children and Young People

Carer Information Sheet

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

This information sheet is for carers who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex.

It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. The If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to indicate that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to participate.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with the University of Plymouth and the University of Exeter to try out a new way of supporting the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub that a young person in your care is attending is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if there is anything that can be done to improve it. Based on information provided by carers, young people and staff at the Hub and other organisations, we will provide recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub to decide if it can be run on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because a young person in your care is attending the Transition Hub. As well as the young people themselves, we are also asking foster carers to participate in the evaluation. It is important that we understand the experiences of different groups of people involved in the project.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, a member of the evaluation team will contact you to arrange a time to interview you about your experiences of the Transition Hub. Most of these interviews will take place using Zoom or over the phone, although some may take place in person. The evaluator will ask you some questions about your experience of the Transition Hub and the perspectives of your family. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you will be given time to talk about issues that are important to you and the young person in your care.

How long will it take?

The evaluation interview will take approximately 45 minutes and you can take breaks during this time if you wish. We may ask to interview you again at a later point so that we can see if and how your experience changes.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no consequence. You and the young person in your care will still be able to receive the support of the Transition Hub. If you decide to withdraw your information after you have finished the interview, you can do so up to 4 weeks later by emailing the contact for the evaluation project (details below).

What data or information will be collected?

All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. We will take notes and audio recordings will be transcribed (in full or part) so that the evaluation team have a typed record of what was said during the interview. All of your information will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or in a locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be assigned a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

We will analyse data from your interview and interviews with other carers so that we can identify common themes to contribute to the evaluation of the Transition Hub. The Transition Hub may be further developed based on what we find. Your interview data will not be shared with staff from the Transition Hub. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and be made publicly available. We may use direct quotes from interviews in the report and subsequent publications, but your name will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Transition Hub. Your name and other identifying details will not be attributed to any quotes or feedback about the Transition Hub, unless you explicitly give us permission to do so.

Normally no-one will be told anything about you personally. The only exceptions are if you disclose that: (a) you are at risk of harm to yourself or from others or (b) someone else is at risk of harm from yourself or others. In these cases, we have a duty to follow the safeguarding procedures of the Transition Hub. They will contact you to talk about what they are going to do.

Your legal rights

The law gives you rights over how we can use your information. You can find full details of these rights in the privacy notice on our website: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-participant-privacy-notice>

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

Email: ■

Tel: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Email: ■

You can also contact the University of Plymouth's Data Protection Officer: dpo@plymouth.ac.uk

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this project has been carried out please contact the Project Lead (Dr Nick Axford) who will refer your complaint to the Research Administrator at the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth as an independent contact (FOHethics@plymouth.ac.uk). You also have the right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You can find more information about the ICO and how to complain to them on their website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>.

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children

Information for Children and Young People

Carer Consent Form

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 dated dd/mm/yyyy concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my access to any current or future services, or access to current or future services by the young person in my care; | Yes / No |
| 3. | If I ask the evaluation team to withdraw my data within 4 weeks of taking part in an interview, the data that I have asked to be withdrawn will be removed and deleted; | Yes / No |
| 4. | If already included in the analysis or archived, my pseudonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. | The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken | Yes / No |
| 6. | The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be retained in secure storage and only the evaluation team will have access to them; | Yes / No |
| 7. | The data collected in the study about me and the young person in my care will be pseudonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 8. | The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 9. | [Optional]The project researchers may contact me at a later date; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

Your contact details:

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Young people

‘Help us understand how the Transition Hub is working, and how it can be improved’

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children

Information for Children and Young People

Young Person Information Sheet

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

This information sheet is for young people who are involved in the Transition Hub. It tells you about a project to understand how the Hub works and invites you to take part.

What we are doing

The Universities of Plymouth and Exeter are doing a study of people who are taking part in the Transition Hub. We are trying to find out about people’s experiences of the Transition Hub and how it might help young people as they experience changes in their education and/or care placement.

The University of Plymouth is called ‘the controller’ because it looks after your information.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this project because you are attending the Transition Hub.

What you will need to do

If you take part in the study, we will ask you to complete a form to say that you agree to take part in the project.

Information we collect

We will ask you to give us some information about yourself, like your name and date of birth. We will also ask Achieving for Children to give us information about how you have used the Transition Hub, including any assessments.

We may contact you to ask you some questions about your experience of the Transition Hub in an interview. We will either do this in person or call you on the telephone or speak to you on Zoom. The interview will take about 45 minutes. With your permission, we will record the conversation so that we can remember everything that is said.

How we use your information

We will use the information that you give us to find out how well the Transition Hub has worked. We will write a report about what we find, but the report won't include your name or any other information that could be used to identify you.

The report will go on the Youth Endowment Fund's website and anyone will be able to read it. The Youth Endowment Fund are paying for this study. We might also use the report in any articles that we write, on our project website and in presentations.

How we comply with the law

We will only use your information if the law says it's ok and it fits with your rights. Because this study is interesting and important to lots of people, the law says we can use your information to do this kind of work.

We always keep your information safe. During the study, we only let our research team look at your information. We don't share your information with anyone in other countries.

Keeping you safe

If you feel upset by any of the questions we ask you in an interview, you can ask to stop at any time and talk to someone you trust. This could be your foster carer, school tutor or social worker. We will not share the information that you give us in an interview with the Transition Hub.

We will keep what you tell us a secret unless we think that you or someone else might be at risk of harm. If this happens then we will usually talk to you first to tell you why we want to talk to another person or organisation.

