

The 'Bright Spots' Scottish Pilot Invitation Pack

Do you want to improve the quality of your care for your children in care and care leavers?



Understand the experiences of children in your care and care leavers and drive local service improvement by becoming a 'Bright Spots Scottish Pilot' Partner. Our pilot programme will enable you to explore how children and young people feel about their wellbeing, care experience and transition to independence.

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1. The 'Bright Spots' surveys

- ❖ 'Your Life, Your Care' – a survey for children and young people in care, which uses age-appropriate questionnaires (for ages 4-7, 8-11 and 11-18)
- ❖ 'Your Life Beyond Care' – a separate survey for care leavers up to the age of 25

Two online surveys have been developed with children and young people to provide an opportunity to share their experiences of care and how they feel about their lives, based on what they say is important.

CELCIS has partnered with Coram Voice to bring 'Bright Spots' to Scotland and will pilot the two surveys with three local authorities, and then other local authorities will have an opportunity to participate.

The pilot is expected to conclude by March 2022. You can find more details about CELCIS and Coram Voice in [section 5](#).

The *Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators* included in the 'Your Life, Your Care' and 'Your Life Beyond Care' surveys are grounded in research, developed by Coram Voice, working with Professor Julie Selwyn from the University of Oxford. The indicators put children and young people's voices at the heart of how wellbeing is measured.

The surveys also identify and promote examples of positive outcomes for children and young people and promising practice, which are referred to as 'Bright Spots' in this project.

To date, in England and Wales the surveys have now been used by over **50 local authorities** and over **15,000 children and young people** in care and care leavers have responded so far.

How can Bright Spots help your local authority?

This approach is unique because the surveys:

- **Measure well-being, quality of care and leaving care experience** – these are the **only** surveys of their kind to provide an effective measure of **subjective wellbeing** of children and young people in care and care leavers, capturing the care experience of children as young as four and up to the age of 25.

The survey provides important independent insight into the views and experiences of children in care. It is also a good example of involving children and young people in the design of research.

(Anne Longfield, former Children's Commissioner for England, 2017)

What is a 'Bright Spot'?

A 'Bright Spot' indicates where there is a particular positive aspect of practice identified through the surveys to highlight. This could be, for example, where the children and young people are reporting the same or higher wellbeing than their peers in the general population.

- **Are designed by children and young people** – 170 children in care and care leavers told the researchers what was important to them.
- **Are strongly evidence based** – the surveys are a robust research tool, initially developed over six years and reviewed regularly. ‘Your Life, Your Care’ draws on two international literature reviews, conducted by the University of Bristol, and a series of focus groups. The questions used in both surveys were simplified and rigorously tested, and it was ensured that findings can be compared to other datasets in the UK.
- **Are confidential and data are handled securely** – The surveys are anonymous and data are aggregated, so individual children and young people cannot be identified. This increases the likelihood of honest feedback. All data, collected using a secure online platform, are controlled by Coram Voice.
- **Enable wider participation than other tools** – By using age-appropriate questionnaires, the surveys give more children and young people in care and care leavers the chance to say what is important to them.
- **Complement current performance monitoring and support services improvement** – Both surveys enable you to improve children and young people’s care experience by focusing change where children and young people say it is needed. In its review of findings from the inspection programme 2018-2020, Scotland’s Care Inspectorate noted that “leaders were at a disadvantage in knowing and understanding their whole population of looked after and care experienced children and young people” (p.44). In ‘The Promise’, the Independent Care Review (2020) found that “Scotland collects data on the ‘care system’ and its inputs, processes and outputs rather than what matters to the experiences and outcomes of the people who live in and around it” (p. 114). Moreover, ‘Bright Spots’ was identified in the Evidence Framework of the Independent Care Review as ‘the only programme of work which has developed a specific approach for the measurement of the subjective wellbeing of care leavers’ (p. 1604). ‘Bright Spots’ surveys can help you demonstrate that you are systematically listening to children and young people and this is informing services. We will also support you to understand the survey findings and identify how to respond.
- **Enable sharing of learning and good practice between local authorities across Great Britain** – For each local area involved in the Scottish pilot, we will produce a detailed bespoke report for staff and a summary for children and young people. Our in-depth analysis of your local data will be able to show how children and young people in your care and care leavers compare to the general population, as well as to children and young people in care and care leavers in England and

Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what they want and need.

