

Sky's the Limit project

# Design brief

A new vision of support for  
care-experienced young adults  
July 2022



## BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE  
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

OVERVIEW

THE BRIEF

AUDIENCE INSIGHT

LOOK AND FEEL

CONCEPT IDEAS

OUTCOME

# Contents

- 03 Overview**
  - 04 Introduction
- 06 Project overview**
  - 09 The brief
  - 10 Product
  - 11 Key elements
- 15 Audience insight**
  - 17 The scrapbook of leaving care moments
- 23 Look and feel**
  - 24 A toolbox for life
- 33 Concept ideas**
  - 34 Designing neighbourhoods that work for care-experienced young adults
  - 40 Reimagining what's important
- 51 Outcome**

**Sky's the Limit design team**  
Alice, Emily, George, Henri, Jada, Jasmine, Jordan, Kim, Louis, Marthad, Becca, Sam, and Samuel.

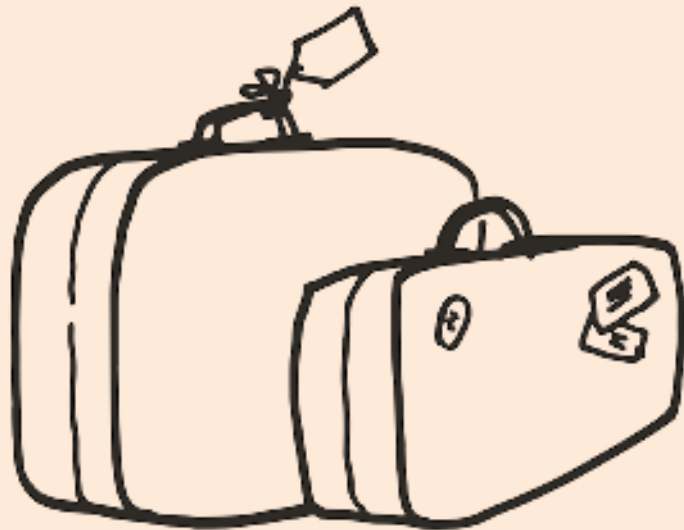
This project has been supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.



# Overview

# Introduction

For too long the care system has been organised around the move from being 'in care' to being a 'care leaver'. Although there have been good improvements in leaving care support in recent years, such as the introduction of Staying Put and the extension of Personal Adviser support until age 25 for all care leavers, these have simply been tweaks to a flawed system.



We reject the idea that anyone should be forced into becoming a 'care leaver' regardless of their circumstances at the age of 18, or even earlier. We need to end the 'care cliff' that's experienced by thousands of young people when they leave care each year.

The recent publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care offered a chance to boldly reimagine what support for care-experienced young adults could look like – something which isn't predicated on getting a completely new 'status' at the age of 18. We don't want little changes to the current system – we want a new system altogether that replaces what we currently know as 'leaving care'.

This doesn't mean that we want young adults to be kept 'in care' for longer. It doesn't mean we want to give up the freedom and responsibility that comes with taking those first steps into adulthood. It doesn't mean we think adults and children should be treated exactly the same as each other or that care-experienced young adults shouldn't be able to do things for themselves.

Instead, it means we want a system that recognises everyone as an individual and adapts not only to their needs or challenges, but also to their strengths and ambitions. It means there shouldn't be an overnight switch in how you're treated by the system, who supports you, and where you live. It means having the chance to make mistakes and live your own life, but with the knowledge you've got someone and somewhere to turn to if you need it.

An issue in the care system [is] there's no middle ground, there's no preparation, there's no anything like that. It takes so long for us to work everything out that we're hitting 30 [years old] by the time we're getting it. And that's a real shame, it's trial and error. We fail a lot before we start getting it right.



# Project overview

This project started from the desire to completely reimagine 'leaving care' as we know it – to start from scratch with a blank piece of paper without the constraints of what might be possible.

## Our key questions were:

- What would it look like if care didn't leave you?
- What if the 'care cliff' didn't exist?
- What should the care system be for young adults?



As a design team, some of us have been involved in policy, consultation, participation or involvement activities before which are often focused on **improving** rather than completely **redesigning** how things should work. The aim for Sky's the Limit was to do things differently.

Designing a new system from scratch is hard! It takes a lot of practice and some imagination to think beyond how things currently work. It can be hard to fight the instinct to lower your expectations or consider all of the reasons why something can't happen or wouldn't work.

It can also be quite challenging to think creatively and allow yourself to have fun in dreaming up new ideas, especially when the subject is so personally important. Reflecting on your own – often difficult – experiences can be emotionally draining, and it's tough doing so when you know your ideas might not be ever realised. We spoke about what we did as "a playful approach to a serious subject"; something that was creative but sensitive, and acknowledged rather than ignored the painful experiences lots of the design team and other care-experienced young people had been through.

## What did the project involve?

The content for this design brief was produced collaboratively over the course of three design sessions and one smaller refinement session taking place online over Zoom in late 2021. The sessions – themed REFLECT, DREAM, and CREATE – were designed and facilitated by Become staff, Sam and Henri, with support from members of Become's Care Review Policy Group. Each featured activities which supported individuals or groups to create something – an image, a drawing, a model, some writing – which captured something important to take forward into the design brief.

Project overview

Why a design brief?

A design brief is a document that sets out the scope of a design project, what should be produced, how it should look, and other practical bits like timelines and budget. They're normally developed by a client and a designer to clearly set out what's expected and the key things the designer needs to know to do the best possible job. After the design is complete, you can look back and see if the designer has fulfilled the brief they were given.

Although they're normally used in fields like architecture, interior design, or web design, we thought we could use a similar approach here. Our target for this report was Josh MacAlister who, as Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, became the lead designer for a new care system. Our main 'clients' are the thousands of children and young people who are in care now and may enter care in the future. We can represent only ourselves and our experiences – but we put this together thinking about some of the experiences, identities, knowledge, and ambitions we might share with others.

We don't have all the answers, but we are a group of individuals with different combinations of lived and learned expertise and a whole bunch of skills and abilities. This design brief covers the key things we wanted Josh MacAlister and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care to consider when they designed the detail of what reforms to the care system might look like.



# The brief

# Product

## What is the 'product'?

A new approach to support for care-experienced young adults which provides a happy and positive start to adulthood.



# Key elements

What are the key qualities or principles of this new approach?

How should it differ from the existing 'leaving care' system?

What are the five main things the designer needs to be thinking about?