After the study finishes

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF for short) is giving us money to do this study. When we finish the study, some of your information will go into a safe place called the YEF archive. This is stored in the Office for National Statistics' Secure Research Service. You can find more information about the YEF archive on the YEF's website:

https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/YEF_Data_Guidance_Participants_Nov2020.pdf

We will send the Department for Education your name, date of birth, gender and Unique Pupil Number. We will also give them information about the number of Transition Hub sessions you have attended, and assessments shared with us by the Transition Hub.

Before your information goes into the YEF archive, the Department for Education will take out your name and other personal details. This means that no one who looks at the information in the YEF archive will know who you are.

In the future, people can ask to use the YEF archive to do more studies to find out whether the Transition Hub and other projects like ours have helped young people. For example, whether being part of a project reduces a young person's likelihood of being excluded from school or becoming involved in crime. Only researchers who are approved by the YEF will be able to look at the archive. The police can't use the information in the YEF archive.

Do you want to take part?

We would like as many people as possible in the Transition Hub to take part because their information helps us to understand what makes a difference for young people.

You do not have to take part in the study – it is up to you. If you don't want to take part, tell your foster carer.

If you decide not to take part in the study, you can still take part in the Transition Hub.

What happens if you change your mind?

You can refuse to take part or withdraw from the project at any time, without giving a reason and with no consequences for you. You will still be able to attend and receive the support of the Transition Hub. Any information about you that has already been analysed will remain in the project but we will not collect any new information about you if you decide to withdraw. If you decide to withdraw you can do so by emailing the project lead, Nick (details below).

Once your information goes into the YEF archive it can't be deleted because it needs to be used for future research.

How long we keep your information

The University of Plymouth will keep your personal information for 4 weeks after we have transferred the data to the DfE for archiving, which we think will be until around 31st May 2023. We will keep data for 10 years after we finish our report but first we will take out your name and other personal details so no one will be able to know who you are from the data.

Information will be kept safely in the YEF archive for as long as it is needed for future research.

Your legal rights

The law gives you rights over how we can use your information. You can find full details of these rights in the privacy notice on our website: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-participant-privacy-notice>

Questions?

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

The project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

University of Plymouth

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

Institute of Education

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

You can also contact the University of Plymouth's Data Protection Officer: dpo@plymouth.ac.uk

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this project has been carried out please contact the Project Lead (Dr Nick Axford) who will refer your complaint to the Research Administrator at the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth as an independent contact (FOHethics@plymouth.ac.uk).

You also have the right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You can find more information about the ICO and how to complain to them on their website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>.

Organisations involved in the project: The Transition Hub is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership with Cambridge Education and St. Mary's University. The University of Plymouth and University of Exeter are supporting this work and want to find out how well the Hub supports the education, behaviour and well-being of young people recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. The Youth Endowment Fund is paying for the work.

For the attention of carers: This information sheet invites the child in your care to take part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub. If the child agrees to take part in the evaluation, you can indicate on the consent form if you agree to provide permission for their participation.

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children

Young Person Consent Form

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy about this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to ask for more information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|---|--|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes / No |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my access to any current or future services; | Yes / No |
| 3. | The data [information about me and assessments] will be kept in secure storage and only the project team and approved researchers (in the case of the YEF archive) will have access to them; | Yes / No |
| 4. | If already analysed or stored, my pseudonymised data may be kept by the project team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes / No |
| 5. | All information about me to be used in the evaluation will be pseudonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes / No |
| 6. | The project team will give the Department for Education relevant information collected about me during the project along with my name, date of birth, gender and Unique Pupil Number, and this will be stored in the YEF archive (without my personal details) for future research | Yes / No |
| <u>If I agree to take part in an interview:</u> | | |
| 7. | [Optional] The project team will re-contact me to invite me to take part in an interview about my experience of the Transition Hub; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |
| 8. | [Optional] The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken; | Yes / No |
| 9. | [Optional] The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be kept in secure storage and only the project team will have access; | Yes / No |
| 10. | [Optional] The project team may contact me at a later date; and I give them permission to do so. | Yes / No |
| 11. | I agree to take part in the pilot outcome evaluation of the Transition Hub for Looked after Children | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Sign below for consent form completed by person taking consent

"I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document"

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for person taking consent

TO BE COMPLETED BY CARER

I have read and understood the accompanying information sheet and consent form and give permission for the child (named above) to take part in the evaluation.

Name_____

Relationship to child_____

Signature_____

Your contact details (evaluation team will make contact with the child using your details):

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Sign below for person taking consent completed permission

“I [researcher name] have read this information sheet and form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally providing permission for the child named above to take part in the evaluation.”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Staff and stakeholders

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children Information for Children and Young People

Staff and partner organisations Information Sheet

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

This information sheet is for school teachers/Transition Hub staff/staff from partner organisations who are interested in taking part in an evaluation of the Transition Hub that is being delivered by Achieving for Children, in partnership Cambridge Education (on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet) and St Mary's University, Twickenham, Middlesex.

It is for you to keep. It tells you about the evaluation being conducted about the Transition Hub. The evaluation is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and being carried out by a team led by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter. If you have any questions about any of it please ask a member of the evaluation team – our details are at the end of this sheet. If you would like to take part, please sign the attached consent form (Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy) to indicate that you understand what the information sheet says and agree to participate.

What is the aim of the project?

