

The Bright Spots Programme in Scotland - Second Pilot Phase Invitation Pack

Do you want to improve the quality of your provision for your children in care and care leavers based on what they tell you is important to them?



Understand the experiences of your children and young people in care and care leavers and drive local service improvement by becoming a **Bright Spots programme partner**. Participation in the second pilot phase of the programme will enable you to explore how your children and young people feel about their wellbeing, care experience and transition to independence. **Apply by submitting an Expression of Interest form by Thursday 16 November 2023.**

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1. The Bright Spots programme

CELCIS has partnered with Coram Voice to bring a second phase of the Bright Spots programme pilot to Scotland. In 2022, a successful initial pilot of the programme was carried out with three Scottish local authorities: Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway, and East Ayrshire. We are now offering three other local authorities the opportunity to participate in the second phase of the Bright Spots programme Scottish pilot.

The Bright Spots programme was developed collaboratively by Coram Voice and the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford, funded by the Hadley Trust. It is a service improvement tool that supports local authorities to systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers, about the things that are important to them.

Over 80 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland have participated in the Bright Spots programme to date, with responses gathered from over 24,000 children in care and care leavers.

The Bright Spots programme has three underlying principles:

- Focus on what children and young people say about their lives and what is important to them
- Ensure the views and experiences of children influence service development and strategic thinking
- Share good practice between local authorities by encouraging opportunities for learning and development

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

- **'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

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'.

What is a 'Bright Spot'?

A 'Bright Spot' indicates a 'good news' story, a positive aspect of practice identified through the surveys. This is where children and young people are doing significantly better than children and young people in the comparator group who have completed the surveys in England and Wales or report the same or higher wellbeing than their peers in the general population.

How can Bright Spots help your local authority?

“Partners had created opportunities for care experienced children and young people to influence service delivery and improvements. Commendably, the partnership had worked collaboratively with Coram Voice and CELCIS to carry out comprehensive surveys of looked after children and young people and care leavers as part of the Bright Spots pilot.”

- Aberdeenshire Inspection Report, Care Inspectorate, 2023

The Bright Spots approach is unique because the surveys:

- **Measure wellbeing, 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.
- **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 engagement with children and young people 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, the Bright Spots programme 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, CELCIS,

supported by Coram Voice, 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 your children and young people in care and care leavers compare to the general population, as well as to children and young people in care and care leavers in the rest of Britain.

We will also bring together learning from all three local authority areas taking part in the second phase of the pilot into a comparative Scottish report and identify and promote examples of ‘Bright Spots’ – promising practice and positive outcomes.

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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.

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Independent Care Review, 2020, The Promise, Scotland, p12

To highlight some of the motivations for taking part in the Bright Spots programme, learning along the way, and what's changed so far to improve the lives of children, young people, and care leavers, CELCIS worked with two local authorities from the initial Scottish pilot and a local authority in England that has participated in the programme for several years to produce two short informational films. These are available to view on the [CELCIS website](#) and the quotes below offer an insight into the experiences of being involved:

“

It's been really rewarding to see the numbers of young people who actually participated in the surveys, and that gave us such a wealth of information about what's important to young people in Aberdeenshire.

”

**Andrew Dick, Service Manager,
Aberdeenshire Council - Bright Spots
programme Scottish pilot participant**

“

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”

**Grace Fletcher, Service Manager,
East Ayrshire Council - Bright Spots
programme Scottish pilot participant**

2. Second pilot phase of Bright Spots programme in Scotland

We are now seeking expressions of interest from local authorities for participation in the second pilot phase in Scotland. We plan to partner with three local authorities that can ideally commit to carrying out both Bright Spots surveys before Easter 2024, though we will consider working with local authorities that are in a position to carry out just one of the surveys. The second pilot phase is expected to conclude by summer 2024.

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 second pilot phase will have access to the surveys at a substantially discounted rate (refer to table below).

	Standard rate (in 2023)	Discounted rate for the 2nd Scottish pilot phase
Both surveys	£17,100	£10,000
<i>Your Life, Your Care</i> (children and young people in care) survey only	£9,550	£5,750
<i>Your Life Beyond Care</i> (care leavers) survey only	£9,550	£5,750

3. Roles and contributions within the partnership

A partnership will be established between each selected local area, CELCIS and Coram Voice.

Contribution of CELCIS, supported by Coram Voice:

We will provide support and guidance at every step of the process (*see 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 will be 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 and support with action planning.	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 area partners

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

- **Appointing a local lead** to manage the local area's engagement in the programme. 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 school classes specifically 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 second pilot phase in Scotland

A selection process will take place, with a view **to partnering with three local authority areas**.

Local authority areas in Scotland are invited to consider the opportunity to become Bright Spots programme partners for the second pilot phase 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 second pilot phase 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 in a position to carry out the surveys early in 2024 (there will be some flexibility around timescales within that period to suit local circumstances).
- 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 and young people in care and care leavers, as well as the geographical representation. Please note that the 'Bright Spots' Your Life Your Care survey is usually used in local areas that have a minimum of 150 children and/or young people in care, and the Your Life Beyond Care survey would usually be used when there is a minimum of 100 eligible 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 Bright Spots programme and your local priorities, or find out more details about the second pilot phase, 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, please complete and submit the Expression of Interest form by **Thursday 16 November 2023**.
- CELCIS aims to announce the results of the selection before the end of November 2023.



You can find out more about our successful initial pilot in Scotland on the [CELCIS website](#). The Bright Spots programme is well established in England and Wales and Coram Voice's website offers [further information](#) about the 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; Carol Ann Anderson – Data Analyst; Emma Young - 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/>