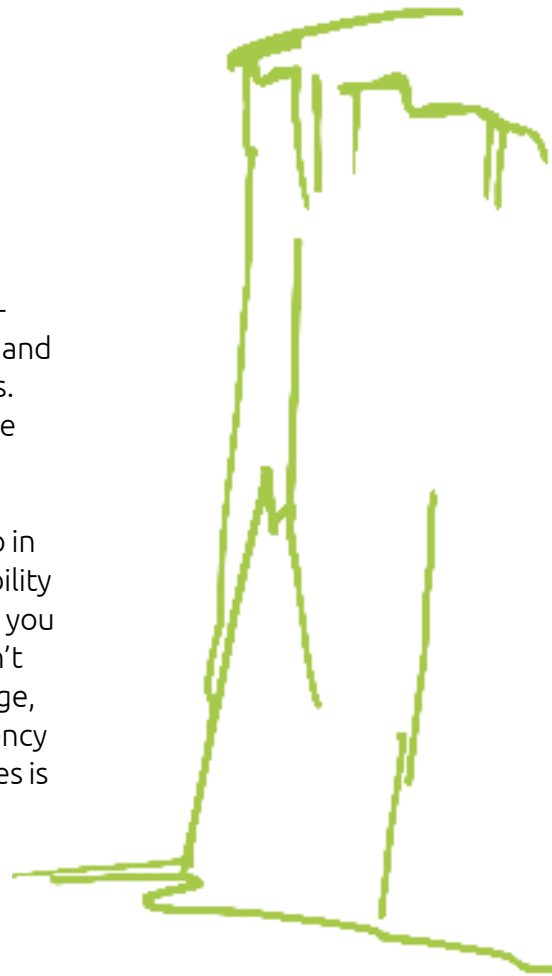


## Key elements

## 1

**An end to the 'care cliff'**

The current system is based on cliff-edges of support at ages 16, 18, 21 and 25 which don't reflect people's lives. Although it's important to recognise the legal change which comes with becoming an adult at age 18, this shouldn't warrant a significant drop in support; it's a critical age when stability in where you live and who supports you is important. A new system shouldn't feature abrupt changes based on age, and instead recognise that consistency in important relationships and places is vital to having a positive start to adulthood.



**I'm not formerly relevant. I'm still very relevant, thank you very much. I hate that. We're always care leavers, we're never not care leavers, it never stops and we're always relevant. I might not be relevant to social services anymore.**



## 2

**Individualised support**

Every person is unique and has their own wishes, feelings, views and aspirations. The current system isn't flexible enough to accommodate these differences. It forces people down pathways which aren't right for them and tries to fit people into a preconceived idea about what 'success' looks like. A fresh approach would recognise and celebrate individuals to help them really plan out their own future journeys rather than put 'care leavers' into a single box.



Opportunities. No matter what we're doing or what situation we're in, there's always an opportunity to try something out, or get a house, or go and get educated. There's always an opportunity. Like when we go to university you get a bursary, there should be that opportunity for other things later in life too because it can be such a closed door. If that's an option then we should have that for the rest of our lives because we haven't had this, we haven't had that. Opportunities to better ourselves.

## 3

**Consistency**

Where you live in the country shouldn't make or break your experience as a care-experienced young adult. The 'postcode lottery' of care is particularly apparent for current care leavers; there isn't really one 'leaving care' system but 151 different ones. This lack of consistency makes it harder to understand what you're entitled to, to feel connected to people and places outside of your local area, and to deliver a fair and well-evidenced level of support for all.



**All the rules should be national but delivery should be local. There has to be one rule for all but then it should be down to local authorities to deliver those nationalised rules and policies. It shouldn't be up to local authorities to develop these because that's when things get lost and you get these postcode lotteries.**

Key elements

4

Accountability

Too often, what care-experienced young adults are supposed to receive on paper doesn't match up with their experiences. There's too little accountability in the system and this allows for bad practice and the denial of people's rights and entitlements. It's important that care-experienced people's rights are upheld and celebrated, and a new system has transparent and recognised processes in place for ensuring care-experienced young adults get what they need and deserve.



Every local authority has a complaints procedure, they all have one, but it doesn't make any difference. It doesn't end anywhere; it doesn't go anywhere. They just go through the motions.



5

Equity

Identity and experiences as a young adult are a combination of lots of different things, including your care experience. The current system reinforces the additional challenges that particular groups of care-experienced people can face, such as those from Black or minoritised communities, those who identify as LGBT+, and Disabled people. A new system needs to have equity at its heart and understand how everyday life as a care-experienced young adult interacts with other characteristics and experiences.

# Audience insight

What are key things to know about care-experienced young adults?

What are their challenges, qualities and strengths?





We're really empathetic, but being that way makes you vulnerable.



**We seem to grow up faster and be more mature.**



We've grown up in less than ideal circumstances. We've got a way of surviving. I hate the word 'resilience' as everyone's like 'oh my god you're so resilient'. I wish you didn't have to learn that skill. I wish I didn't have to live in circumstances where I had to make my own food at a young age.



**We learn to keep ourselves hidden or in a shell to keep us from getting hurt.**



We develop a really thick skin.



We're great at problem-solving. We're shapeshifters. Put us in any room and we morph!



**We learn to use money and budget – for good and bad, for survival and for fun.**



There's a kind of 'cut our nose off to spite our face' habit where if stuff gets a bit real, where you like someone or in a good part of your life, you're like 'right these things need to leave because I can't worry about the fear of them going on their own volition'. We're hard-nosed. We get disenfranchised. I don't like saying these are skills but they're survival. It's a really sad skill to have.



We've got Machiavellian survival skills.



We're not lazy people. A lot of the time we have to fight tooth and nail just to get something that we need or want. We've got very transferable skills because we always go back to survival.



Headstrong. I will make this mistake. I have to do this for myself. If it ends up being the wrong thing then I'll learn from it. How am I going to learn if I don't take these chances? They did everything in their power to not let me go, but I was already moving in. Just not letting go of who you are, knowing what your decisions are and knowing what your mind is, knowing that things might go wrong but at least it was you who made the decision. I knew I would lose myself if I let it in for one minute.



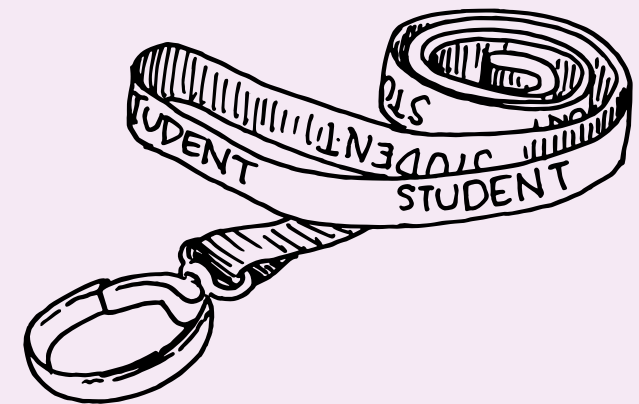
**We've got grit, a good work ethic.**

We are like an elastic band which springs back into shape.