The Transition Hub is working with other professionals from the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter and Dartington Service Design Lab to try out a new intervention to support the education of young people who are experiencing changes in their lives. These changes include recently entering foster care and/or changing foster placement or school. We want to know if the Transition Hub is helpful, which bits of the support are more or less helpful, and if and how it can be improved. Based on information provided by carers, young people and staff at the Hub and other organisations, we will provide recommendations about changes that can be made to the Hub to decide if it can be run on a larger scale.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation because you work in the Transition Hub. It is important that we understand the experiences of all stakeholders.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, a member of the evaluation team will contact you to arrange a time to interview you about your experiences of the Transition Hub. Most of these interviews will take place using Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or over the phone, although some may take place in person. The evaluator will ask you some questions about your experience of working in/with the Transition Hub. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you will be given time to discuss issues that you believe to be important.

How long will it take?

The evaluation interview will take approximately 45 minutes and you can take breaks during this time if you wish. We may ask to interview you again at a later point so that we can see if and how your experience changes.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You have the right to refuse to take part or withdraw participation at any time, without giving a reason and with no consequence. Your employment/professional relationship with the Transition Hub will not be affected. If you decide to withdraw your information after you have finished the interview, you can do so up to 4 weeks later by emailing the evaluation team (details below).

What data or information will be collected?

All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. We will take notes and audio recordings will be transcribed (in full or part) so that the evaluation team have a typed record of what was said during the interview. All of your information will be stored securely on a secure server at the University of Plymouth and/or in a locked filing cabinet (hard copies) and accessible only to the evaluation team. All participants will be assigned a unique number, which we will use to record this information rather than your name so that you cannot be identified.

How will the information be used?

We will analyse data from your interview and interviews with other people as part of the project so that we can identify common themes to contribute to the evaluation of the Transition Hub. The Hub may be further developed based on what we find. Your interview data will not be shared with staff from the Transition Hub. One or more reports will be produced describing the project and the findings of the evaluation. These will be shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund and be made publicly available. We may use direct quotes from interviews in the report and subsequent publications, but your name will not be written anywhere in reports or documents about the Hub. Your name and other identifying details will not be attributed to any quotes or feedback about the Hub, unless you explicitly give us permission to do so.

Normally no one will be told anything about you personally. The only exceptions are if you disclose that: (a) you are at risk of harm to yourself or from others or (b) someone else is at risk of harm from yourself or others. In these cases we have a duty to follow the safeguarding procedures of the Transition Hub. They will contact you to talk about what they are going to do.

What if I have questions?

The evaluation project:

University of Plymouth Project Lead:

Dr Nick Axford

Tel: ■

Email: ■

The Transition Hub:

Catherine Carroll, Senior Lecturer

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Tel: ■

Email: ■

Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this project has been carried out please contact the Project Lead (Dr Nick Axford) who will refer our complaint to the Research Administrator at the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at the University of Plymouth as an independent contact (hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk).

Pilot outcomes evaluation of Transition Hub for Looked After Children

Information for Children and Young People

Staff and partner organisations Consent Form

Version 1, dd/mm/yyyy

I have read the Information Sheet Version Number 1 Dated dd/mm/yyyy concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

Please circle

- | | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | My participation in the project is entirely voluntary; | Yes |
| 2. | I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and my withdrawal will not affect my professional relationship with any current or future services; | Yes |
| 3. | If I ask the evaluation team to withdraw my data within 4 weeks of taking part in an interview, the data that I have asked to be withdrawn will be removed and deleted; | Yes |
| 4. | If already included in the analysis or archived, my pseudonymised data may be retained by the evaluation team and used for the study even if I decide I no longer want to take part; | Yes |
| 5. | The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken; | Yes |
| 6. | The data [notes, recording and full/partial transcript of the interview] will be retained in secure storage and only the evaluation team will have access to them; | Yes |
| 7. | The data collected in the study about me will be pseudonymised, stored securely and destroyed according to Medical Research Council best research practice guidelines; | Yes |
| 8. | The results of the project will be published and shared with the Transition Hub and Youth Endowment Fund, but I will not be identified (my anonymity will be preserved); | Yes / No |
| 9. | [Optional]The project researchers may contact me at a later date; and I give my permission for them to do so. | Yes / No |

Sign below for participant completed consent form

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Sign below for researcher completed consent form

“I [researcher name] have read this form of consent to [participant name] because [participant name] is not able to physically sign this informed consent document. I have audio recorded [participant name] verbally agreeing to each of the numbered points on the consent form above and to confirm that they have understood the informed consent document”

Name of participant	Date	Signature on behalf of participant
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

*1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher

Your contact details:

Mobile telephone number:

Email address:

Appendix 4: Interview schedules (feasibility phase)

Foster carers (pp.142-145)

Young people (pp.145-147)

Staff (pp.147-151)

Stakeholders (pp.151-154)

*** Priority questions

FOSTER CARERS

Introduction

***1. To start with, can you tell me what you know about the hub?

Prompts: What do you think its main aims are? What kind of things does it do to achieve these? What does a normal day at the hub look like for young people? OR What does young people's involvement in the hub look like?

***2. How did you and [YP] come to be involved in the hub?

Prompts: When was this? How long have you and [YP] been involved?

***3. What was it like when you and [YP] first met people from the hub?

Prompts: What did they tell you about it? Why did you agree to [YP] being involved?

Did [YP] want to be involved? Why? Is it different to what you/[YP] expected? How?

I'm interested to know about what you and [YP] have received from the hub/hub staff.

***4. What support has [YP] received from the hub / hub staff?

Prompts: From whom, delivered how, how much, content, if/how changed over time, where (in hub, in school, online), nature (lessons, extracurricular, other)

***5. How regularly has [YP] been attending the hub / taking part in sessions with their learning mentor?

Prompts: What has helped make them want to go / take part? What has stopped or discouraged them from going / taking part? What would make them go / take part more?