(Independent Care Review, 2020, *The Promise*, Scotland, p. 12)

Wales (our comparison will benefit from a dataset of the most recent 13,500 responses to 'Bright Spots' surveys from over 50 local authorities in England and Wales). Potentially, by repeating the surveys, local areas could better understand how the experiences of their children and young people in care and care leavers change over time.

We will also bring together learning from all three pilot areas into a comparative Scottish report, and identify and promote examples of 'Bright Spots' – promising practice and positive outcomes.

I always thought I listened to my Care Leavers but now they are listened to across the Council and they are a force to be reckoned with and they are changing what we do for the better... they hold the Council to account and they are not giving up on the Your Life Beyond Care drive for change.

(Leaving care manager,
North Somerset)

I am so glad that we have been involved with Bright Spots, there is some really good feedback for us and clarity about the things we need to do better. Our young people are amazing and they deserve and have every right to the very best care and support.

(Head of Quality Assurance for
Safeguarding,
Manchester City Council)

2. 'Bright Spots' Scottish Pilot Programme

We are seeking expressions of interest from local authorities for participation in the pilot phase. We plan to start the piloting of both 'Bright Spots' surveys in Scotland in Autumn 2021, and partner with three local authorities that can ideally commit to carrying out both surveys (though we will consider working with local authorities that are in a position to carry out just one of the surveys at present). The pilot is expected to conclude by March 2022.

We will select partners based on the extent to which they meet key criteria for engagement. Roles and contributions are outlined in [section 3](#) below, with criteria for engagement in [section 4](#). Those participating in the pilot phase will have access to the surveys at a discounted rate (refer to table below).

After the pilot phase, all Scotland's local authorities will be offered the opportunity to carry out the surveys (standard rates will apply).

3. Roles and contributions within the partnership

A partnership will be established between each selected local area, CELCIS and Coram Voice. CELCIS is able to offer the delivery of the 'Bright Spots' surveys at a **50% discounted rate**, as part of the pilot (the remaining half will be covered by CELCIS).

	Standard rate (in 2021)	50% discounted rate (applies to local areas selected for the Scottish pilot)
Both surveys	£15,500	£7,750
Your Life, Your Care (in care) survey only	£8,500	£4,250
Your Life Beyond Care (care leaver) survey only	£8,500	£4,250

Contribution of CELCIS, supported by Coram Voice:

We will provide support and guidance at every step of the process (*see the diagram below*) to ensure the best possible response rates.

Upon completion of the survey questionnaires, we will conduct a detailed analysis and provide you with bespoke reports of the findings – both for your staff and your children and young people.

All reports will be prepared by our experienced research analysts and quality assured. We will work with you to understand where you are doing well (the 'Bright Spots') and where improvement is needed.

Planning and supporting survey distribution

Meeting with the local area team (working group) to plan distribution of the survey.	Detailed guidance pack (including template letters).	Ongoing advice (by phone, email, online meeting).	Set up of LA specific online surveys.	Weekly response rates and advice on how to boost them.
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Analysis

Detailed analysis of findings by experienced research analysts.	Report (includes data comparison with other Bright Spots partner LAs, and general population).	Access to anonymised raw data should you wish to interrogate it further.	Summaries of findings for staff and young people.
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Dissemination and service development

Guidance on communication and dissemination of findings.	Dissemination and exploration meeting with an audience of your choice to present and explore local findings and support action planning with professionals and young people.
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Peer learning

Peer learning opportunities, enabling participating local authorities to network and share positive practice.

Expected contribution from local areas

We expect that the local areas selected for the Scottish pilot will also commit resources and capacity for:

- **Appointing a local lead** to manage the local area's engagement in the pilot. It is important that the local lead is a senior leader or has ready access to senior leaders, as well as sufficient authority to be able to coordinate this activity.
- **Setting up a local working group** to facilitate the implementation of the survey in a manner that attends to both the local context and the surveys' methodological requirement. The working group requires multi-agency representation (e.g. social work, education, health, disability etc.). Examples of activities led by the working group include:
 - creating a list of all children and young people 'eligible' to take part and designing a distribution strategy to ensure that they all get the opportunity to take part in the survey(s), which will include disseminating information about this initiative to relevant staff and carers (CELCIS and Coram Voice will provide templates that can be adapted);