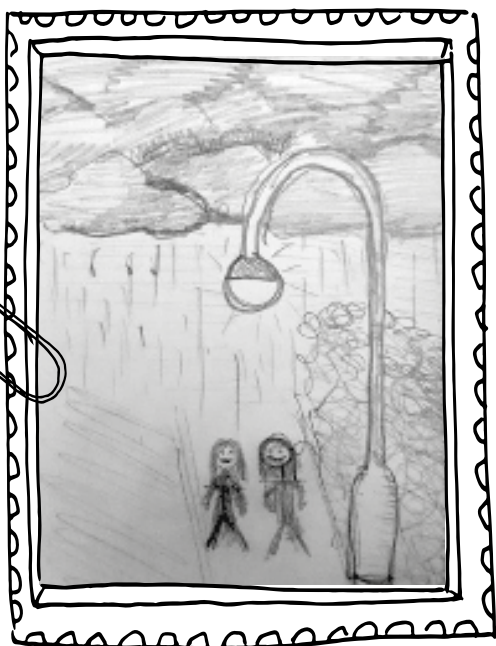
# The scrapbook of leaving care moments

**Young adult's experiences of leaving care need to be at the heart of designing what a new system should be.**



## Scrapbook moments

These 'moments' provide important insight to help reimagine the approach

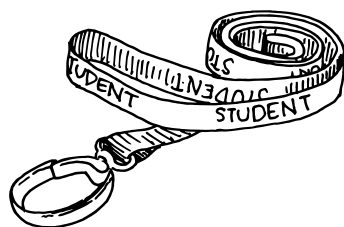


“

I'd just moved into college accommodation to live independently, and actually moved in on my birthday. My social worker came to see me to explain how to fill out a benefits form under a lamppost in the rain right before she left. I felt really like 'okay, so this is going to be difficult'.

📌 What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- Professionals can often make the leaving care process alienating.
- A lack of care and preparation for conversations that need more time and support often leaves young people in this position.
- Young people are expected to understand the benefit system whilst dealing with education.
- Care-experienced young adults are often wearing lots of hats without any support.



“

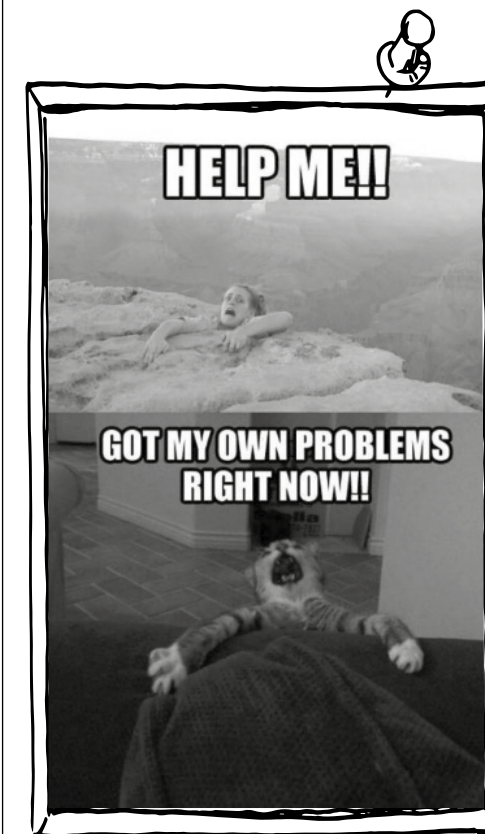
In first year of college I was kicked out at home and didn't tell anyone, which meant I was trying to support myself at 16. Then Covid hit. I was struggling with coursework and had to go into college a lot during lockdown. I tried to get back in with social services having previously been in foster care at 14. I thought it would be easy to get me back in the system, but it wasn't. I was missing college for days at a time and spent hours outside of Harrow Civic Centre right up until closing time when they would kick me out at 5pm.

📌 What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- Young adults can often fall through the gap due to the lack of support from social services.
- There is a direct link between care experienced young adults who have had experience being homeless.
- The care system can often feel like a slamming door once it's shut it's hard to get the exact support.
- Young adults in care often have to go through great lengths in order to be seen or heard.

“

My picture is representative of what went on – it's a bit of a joke. The day before you're 25 you're a full care leaver and then the day after you're not. You're the same person the day before and the same person the day after, yet it was a complete transition. What changed?



📌 What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- For care-experienced adults that one day is pivotal – it's a withdrawal of all support and leads to feelings of abandonment.

## Scrapbook moments



Imagine a picture of me standing alone outside in the rain. I entered care with a bang because of a domestic issue with family. I ran out and got arrested. A cab took me to a house – a care home – with lots of people I didn't recognise. I felt disconnected. It's a moment where you make or break in life. They weren't talking to me like 'hi are you okay?' – it was like 'this is what you get, this is how you get your money'. I felt alone, battling so many thoughts and reflecting to myself. This was at age 16. It was tough to be disconnected and just came out of a police station. They could have sat me down and say 'hey, are you okay?'.



This image takes me back to 2017 when I had to move somewhere. I was just finding myself and finding out who I was. It was hard moving out when I didn't have a job or anything. I had to go to Edinburgh for a case I wasn't involved in. When I look back it brings back not good memories, but it is what it is.

### What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- There isn't support in place for care-experienced adults to have therapeutic help on identity and belonging of who they are.
- Often care-experienced adults are more likely to be criminalised by their peers due to stigma and negative stereotypes.

### What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- When you enter the care system there isn't anyone who tells you it will be okay or reassure you of the storm you about to embark on.
- The lack of empathy from multi-agencies can often leave young adults in care isolated. Police can have a huge presence in a young person's time in care.
- Professionals can often sound robotic in a time of trauma and distress. Young adults need more love when entering the care system.



The picture is colourful with really strong colours in the different lines. The colours represented my feelings through care system and at different stages – always changing. A lot of times processes were quite triggering for stress and anxiety, and different colours represent that. It could have been a lot different.

### What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- Care-experienced young adults have all experienced anxiety, stress and isolation during their time spent in care.
- They will often navigate through the system and overcome these adversities without any mental health support.



I had dedicated myself for two years to working with social workers and the council, going along to the youth centre for kids in care. I was doing every workshop and every meeting. There were times where I told people I wasn't happy – but people would use the excuse that I seemed happy because I go to gym and play sports.

Things look happy for me but deep inside some people are actually hurting. My older sister was in care before me, but the system did nothing to really connect us in a way. I was in care for 7-8 years but only 3 years ago we reconnected. Now I'm an uncle to my nephew. That's the thing that's got me back on my feet.