***6. What support (if any) have you received from the hub / hub staff?

Prompts: From whom, delivered how, how much, content, if/how it has changed over time, why engaged with it (or not)

***7. How much have you engaged with the hub support for carers?

Prompts: As much as possible? Why? Why not?

8. Apart from the hub, what other support does [YP] receive?

Prompts: Is this helpful? Has the hub helped with accessing this support? What support would you/[YP] receive without the hub?

Now I'm going to ask about what you and [YP] think of the hub.

***9. What (if anything) do you like about the hub and what it has done with you / [YP]?

Prompts: Example(s)

***10. What (if anything) don't you like about the hub and what it has done with you / [YP]?

Prompts: Example(s)

11. What are the hub staff like? How would you describe [YP]'s key worker?

Prompts: Example(s)

***12. Thinking about [YP], what (if anything) do they like or dislike about the hub and what it has done with them?

Prompts: Example(s)

Obviously, we have had COVID in the last year.

***13. How did the COVID 19 restrictions affect [YP]'s education?

Prompt(s): Amount, nature, quality

***14. What (if any) support did [YP] get from the hub / hub staff during lockdown?

Prompts: In person / online? Like/dislike? Helpful or not, what would have been helpful?

***15. What (if any) support did you get from the hub / hub staff during lockdown?

Prompts: In person / online? Like/dislike? Helpful or not, what would have been helpful?

In the next set of questions I'm interested to know what difference the hub has made for you and [YP].

***16. How (if at all) has going to the hub / receiving support from the learning mentor in school helped [YP]?

Prompts: education/learning, social-emotional, behaviour, peer relations etc.

17. How (if at all) has the hub / learning mentor support affected [YP]'s thinking and behaviour?

Prompts: At home, school, in the community

18. What do you think helped make the difference?

***19. How (if at all) has support from the hub / hub staff helped you?

Prompts: Example(s). Responsiveness to needs?

20. How (if at all) has the hub / learning mentor support affected the way you think or the things you do?

Prompts: At home, school, in the community

21. What do you think helped make the difference?

Now I'm going to ask a bit about if and how the support on offer can be improved.

22. What (if any) support should the hub be giving [YP] / you that it isn't? **[if support has ended: ...should have given [YP] / you but didn't?]**

23. What (if any) activities or parts of hub support have not been that useful or were not needed for [YP] or you?

***24. What changes (if any) can be made to make the hub a better service?

[If young person has left hub]

25. How did contact with the hub end?

Prompts: How did support from the hub / hub staff change in the run-up to this? (amount, content, focus)

26. What do think about the way the support ended?

Prompts: Was it enough / too much? Did the way it ended help [YP] / you? How? What could have been done differently / better?

27. What support (if any) have you / [YP] received from anyone else for [YP]'s education since contact with the hub ended?

Prompts: Who, amount

28. What has it been like since [YP] left the hub / stopped receiving hub support?

Prompts: How has [YP] dealt with it? How have you dealt with it? Any obvious changes in learning, social-emotional, behaviour, peer relations etc.?

Finally

29. How worthwhile has being involved with the hub been for [YP] / you?

YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

***1. To start with, what is it like to be involved in the hub?

Prompts: How long have you been involved?

***2. In your opinion, what is the hub supposed to help with?

Prompts: How does it try to do this?

***3. What was it like when you first met people from the hub?

Prompts: What did they tell you about it? Did you want to be involved? Why? Is it different to what you expected? How?

I'm interested in what you do at the hub and what your keyworker / learning mentor does with you.

***4. What kind of things do/did you do in the hub? What does/did a normal day/week look like?

Prompts: lessons, extracurricular, other; inreach/outreach

5. What sort of things do you talk to hub staff about? Why?

6. What (if anything) does the hub do with/for your carer?

***7. **[If in new school]** How often do you meet your learning mentor? What do you do with them?

***8. **[If in new school]** How often do you meet your designated teacher? What do they do with / for you?

***9. How often do you go to the hub / attend sessions with your learning mentor?

Prompts: What makes you go? Why do you not attend more? Would you say you try to do your best in the hub / working with your learning mentor? Why?

Obviously, we have had Covid in the last year.

***10. How (if at all) did the hub support you in the Covid lockdowns?

Prompts: Was this helpful? Why / why not? What would have been more helpful?

11. How often did you log in to online sessions [during Covid lockdowns]?

Prompts: What made you go/log in? Why did you not go/log in very often? What would need to happen for you to go/log in more often?

The next few questions are about what you think of the hub.

***12. What (if anything) do you *like* about the hub and what it has done with you?

Prompts: Example(s)

***13. What (if anything) *don't* you like about the hub and what it has done with you?

Prompts: Example(s)

***14. How would you describe your keyworker?

Prompts: Are you able to talk to your keyworker / other hub staff about things that bother you?

I'm also interested in what difference the hub has made for you.

***15. How (if at all) has going to the hub / getting support from hub staff helped you?

Prompts: Education/learning, social-emotional, behaviour, peer relationships, think / feel / behave

***16. What has helped with this? What has not helped with this (i.e. made it harder)?

***17. Thinking about your Journey Planner, what sort of things were you hoping to achieve? To what extent did you achieve any of them and/or did things improve?

Prompts: What helped with this? What got in the way or made it harder?

18. How (if at all) has the hub helped your carer?

Prompts: How has this affected you?