- putting support in place for children and young people who need it, including the younger children and the children/young people with additional needs, who will need a 'trusted adult' (who cannot be the parent/carer or the child's social worker) to support them to complete the survey or facilitate their access to survey;
 - avoiding stigma and ensuring that the approach for completing the survey does not single children out (e.g. avoiding taking a child/young person out of class especially to complete the survey);
 - implementing the survey(s) distribution strategy and supporting buy-in for the survey(s) across the local partnership.
- **Disseminating the findings and the learning:**
 - Preparing a statement on what the local area promises to do based on the findings. This includes providing feedback to children and young people in care.
 - Making the survey reports widely available; sharing learning with other local areas and stakeholders, including the implementation of the pilot (exploring what worked well / could have been better).

Note: The survey questionnaires will be anonymous, online and will be able to be completed on any device connected to the internet. Paper copies can also be made available – this would then require someone in the local authority to manually enter the response information into the online system (paper copies will need to be kept secure and destroyed once the information has been logged online).

4. Criteria for engagement in the Scottish pilot

A selection process will take place, with a view **to pilot the surveys in three local areas**. The Scottish pilot is expected to end in March 2022.

Local areas in Scotland are invited to consider the opportunity to become 'Bright Spots' Scottish Pilot Partners and appraise to what extent this initiative aligns with their local priorities and capacity. CELCIS will then select three local authorities to participate in the pilot based on the following criteria:

Selection criteria:

- The local area is committed to embedding the voice of children and young people in care and care leavers in the local area's decision-making processes.
- There is strategic buy-in and committed leadership for the implementation of this pilot.
- There is a history of collaboration across the key local services with corporate parenting responsibilities.
- The local area is able to commit the resources and capacity required for the implementation of the pilot, as detailed under the 'Roles and contributions within the partnership' section (including appointing a local lead to manage local area's engagement in the pilot; committing staff time and resources for the working group and for fulfilling the 'trusted adult' roles, where needed).
- The local area is committed to using the 'Bright Spots' data for planning, decision-making and service improvement.
- The local area is willing to make public the survey reports and share learning with other local areas and stakeholders, including about the implementation of the pilot (exploring what worked well / could have been better).
- The size of the local area's population of children/young people in care and care leavers, as well as the geographical representation. Please note that the 'Bright Spots' surveys can be used in local areas that have a minimum of 150 children/young people in care, respectively a minimum of 100 care leavers.
- Priority may be given to local areas who are able to commit to both surveys.

5. Next steps and further information

Next steps

- If you would like to arrange an initial meeting/call with the CELCIS team to support you in appraising the fit between the suggested pilot and your local priorities, or find out more details about the pilot, please send us an email at: celcis.brightspots@strath.ac.uk
- If, after consultation with key agencies with corporate parenting responsibilities, your local area is interested in becoming a partner within the 'Bright Spots' Scottish Pilot, please complete and submit the attached 'Expressions of Interest', by 24 August 2021.
- CELCIS aims to announce the results of the selection in September 2021.
- Please note that the pilot programme is expected to end in March 2022, and the exact timelines for conducting the pilot will be agreed in consultation with each selected local area.



The implementation of 'Bright Spots' in England and Wales has been very successful. Coram Voice's website offers further information about the ['Bright Spots' Programme](#), including examples of the [types of reports produced](#) and [how local authorities have used the Bright Spots findings](#) to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in care and care leavers.

About us:

CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection) is a leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland, based within the University of Strathclyde. We improve children's lives by supporting people and organisations to drive long-lasting change in the services they need, and the practices used by people responsible for their care.

'Bright Spots' team at CELCIS: Micky Anderson – Data Lead; Sharon McGregor – Research Associate; Mihaela Manole – Research and Evaluation Associate.

<https://www.celcis.org/>

Coram Voice is a leading children's rights organisation. We champion the rights of children. We get young voices heard in decisions that matter to them and work to improve the lives of children in care, care leavers and others who depend upon the help of the state. We have supported children and young people to have their voices heard for over 40 years. As part of the Coram Group, we work collaboratively with experts from across Coram to develop and support best practice in support of vulnerable children.

<http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/>