### What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- Care-experienced young adults that are driven can often be overlooked by professionals and not receive the same support as their peers.
- There isn't support in place to reconnect siblings that have been placed in the care system. This can have long-lasting effects on healthy relationships.



## Scrapbook moments



Summer holidays in university were the worst. My local council refused to find me accommodation. Full term accommodation was at uni. I was homeless. My local authority said it's not our concern – “you're able to fend for yourself”.

I didn't have much money and was working in Nando's, and I couldn't just find a tenancy agreement for only three months. I basically had to live at different people's houses and sofa surfed, sleeping on couches. When people were looking forward to going back to their families and going on holiday, I was trying to find somewhere to sleep.



► What does this tell us about what's important for a reimagined approach?

- University for care-experienced adults can often feel lonely and isolating especially if there is no financial support packages in place to support care leavers during the holiday period.
- The postcode lottery can leave young people uncertain about what support is offered while at university. This can look very different for each local authority.

# Look and feel

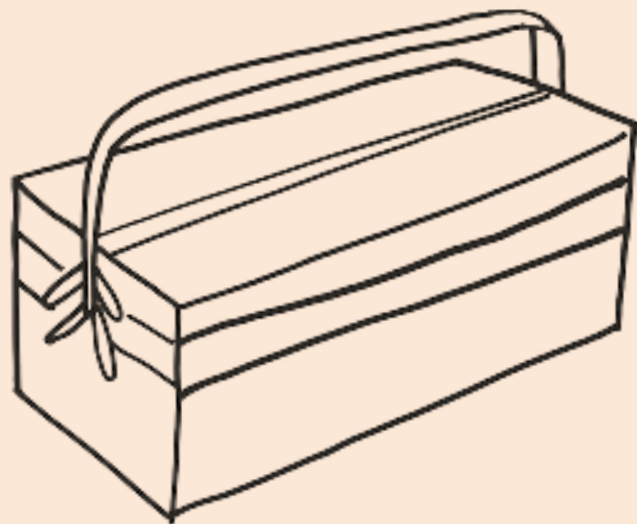
What are the key qualities and requirements for a new system?

What does it look like?

How does it make people feel?

# A toolbox for life

The toolbox for life highlights the key tools – the qualities or skills – that might be important to all young adults, but particularly those who are care-experienced. These are the tools which any system of support for care-experienced young adults should equip young people with.



Normally in the care system it will be like preparation for independence, like getting your white goods or cooking skills or budgeting, but what about the skills for living alone – dealing with your interpersonal skills and your relationships and your security and stability. They don't prepare you for that.



## A toolbox for life

# The measuring tape of risk



“

I've got a tape measure for risk assessing situations, the forethought and ability to think 'what will happen if I do this, what situation will I end up in?' Sometimes you can't help it; sometimes you haven't had the foresight to see what will happen or it's out of your control, but being able to risk assess the situation you are in or could be in if you do certain things.

The self-management aspect as well. What I found was when I was younger I would do things to make myself feel better, but they would end up being risky situations. If I had the tools to better self-manage my emotions and to self-soothe and not need risky behaviour to take myself out of what I was feeling then I wouldn't need necessarily as much risk management.

“

It represents it well because, although you can't assess risk in millimetres, it's still a unit of measurement. It's a rule to find out where on the scale you sit and how risky is this situation on the tape.

“

One important skill I find to be a problem with my best friend who's also a care leaver is prioritising. When I was in foster care, my carers from the age of 16 upwards taught me a lot, and they taught me to prioritise more important things over things that we don't need. My friend would prioritise a £3 meal deal over £3 on toilet roll that she really needs. I think it's really important people learn how to prioritise well.

“

Prioritisation of your life is always a skill. It's identified the fact we don't have that skill to begin with but also we're not given an introduction too. It's all or nothing – we've got no choice or we've got every choice in the world and it's overwhelming. It highlights an issue in the care system where there's no middle ground, there's no preparation, there's no anything like that. It's take so long for us to work everything out and get to a place that we're hitting 30 by the time we're getting it. And that's a real shame, it's trial and error. We fail a lot before we start getting it right.

## The prioritisation multitool

“

You'll need to buy a few of these [prioritisation multitools] and replace them as your priorities change.

“

I did prioritise a lot, but I went the other way. Unless I drastically needed something, I wouldn't spend a penny as I didn't have the money, and because I didn't get a lot, I grew up without many possessions at all and very limited items that I did need. I found it easy – I'd have holes in my clothes and stuff like that.

“

Yes prioritising is a really important skill, but why do we struggle so much? I think it's because we go from having every option or choice taken away from us to then when we become 18, it's like 'here, have everything, have every single thing you could possibly want to be in charge of, now you're in charge of it all! We've taught you nothing about how to deal with it and also you need to make sure you do it in the right order and prioritise the things that need doing, and you're just like 'what!?' And then you go into Tesco and buy that meal deal instead of the toilet roll because you just can't cope. And you're starving because you've not been able to organise 'right, I need to eat this tonight' and you don't even know you haven't got any toilet roll because you've got that much going on.