***19. **[If in new school]** How do you feel about your new school?

Prompts: What are people like there? Have you been able to make friends? Are teachers supportive?

***20. **[If in new school]** How well prepared did you feel for your new school?

Prompts: How has the hub helped or not helped with this? What else would have been helpful?

We are also interested to learn if and how the hub could be improved.

***21. What changes (if any) would make the hub better?

Prompts: Inreach, outreach; content, delivery; why – how would this make it better?

***22. Which parts of hub sessions / support have you found useful?

Prompts: Why?

***23. Which parts of hub sessions / support have you NOT found useful?

Prompts: Why?

[If young person has left the hub]

***24. How did your contact with the hub end?

Prompts: Did you see them less and less in the last few weeks? Did the hub do enough to help you get ready for ending contact with them?

25. What (if any) help have you had since your contact with the hub ended?

Prompts: Who is it from?

***26. What has it been like since you left the hub?

***27. Was your time in the hub / getting support from your learning mentor too long, too short, or about right?

Prompts: Why?

28. What (if any) support do you get from anyone outside the hub?

Prompts: What with/for? Is this helpful? Has the hub helped with getting this support?

Finally

29. How worthwhile has being involved with the hub been? In what ways?

STAFF

LT=Lead teacher, SLM=Senior Learning Mentor, LM=Learning Mentor, EdPsych = Education Psychologist

Introduction

***1. Can you tell me about your role in the hub?

Prompts: title; responsibilities; different to what you expected/understood when you took on the role?

Understanding of model

***2. Can you talk me through your understanding of how the hub is supposed to work i.e. what is it trying to achieve, and how does it try to do this? How is it different to what was provided beforehand for similar young people in [site]?

Prompts: Aims (e.g. education, behaviour); work with young people, schools, carers; transition stages

Acceptability

***3. How satisfied are you with the Hub?

Prompts: What do you like about it? Not like? Why? (e.g. content, delivery, ease/fit, support with role)

***4. Would you want to continue in your role in the hub after the initial funding ends / if it was rolled out?

Prompts: why, why not?

5. How satisfied do you think the young people are with it?

Prompts: What do they like about it? Not like? How does this vary by young person? What affects this? How do you know?

6. How satisfied do think their carers are with it?

Prompts: What do they like about it? Not like? How does this vary by carer? What affects this? How do you know?

Fidelity / adaptation

***7. Tell me about your work with young people who are part of the transition hub: what kinds of things do you do with them?

Prompts: inreach / outreach phases²⁶, example(s)

8. Has what you do with young people changed over time (i.e. since the programme began), and if so how?

Prompts: What prompted the change(s)?

9. Does what you do with young people vary depending on the young person and/or or their carer, and if so how?

Prompts: What factors affected this change? Example(s)

²⁶ [Site] = inreach only (outreach for both sites).

***10. Tell me about your work with young people's carers: what kinds of things do you do with them?

Prompts: inreach / outreach phases²⁷, example(s)

11. Has what you do with carers changed over time (i.e. since the programme began), and if so how?

Prompts: What prompted the change(s)?

12. Does what you do with carers vary depending on the carer and/or the young person, and if so how?

Prompts: What factors affected this variation? Example(s)

***13. Can you tell me about what happened during the first Covid lockdown in terms of delivering the hub programme?

Prompts: Adaptations to content/delivery, reasons for them. Was it any different in the second or third lockdown?

***14. Can you tell me how you use the Journey Planner?

Prompts: Extent of use, whether/how it influences what support young people receive, usefulness in tracking progress and shaping delivery

Training, supervision, CPD

***15. Can you tell me about the training you received for your role in the Hub?

Prompts: group and individual; who provides, how often; content

***16. How well did the training prepare you for the role?

Prompts: what was useful; what would have been helpful (i.e. what could be added); any other changes (e.g. content, format, style)

***17. Can you tell me about the ongoing supervision and CPD you receive for your role in the hub?

Prompts: group and individual; who provides, how often; content

***18. How well has the supervision / CPD supported you in your role?

Prompts: what was useful; what would have been helpful (i.e. what could be added); any other changes (e.g. content, format, style)

19. In what ways, if any, has the role been helpful for your own continuing professional development?

20. What have been your experiences of peer working?

²⁷ [Site] = inreach only (outreach for both sites).

Prompts: learning, other benefits (e.g. troubleshooting, emotional support)

***21. Can you talk to me about [Project lead]'s role in overseeing the hub?

Prompts: Has it affected how you understand the hub and what it's trying to achieve?

Has [Project lead] had an influence over how you go about things? Do you have an example?

Perceived impact

***22. How valuable do you think the hub is for the young people / carers who are part of it?

Prompts: nature of benefits (e.g. educational, behavioural, social-emotional)

23. Which parts of the programme have worked well / contributed to a positive impact?

Prompts: Example(s)

24. Which parts have worked less well or not at all / not obviously contributed to impact?

Prompts: Example(s)

Demand

***25. How easy has it been to recruit young people to the hub? **[LT]**

Prompts: Numbers (enough, too few, too many); procedures / processes

26. Do you think the Hub is right for the young people who have been referred? OR Do you think the young people who have come into the Hub are from the right target population?