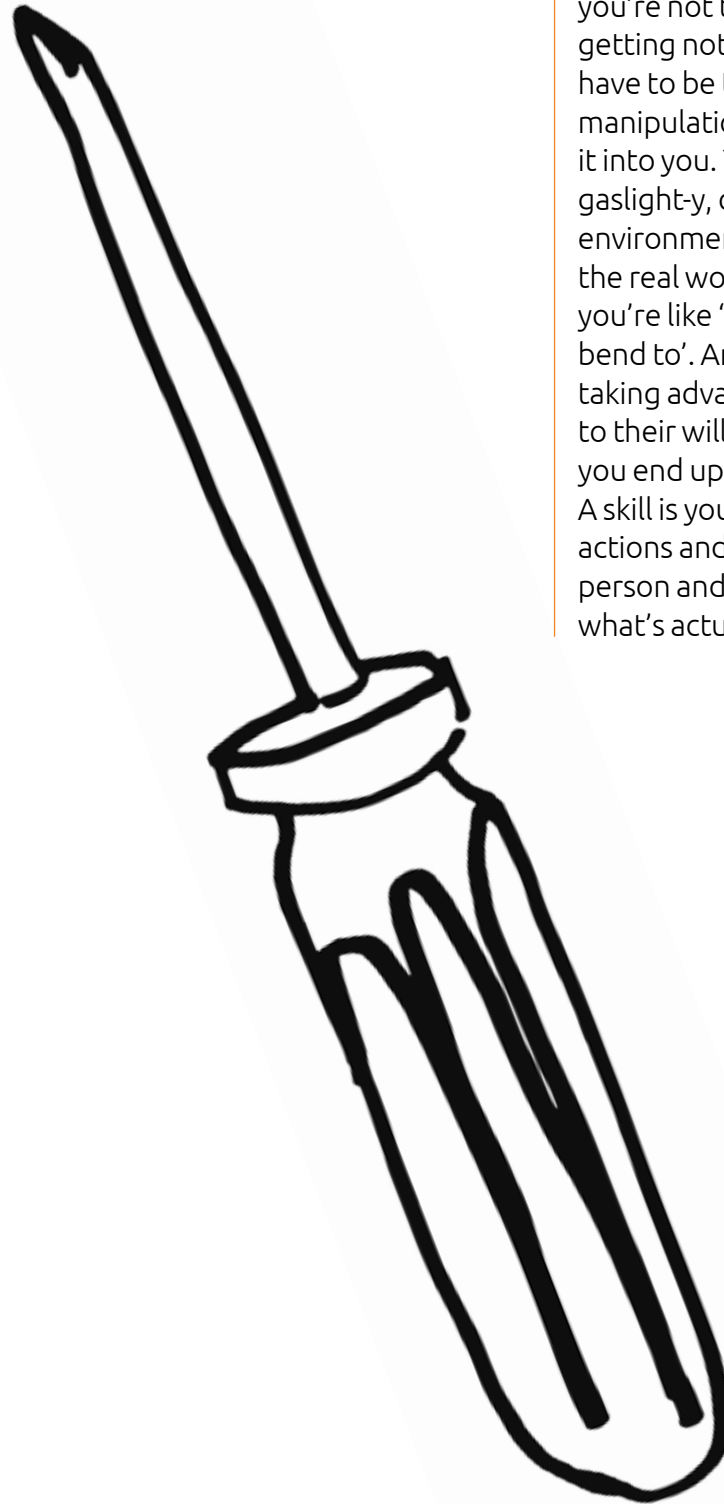
## A toolbox for life

# The relationship screwdriver

“

Because of our histories, we learn very well how to adapt to people's needs. It's survival. If I can fit this mould that's providing me with something that I need then I'm safe. It leaves us in a position where we're quite vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. It's good to be able to adapt, but because of you – because you need something from that person, not because they need something from you.

You need to know when and how and why you're doing it because otherwise you end up bending yourself into knots. You can lose yourself doing that and you don't know who you are because you've spent all your life trying to survive and fit everyone else's mould.



“

It's the same with social services. If you're not their best mate, you ain't getting nothing you're entitled to. You have to be that person. It breeds the manipulation, the coercion, it breeds it into you. You leave that systematic, gaslight-y, coercive, controlling environment and then you're out in the real world, and because it's normal, you're like 'right, who else do I now bend to'. And because people who like taking advantage of people who bend to their will are quite horrible people, you end up in the same situations. A skill is you're more aware of your actions and what you want, who is this person and are they good for me, what's actually going on here.”

“

**To maintain a good relationship, you need to think about 3 things – one thing you want to keep, one thing you want to get rid of, and one thing new you want to bring to that relationship. I feel like, if you're at least able to think like that, that in itself is being adaptive and flexible. Because that one thing they might want you to get rid of, you might want to keep that, but there's always a compromise in relationships. It's having that awareness.**

“

When you screw it in, you screw the screw really tight and it makes that connection strong, but it's also about what screw end you need in order to screw it in as well as you can. That could be what you need from that relationship or relationship management stuff like that. Being able to change or adapt or know what you need in order to be able to screw it in as tight as possible.

## A toolbox for life

# The self-worth weight



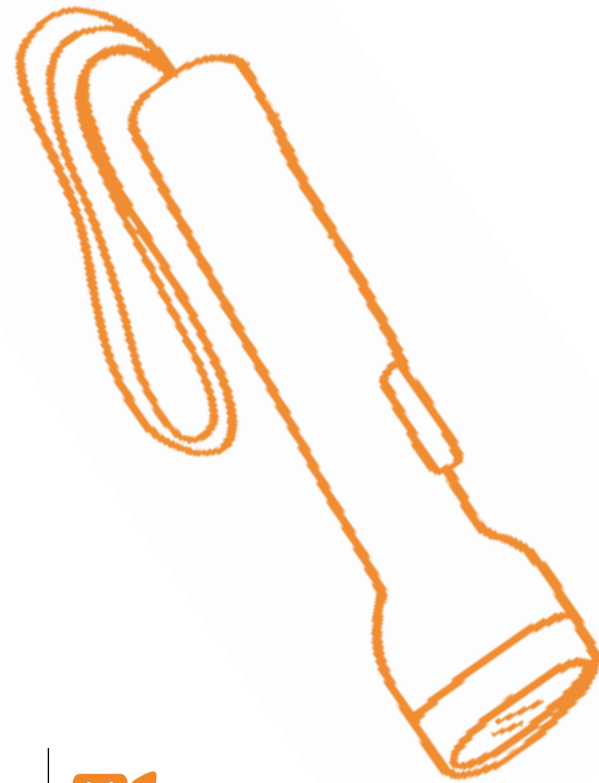
Self-worth – it needs to be something heavy, like a weight. If you have good self-worth, you're not gonna end up lowering what you're worth for other people.



It's about being self-aware of your needs and requirements rather than relying on the people who are meant to be responsible for you.



Self-care is a tool you need to learn, to care for yourself in ways that work for you. But I think that's something you'll need to replenish.



# The torch of optimism



Keeping optimistic, looking ahead, fighting through.

# Picture hooks of memories



You should always have a set of picture hooks with you so you can hang up your picture and remember the good bits and the things you want to remember, learn from or reflect on.



# The red tape scissors



Cut all the red-tape, bureaucracy and challenges and cut through.



## A toolbox for life

# The Swiss army knife of boundaries



Learning what your boundaries are, how to install them, how to defend your boundaries and keep them there when people are trying to trample them. Always your boundaries are changing, they're fluid depending on how you feel.

The Swiss army knife gives you different ones for different things, for different people. I think learning your boundaries and keeping them is one of the most important tools you could have in your kit. There's never a situation you wouldn't need them.



In the system you're always taught you're not allowed boundaries, you're not entitled to boundaries. It was born in me that boundaries were all I had so I never let them down, I'd fight people over it, I'd be in PEP meetings screaming hell. But it kept me sane, it made me strong, it gave me power and I knew that the boundary would never be taken down by me. Someone might overstep but it's not because I've let them. It gives you such power and makes you feel like you're the person in control of your own life. You can't control other people's lives but you can control your own.

# Concept ideas

What are some of the ideas we have about aspects of a new system?

# Designing neighbourhoods that work for care-experienced young adults

A new system needs to ensure strong community connections, supporting young people to feel connected to and part of their wider neighbourhoods. This needs to be designed in a way that reduces barriers to young people accessing their communities.





# Neighbourhood of support

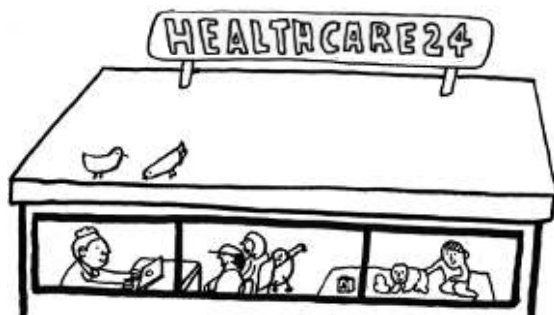


## Designing neighbourhoods

# Key components of a strong community

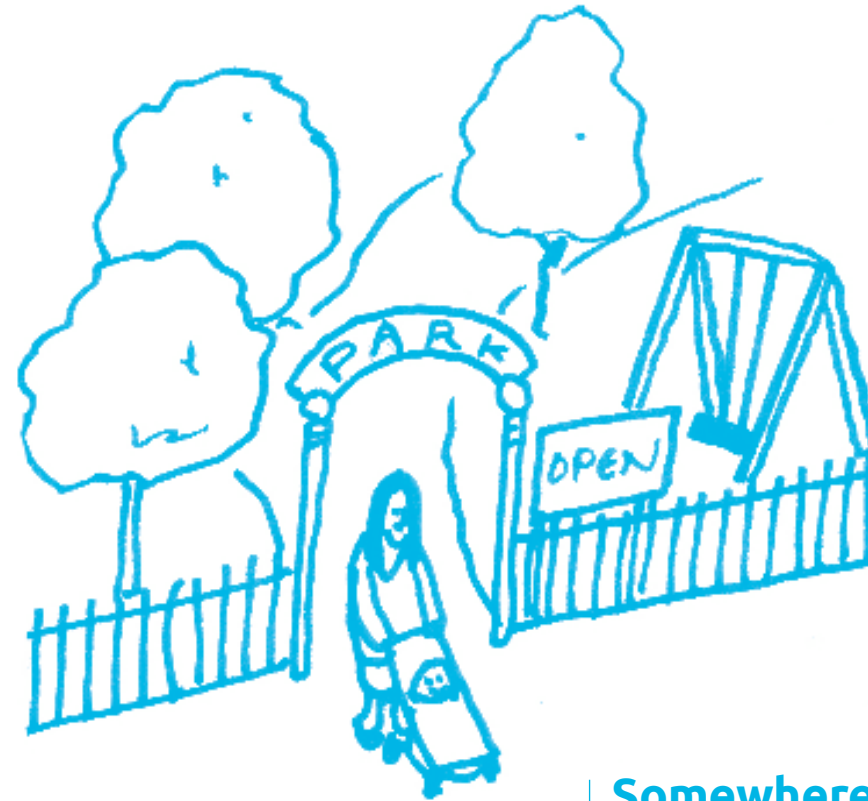
## Accessible healthcare facilities

- Free and accessible healthcare facilities.
- Sustained mental health support.
- An accessible open-door service continuing after last touchpoint with the care system.
- Embedded in the community.
- Removed financial burden of prescriptions.



## Educational hubs

- Free employability/education support hubs offering 1:1 support.
- Warm and supportive space with new computers for CV development/applications.
- Space to learn new skills whilst applying knowledge to chosen career.
- Continued access into adulthood.
- Volunteering opportunities to support peers.



## Somewhere to raise your children

- Safe and supportive environment.
- Buddying system to support with living independently; local groups and community workers.
- Love/warmth and empathy that is long-lasting to support healing from trauma.
- Recognising the challenges of being a parent – it takes a village to raise a child.

## Democracy and participation

- Channels to have your voice heard.
- Space to join meetings, support and become decision- and policy-makers.
- Training on politics and key legislation.





# Reimagining what's important

To reimagine 'leaving care' as we know it, we need to start from scratch with a blank piece of paper without the constraints of current systems and resources. We want to see concept ideas that are inspirational.



## Reimagining what's important

# The one-stop shop

“

You know when you go to the dump and there are different sections – there's a metal section to throw away your metal items. Maybe there could be workers there who can examine whether an item is in good condition? If it's in a somewhat good condition we can upcycle and change it and give it to someone who can make use of it.

“

And if young people were involved in upcycling that furniture. You would be so proud if you had changed something to be what you want it to be. I think that would make you feel a lot more friendly towards it. I have loads of stuff in my house that's second hand because I needed to and I had no choice because of budget, but I'll make it my own and it makes me proud and takes the edge off a little bit.

“

**I hate this because I've always had to buy second hand and I hate it, but if there was this massive furniture shop that got given discontinued stuff from DFS or ex-showroom stuff and it was new, but much more discounted and you got the chance to see it before you bought it. It would be nice if there was a reduce, reuse, recycle aspect to it.**

There should be a funding place where it's for everyone in the neighbourhood. If they need a sofa or a TV. They could go and get the funding without all these big interests. Something that really supports the people in the neighbourhood without them worrying.

”



🕒 **What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?**

- Reducing barriers/ hoops to getting what you need.
- Feeling proud.
- Importance of personal spaces/home.
- Using what already exists.