Prompts: age, circumstances, geography (where they live relative to hub); some attending for whom not a good fit; others not attending for whom would be a good fit

***27. Once young people are in the hub, how well in general have they engaged in the programme?

Prompts: factors that affect this e.g. young person-related (personality, circumstances, geography), hub- or school-related; vary by phase

28. Are there things that have worked particularly well in terms of engaging young people in the hub?

Prompts: Example(s)

29. Are there things that could have been done better in terms of engaging young people in the hub?

Prompts: Example(s)

Practicality

***30. Are there things that have got in the way of delivering the hub programme well? What are they?

Prompts: Resources, time, staffing, COVID; Example(s); Have you managed to overcome those, and if so how?

***31. What things have made it easier to deliver the programme well?

Prompts: Resources, time, staffing, support from others; Example(s)

Sustainability / system fit

***32. Can you give any examples of joint working or liaising with other agencies with regards to a young person you have been working with?

Prompts: In what ways, if any, do you link in with multi-agency teams around the young person? Have the agencies been responsive?

***33. What, if anything, would need to change if the hub were to become part of regular service delivery here? Why?

Prompts: Aspects of programme, providers, process, supports from schools / other agencies, training, supervision, site readiness

***34. What would be important considerations for rolling the hub out to other locations / settings? Why?

Prompts: Aspects of programme, providers, process, supports from schools / other agencies, training, supervision, site readiness

STAKEHOLDERS

VSH=Virtual School Head, HSH=Host School Head, SC=Social care, DT=Designated Teacher

Introduction

***1. Can you tell me about your role in relation to the hub?

Prompts: title; responsibilities; different to what you expected/understood when you took on the role?

Understanding of model

***2. Can you talk me through your understanding of how the hub is supposed to work i.e. what is it trying to achieve, and how does it try to do this? How is it different to what was provided beforehand for similar young people in [site]?

Prompts: Aims (e.g. education, behaviour); work with young people, schools, carers; transition stages

Acceptability

***3. How satisfied are you with the Hub?

Prompts: What do you like about it? Not like? Why? (e.g. content, delivery, ease/fit, support with role)

4. How satisfied do you think the young people are with it? **[SC, DT]**

Prompts: What do they like about it? Not like? How does this vary by young person? What affects this? How do you know?

5. How satisfied do think their carers are with it? **[SC, DT]**

Prompts: What do they like about it? Not like? How does this vary by carer? What affects this? How do you know?

Fidelity / adaptation

***6. Can you tell me about the support young people / carers in the hub programme received during the first Covid lockdown?

Prompts: Adaptations to content/delivery, reasons for them. Was it any different in the second or third lockdown?

Training, supervision, CPD

***7. Can you tell me about any training you received for your role with the Hub?

Prompts: group and individual; who provides, how often; content

***8. What is your understanding of the role of [Project lead] in the hub?

Prompts: Have you had direct contact with [Project lead]? In what ways, if any, has [Project lead]'s involvement influenced the delivery of the hub programme? Do you have an example?

Perceived impact

***9. How valuable do you think the hub is for the young people / carers who are part of it?

Prompts: nature of benefits (e.g. educational, behavioural, social-emotional, peer relations); how do you know this? Example(s); without naming names, are there particular young people for whom it is more/less beneficial?

10. Which parts of the programme have worked well / contributed to a positive impact? **[VSH, SC, DT]**

Prompts: Example(s)

11. Which parts of the programme have worked less well or not at all / not obviously contributed to impact? **[VSH, SC, DT]**

Prompts: Example(s)

***12. Have any of the young people you work with finished their time on the hub programme? If yes, do you think the Hub prepared them adequately for the transition? **[SC, DT]**

***13. How, if at all, would you say your work/role has been affected by the presence of the hub and/or its staff? **[HSH, SC, DT]**

Prompts: Example(s); how was/is your relationship with hub staff?

Demand

***14. How easy has it been to recruit young people to the hub? **[VSH, SC]**

Prompts: Numbers (enough, too few, too many); procedures / processes

***15. Do you think the Hub is right for the young people who have been referred? OR Do you think the young people who have come into the Hub are from the right target population? **[VSH, SC, DT]**

Prompts: age, circumstances, geography (where they live relative to hub); some attending for whom not a good fit (i.e. they would benefit from other/different services; others not attending for whom would be a good fit

16. Do recruitment criteria or processes need to be changed, and if so how? **[VSH, SC, DT]**

Practicality

***17. Are there things that have got in the way of delivering the hub programme well? What are they? **[VSH, HSH, DT]**

Prompts: Resources, time, staffing, COVID; Example(s); Have you managed to overcome those, and if so how?

***18. What things have made it easier to deliver the programme well? **[VSH, HSH, DT]**

Prompts: Resources, time, staffing, support from others; Example(s)

Sustainability / system fit

***19. How has the hub liaised with you regarding the young people you are supporting? **[SC, DT]**

*Prompts: How did this link with the support you were providing to the young person / young people?
How often do you speak with hub staff?*

***20. How has it been working with the hub?

Prompts: What did you expect? Was it as you imagined? Example(s) of positives and challenges

21. Can you talk me through some of the discussions you have had with hub staff regarding young people you work with? **[SC, DT]**

Prompts: Did they share any paperwork or data with you (e.g. Journey Planner)? Did these discussions impact on your work, and if so how?

22. How could work between the hub and other services be improved?

***23. What, if anything, would need to change if the hub were to become part of regular service delivery here? Why?

Prompts: Aspects of programme, providers, process, supports from schools / other agencies, training, supervision, site readiness

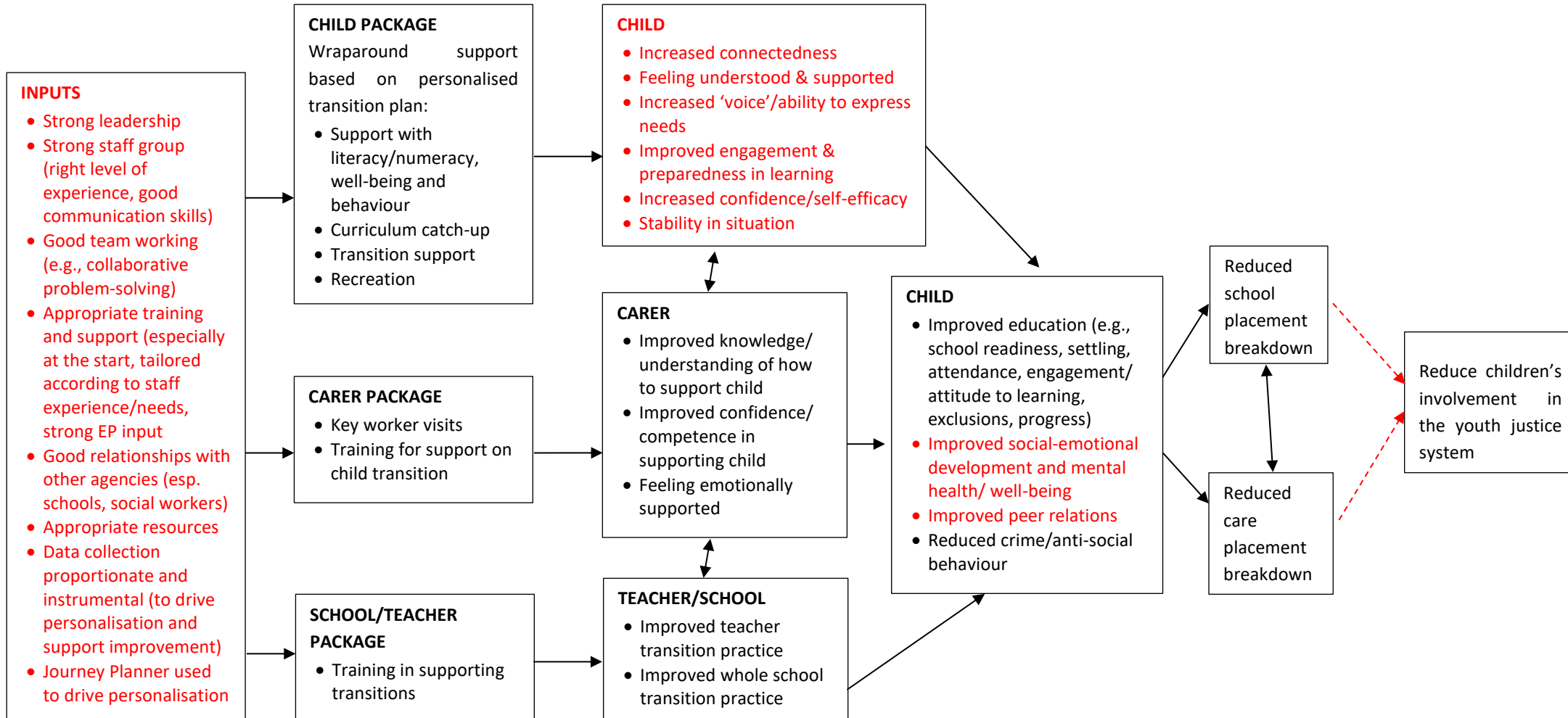
***24. What would be important considerations for rolling the hub out to other locations / settings? Why?

Prompts: Aspects of programme, providers, process, supports from schools / other agencies, training, supervision, site readiness

Appendix 5: Length of intervention

Status	Total (n = 40)	
	Number	Length of intervention mean months
Completed	14	6.95
Still attending at time of analysis	16	-
Dropped out	4	3.65
Ineligible following acceptance	6	-
Total	40	

Appendix 6: Transition Hub revised logic model [red text indicates additions post-feasibility phase]



ASSUMPTIONS

- Constant flow of referrals
- Right target group (elevated need)
- Young people able to access the physical hub (if it continues)
- Other agencies / practitioners (especially social workers, designated teachers) are facilitated/enabled to engage with hub staff (supported by clear communications about the focus and nature of hub support and potential benefits)
- Suitable host school facilitating integration but autonomy
- Clear accountability and expectations for Hub leadership and staff
- Good relationship between local authority and Virtual School.

Appendix 7: Interview schedules (pilot phase)

Foster carers (pp.158-159)

Young people (pp.159-161)

Staff and stakeholders (pp.161-162)

*** Priority questions

FOSTER CARERS

Introduction

1. To start with, can you tell me what you know about the Hub?

Prompts: What do you think its main aims are? What kind of things does it do to achieve these? What does a normal day at the Hub look like for young people? OR What does young people's involvement in the Hub look like?

2. Can you tell me how you and [YP] came to be involved in the Hub?

Prompts: When was this? How long and you and [YP] been involved/how long were you involved

3. How long have you/did you care for [YP]?

Prompt: Dates?

I'm interested to know about what you and [YP] have received from the Hub/Hub staff.

4. What support has [YP] received from the Hub/Hub staff?

Prompts: From whom, delivered how, how much, content, if/how changed over time, where (in Hub, in school, online), nature (lessons, extracurricular, other)

5. Have you received any support from the Hub/Hub staff? What is/was the nature of that support?

Prompts: from whom, delivered how, how much, content, if/how it has changed, why engaged with it (or not)?

6. part from the Hub, what other support does/did [YP] receive?