Reimagining what's important

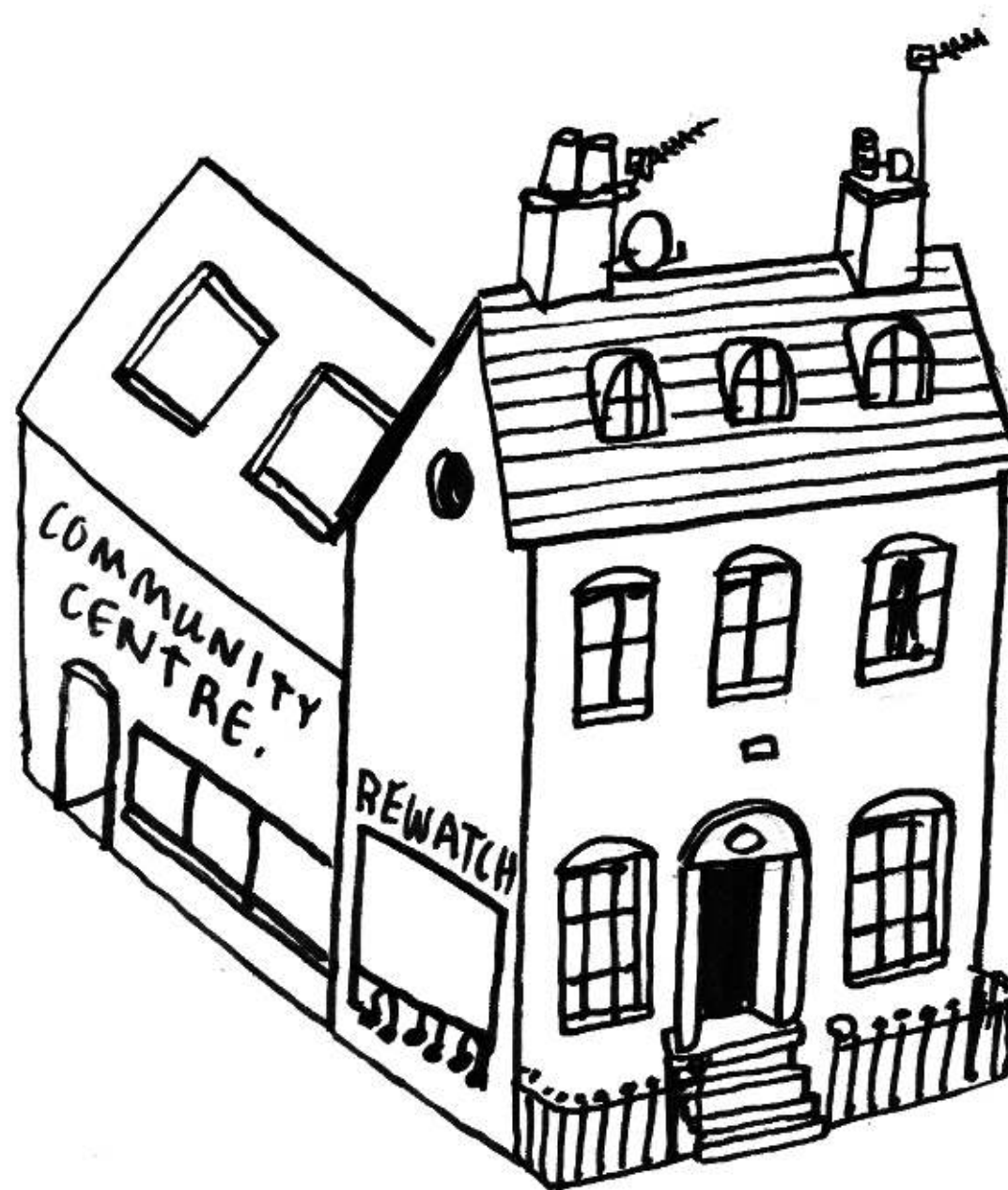
# Communal youth spaces

“

Where I live, poverty is real, and I would just like to live in a place where people are not financially struggling, they had access to better support and education. When I was growing up I used to go to a lot of youth clubs but all of those youth clubs have shut down, so it would be nice if the young people could go to youth clubs, music centres, studios, and just really pursue their talents and passion and not have to worry about money. I feel money is the biggest thing.

“

**For me, a lot of these youth clubs were located in really run down areas which made it dangerous for kids to travel and that's what prevented lots of people from going to these clubs. There should be funding for, let's say, a minibus. I would push forward for a lot more communal areas.**



I really like the idea of having a minibus to take you to areas where you don't feel safe.



The sports and movement complex:

“

It would have state of the art equipment and space for all sports as well as movement – like dance. It would be fully accessible for all abilities and incomes. It would be subsidised if you couldn't afford it.

What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?

- Meeting and connecting to others.
- Ensuring equal access and participation.
- Making it safe and secure.
- Pursuing talents and interests/hobbies.
- High-quality options – not just the cheapest or easiest thing.



Reimagining what's important

# Magic money trees (and skills exchange)

► What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?

- Financial and social elements considered together.
- Give and take – not just one way.
- Assuming good and reducing the hoops to jump through.
- Equality – no hierarchies.
- Sharing and recognising different skills.



“

My neighbourhood will have a money tree where people can go to it and then there's a social element – every time you take the money you have to give back with a skill you can give to the community, like if you're good at design or teaching English.

“

I suppose in a way you could say that top of the chain white middle class man has more skills to give, but I don't think that's true. Like on paper skills maybe, but if I'm really poor but I'm a great cook, that's a life skill and that's just as valuable. It doesn't look at that and think “right, you've got more money so you're deserving of more things”. It could be someone who's homeless but speaks two languages.

I like that idea because it's a give and take, and that's really important. For a community, it should be like that.

”

“

I like the fact it brings equality which is something I'm really passionate about. The fact that anyone can have access to it and it's trade for trade, so if I'm an investment banker then I can take money from it and deliver a session – it doesn't create a hierarchy and I feel that sometimes in life there's always a hierarchy of ‘those that went to uni’ and ‘those that got a 1st’ and ‘those who didn't go to uni’ and those who did this and that's really annoying and it breeds elitism, and it happens in our neighbourhoods and our communities so much, but with your idea it eliminates that and makes everyone equal and gives everyone equal opportunity to gain or give money and knowledge.

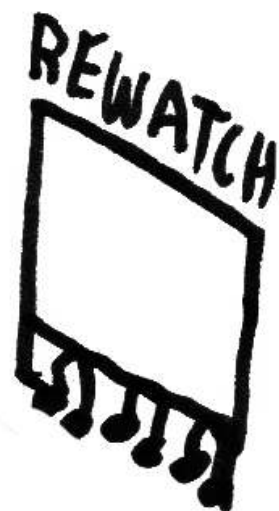
“

I really like it because it takes out the obstacles of obtaining money. I've got skills, but I'm disabled and I find it very difficult to retain employment or even gain employment, but if I was going to the money tree there's nobody sat there judging me on how much I'm going to cost them – instead it's “Oh right you've got something I can use that's really important for other people. Great, here's some money to live and then you then donate that.” It takes out the gatekeeping aspect of trying to be a ‘contributing member of society’.

## Reimagining what's important

# The re-watch button

I like the idea of being able to rewind a good moment. We don't get enough time to go back in the good moments. Especially when you're in care, you only remember a lot of the bad moments, you don't remember the good ones.



You can re-watch but you can't rewind. You can watch and learn from your actions so you know you won't be doing that a second time.



If you knew you could rewind if you'd made a mistake, you'd be more careless, and I also feel as though you wouldn't learn from your mistakes because you wouldn't make them. A lot of the time when you make a mistake or there's an accident or something, you don't learn that it was a mistake until much later.



That's good because that's reflecting on your actions.



You remember things differently as well.

📌 **What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?**

- Memories and recording experiences.
- Revisiting good bits.
- Learning from mistakes and having the opportunity for second chances.

## Reimagining what's important

# The celebratory community kitchen



It would be a way of the community coming together and appreciating care-experienced young people because I feel that, as time goes on, we find ourselves so far removed from adults – they don't understand us, they think we're delinquents, annoying. But I just feel like the reasons why care-experienced young people are so misunderstood is because our lives are so far apart – we might live in the same houses as adults but we don't share a life. That never used to be the case as much before the 'age of the teenager' that came about. It used to be the case that you were a child but you just did child-appropriate versions of adult things, but then it was different when teenagers got money and stuff like that. I think since that we've just become further and further removed from sharing commonalities with adults and I think that they do think we're incapable. Cooking is a life skill that will serve you well as you get older but it's also a way of communicating with people, connecting and you're also learning about multiple cultures.



A community kitchen where young people and young care-experienced people go to learn the skills of cooking, but not just boring everyday cooking. It would encompass food from all over the world and all different cultures and countries, and you would prepare the food and the community would then come and eat it.



For me, I love cultural food places. It's celebrating them. Let's say it's Diwali, there would be a street party for Diwali, let's say it's Hanukkah.

📌 **What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?**

- Meeting and connecting to others.
- Ensuring equal access and participation.
- Making it safe and secure.
- Pursuing talents and interests/hobbies.
- High-quality options – not just the cheapest or easiest thing.

## Reimagining what's important

# Care-experienced communities



They wouldn't be far out of the way but enough so they have peace and quiet when they need it and land to grow vegetables and fruit and even grow a business from it.



**Preparation for adulthood programme.** In the town centre there would be a place where you learnt general first aid, how to manage money, how to clean properly, how to cook – every little thing where you leave home and you're like "oh my god, I don't know how to live, I don't know how to do that". They would then prepare you with a two-year programme so before you leave so when you do leave you know you've got this and it doesn't feel like you're falling off the edge of a cliff.



I really like having a space for care leavers you can go to and come through. Something that's not too far but it's optional. Sometimes we want to just be around people that look like us and are the same as us so it would be that shared common ground. I'd love to go there.



◀ **What does this idea tell us about what's important for care-experienced young adults?**

- Designated spaces for people who share experiences or characteristics.
- Learning slowly and with help over a long period of time.
- Taking ownership over things in your life.

# Outcome



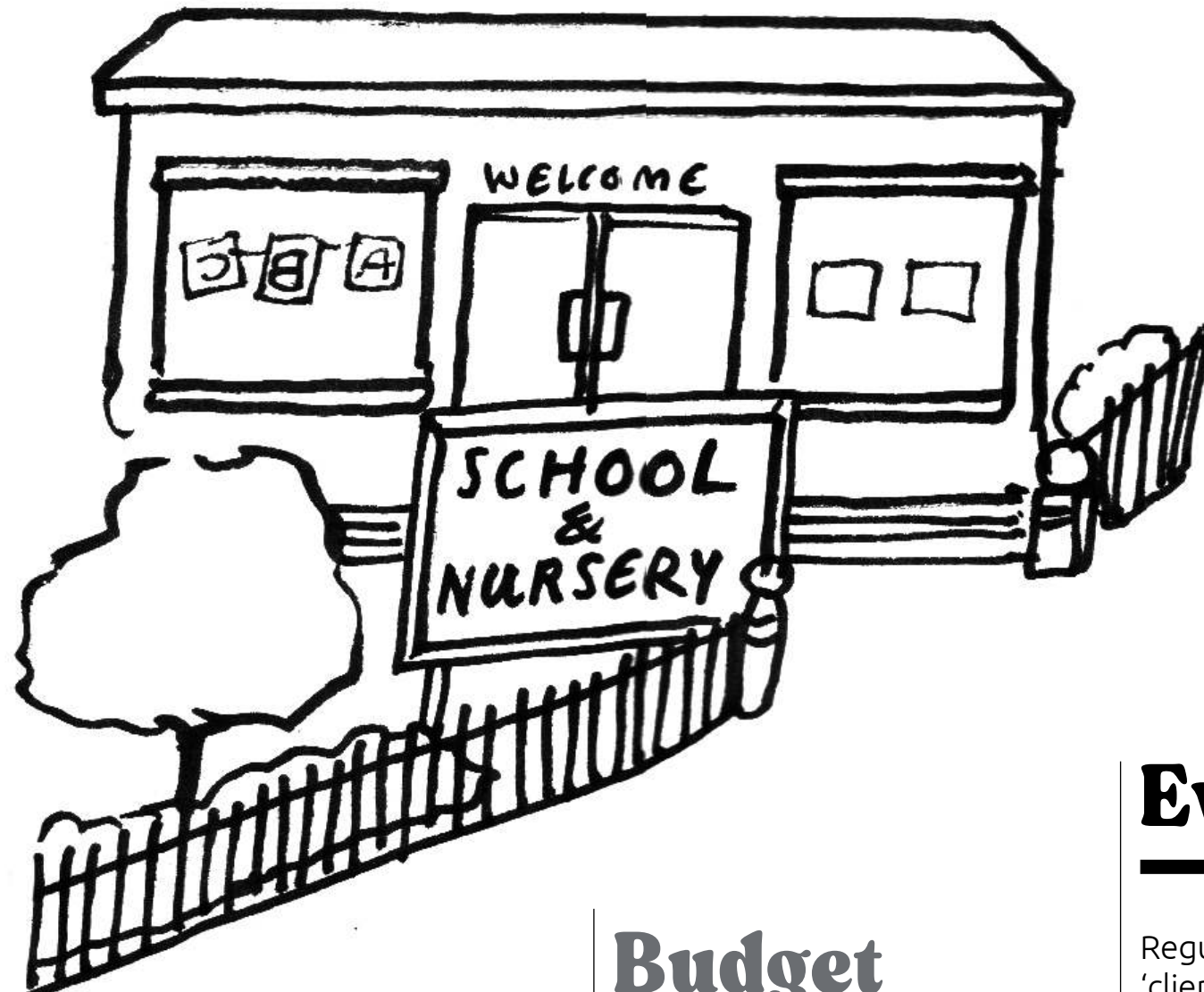
## Outcome

# Timeline

This design brief covers the key things we wanted Josh MacAlister and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care to consider when they designed the detail of what reforms to the care system might look like.

We hope the design for the care system matches what's included here.

Now the Government, as the architects building the care system, need to set a clear timeline and action plan for how they will take forward these design principles.



## Budget

The design team should consider how and where resources should be best spent to ensure sustainable and sufficient funding that guarantees support into adulthood.

## Evaluation

Regular review points for the 'clients' – the thousands of children and young people who are in care now and who may enter care in the future – to offer feedback on the construction progress, must be built in to ensure the foundations are solid.

**Become Charity**

Unit 151, 264 Lavender Hill  
London SW11 1LJ

@Become1992  
media@becomecharity.org.uk  
**becomecharity.org.uk**

**BECOME.**  
THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE  
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

 **Esmée  
Fairbairn**  
FOUNDATION