Prompts: is this helpful? Has the hub helped with accessing this support? What support would you/[YP] receive without the Hub?

In the next set of questions I'm interested to know what difference the Hub has made for you and [YP].

7. Has going to the Hub/receiving support from the learning mentor in school helped [YP]? In what ways?

Prompts: education/learning, social-emotional, behaviour, peer relations, stability of placement

8a. What do you think made the difference?

Prompts: learning mentor; extracurricular activities; other aspects of the Hub

8b. To what extent did other support contribute to some of the changes you noticed?

Prompts: support from other agencies, e.g. school, social worker, other organisation/source of support

8c. To what extent did other things in [YP]'s life contribute to some of the changes you noticed?

Prompts: family, friends, events

9a. Has support from the Hub/Hub staff helped you? How?/why?

Prompts: example(s), Responsiveness to [YP]'s needs?

9b. What do you think helped make the difference?

9c. To what extent do you think the effect it had on you had an impact on [YP]?

Now I'm going to ask a bit about if and how the support on offer can be improved.

10. Is there support that the Hub should be giving [YP]/you that it isn't? [if support has ended...should have given [YP]/you but didn't]

11. Based on your experience / [YP] in your care, are there (a) things that the Hub didn't do that they could have done, (b) things that the Hub did that they didn't need to?

12. What changes, if any, can be made to make the Hub a better service?

Finally

15. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your / [YP]'s experience of the Hub that you have not yet had a chance to discuss?

YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

***1. To start with, can you tell me about being involved in the hub? What's it been like?

Prompts: How long have you been involved?

***2. In your opinion, what is the hub supposed to help with?

Prompts: How does it try to do this?

I'm interested in what you do at the hub and what your keyworker / learning mentor does with you.

***3. Can you talk me through what you do/did in the hub? What does/did a normal day/week look like?

Prompts: lessons, extracurricular, other; inreach/outreach

4. What sort of things do you talk to hub staff about? Why?

5. Does the hub do anything with/for your carer? What is it?

I'm interested in what difference the hub has made for you.

***6. Has going to the hub / getting support from hub staff helped you? How? Has it affected how you think, feel or behave?

Prompts: Education/learning, social-emotional, behaviour, peer relationships

***7. What has helped with this? What has not helped with this (i.e. made it harder)?

***8. Thinking about your Journey Planner, what sort of things were you hoping to achieve? Did you achieve any of them and/or did things improve?

Prompts: What helped with this? What got in the way or made it harder?

9. Has the hub helped your carer?

Prompts: How? How has this affected you?

***10. **[If in new school]** How do you feel about your new school?

Prompts: What are people like there? Have you been able to make friends? Are teachers supportive?

***11. **[If in new school]** Do/did you feel prepared for your new school?

Prompts: How has the hub helped or not helped with this? What else would have been helpful?

I'm also interested to learn if and how you think the hub could be improved.

***12. Which parts of hub sessions / support have you found useful?

Prompts: Inreach, outreach; content, delivery; why

***13. Which parts of hub sessions / support have you NOT found useful?

Prompts: Inreach, outreach; content, delivery; why

[If young person has left the hub]

I understand that you have left the hub.

***14. How did your contact with the hub end?

Prompts: Did you see them less and less in the last few weeks? Did the hub do enough to help you get ready for ending contact with them?

15. Have you had any help after your contact with the hub ended?

Prompts: What is that support? Who is it from?

***16. What has it been like since you left the hub?

17. Do you get support from anyone outside the hub?

Prompts: What with/for? Is this helpful? Has the hub helped with getting this support?

Finally

18. Has being involved with the hub been worthwhile? In what ways?

STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS

1. Can you tell me about your role in relation to the hub?

Prompts: title; responsibilities; different to what you expected/understood when you took on the role; number of young people worked with?

2. Can you talk me through your understanding of how the hub is supposed to work i.e. what is it trying to achieve, and how does it try to do this? How is it different to what was provided beforehand for similar young people in [site]? Has it changed since you have been involved (or since we last spoke / Summer 2021), and if so how?

Prompts: Aims (e.g. education, behaviour); work with young person / young people, schools, carers; transition stages

3. How valuable do you think the hub is for the young people who are part of it?

Prompts: nature of benefits (e.g. educational[school stability, attendance, engagement, exclusions, attainment/progress], behavioural [in home/school/community, inc. crime / violence / anti-social behaviour], social-emotional, placement stability)

4. How valuable do you think the hub is for the foster carers who are part of it?

Prompts: nature of benefits (e.g. knowledge/understanding of how to support young person, confidence/competence in supporting young person), have some foster carers benefitted more than others (who, why)

5. Which parts of the programme have worked well / contributed to a positive impact?

Prompts: Carer / young person impact; Different parts of programme (e.g. inreach/outreach, supports for carer, extracurricular activities, holiday activities, relationship with Learning Mentor / Designated Teacher; Example(s)

6. Which parts have worked less well or not at all / not obviously contributed to impact?

Prompts: Carer / young person impact; Different parts of programme (e.g. inreach/outreach, supports for carer, extracurricular activities, holiday activities, relationship with Learning Mentor / Designated Teacher; Example(s)

7. Are there ways in which the hub has had a negative / adverse impact on young people or foster carers?

Prompts: How/why; Example(s)

8. Are you aware of other things besides the Hub that might have contributed to any positive changes you have observed in young people or their foster carers?

Prompts: How/why; Example(s)

9. Has the hub had an impact on you or other staff? How?

Prompts: experience and training, influence on current practice / roles?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the impact of the hub?