

TRANSITIONS EVALUATION: ADDENDUM

**Stories of change from young people and
family members**

March 2026

Stories collected by:

Dr Katherine Allen
Dr Laura Stevens
Dr Linda Cooper
Institute for Social Justice & Crime
University of Suffolk

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Disclaimer	2
About the stories	4
The stories	4
Story 1: ‘They listen. They’re people’	4
Story 2: ‘I feel like I’m at a really good place at the minute’	6
Story 3: ‘It just lifts you up’	8
Story 4: ‘I just wish all the young people had somebody like this’	9
Story 5: ‘I have gotten better with people, gotten better with basically everything really’	11

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank everyone whose participation, support and guidance has helped bring this project to fruition

We are very grateful to Heidi Dix (Director of the Youth Justice Institute), for her incisive and constructive feedback on emerging findings and report drafts.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the team at Future Projects, for their warm welcome during fieldwork, their support with sense-checking the evaluation approach and materials, and their invaluable contributions to the research.

Thanks also to our colleagues in the Institute for Social Justice and Crime (ISJC): Professor Miranda Horvath (Director) for her judicious guidance and oversight across the course of the project, and Dr Joey Hudgell (Research Projects Officer), for their unerring support with project planning and coordination.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the young people and family members who entrusted us with their stories – your words are at the heart of this evaluation

Disclaimer

Copyright University of Suffolk 2026

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this report is accurate and up to date, neither the authors nor the University of Suffolk can accept legal responsibility or liability for anything done by readers as a result of any errors or omissions.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publishers, University of Suffolk.

Published by:

University of Suffolk, Waterfront Building, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1QJ

To cite this report:

Allen, K., Stevens, L. & Cooper, L. (2026) Transitions evaluation: Addendum. Stories of change from young people and family members. Institute for Social Justice & Crime, University of Suffolk.

About the stories

The following stories were collected during an independent evaluation of the Transitions Service, conducted by a research team from the Institute for Social Justice and Crime, University of Suffolk.

The evaluation explored how the programme works, and how young people, family members and professionals feel it is making a difference for local people and communities.

To hear the perspectives of young people and their families, researchers spoke with five people who had been supported by the service, including three young people and two family members.

These open-ended conversations (storytelling interviews) focused on exploring storytellers' experiences with the Transitions Service, what had changed for them because of receiving support through the service, and what this change meant to them. Researchers also asked storytellers how they felt the service could be improved.

After each conversation, researchers used the recording and transcript to create a 1–2-page story which captures participants' experiences with the service, in their own words.

Each storyteller then had the opportunity to review their story, to ensure that they felt comfortable with it being shared and felt that it accurately reflected their perspective.

To protect participant anonymity and confidentiality, names, places and potentially identifying details have been removed; otherwise, the stories seek to capture what storytellers said and how they said it.

For further information about the evaluation as a whole, and discussion of themes across the stories, interviews and workshops, see the full report.

The stories

Story 1: 'They listen. They're people'

What changed?

If it weren't for Baseline, I think my daughter would be dead. And I think I'd have had a nervous breakdown because I was dealing with it all on my own.

My daughter was under social services because of trauma, but previous to that she got put out of school. The school used to say to her that she's useless, she's going to end up in these naughty schools, "You'll become nothing". Once she went to the high school, all they kept wanting was just chuck her out. You know, not help, just chuck them out. Obviously, that's damaged her as well because she's been told she's useless and she'll never make nothing of herself. Then she got in with people who she shouldn't have got in with. So she then went into drinking heavily, which she got hospitalised for. She then stopped the drinking and went on to drugs. Social services never helped us at all. They might as well have not been involved with us.

It gives me a break because I've got two adult children now and it's just me, they've got no one else. So I've got someone to talk to, I can pass on to the Youth Connector "My daughter's done this, can you..?", you know, or "Can you get her to wherever she's got to go to?" It just took a lot of stress and strain off me so that I can then think a bit more clearly.

She was coming up to 18 and they finish with them in social services. So then social services put her onto, or us onto, Baseline [and the Youth Connector]. I think that's nice when you just talk to one person, you've got one person in a service where you can go to, and then get that trust and open up. If you don't trust people, you ain't gonna open up, feel relaxed with them and tell them your problems.

They've helped her get different services, like Universal Credit and things like that. They sort a lot of things out for her. They've helped get her sorted out in hospitals and they take her, because when I go, she gets on to me and shouts at me and that then stresses me out. If [Youth Connector] and them go, then she doesn't do that. And she talks more openly with them. I don't want her to hold anything back, because she needs support and medical help. I don't want her to go with me and then not tell them something important.

I can see the difference in my daughter, and I know if anything is bothering her the Youth Connector will pick up on it. I think she knows that she can turn to the Youth Connector for anything, and she feels that she can do that. I know if the Youth Connector thinks I need to know anything, she'll tell me. If not, I let them deal with it because I know teenagers don't want to tell their mums things. And I know my daughter's safe, as safe as we can keep her. She'll come home and say, "Well, I've done this, they've helped me sort this out". Before she'd just shut off and wouldn't speak and "Everyone's useless", but she's never said that about Baseline. I think it's because they listen. They're people.

What could be improved?

I'm really pleased with what the Youth Connector is doing and what the service has done for my daughter. I'm just hoping that it's going to carry on getting better. I still worry she'll go back, but I think that's a mum thing. I'd like to see [Transitions Service] just helping her off the drugs, obviously keep supporting her because I don't think there's going to be a quick fix. That's why I don't want it to stop because I don't know where she'll end up. She's just been let down by so many people. I think this is the only service that's actually been there and helped her through things and not left her.

Family member

Story 2: 'I feel like I'm at a really good place at the minute'

What changed?

When you're under 18, you don't really have much choice who you're working with. I was used to having social workers and youth workers. But then when I was 18 and was referred to Transitions, I thought "Well, if I don't want to do it, I won't do it". And then it was alright. It wasn't as bad as what I thought it would be.

I used to come here every other day to begin with, with the first support worker [Youth Connector], and then they helped me get placements. These lot at Baseline Centre will do every activity but I just didn't really get involved in anything. It would just be me chilling really, and having somewhere to actually relax instead of hearing a lot of negative stuff. I would either just do coursework for my current job or just chill or just have some conversations with some workers.

These lot are really laid back. I like the way they do things. They are professionals, but they also act themselves. You know what I mean? If you have your own personality whilst working in a professional manner, it works a lot better.

You get to know professionals. I feel like they know your face, like if there's any sort of emotion there. For example. I'd say "I'm alright. I don't need to go anywhere". They'll just come anyway and just bring me up here. Obviously having someone there if I've had a really shitty day, something really shitty has happened. I could just get out of the house. For me, I hate speaking about my feelings. These lot know that I will never, ever be that type of person. A lot of it was just getting me outside the house, really, just random stuff.

I had really dirty attitude problems and always wanted to have a fight. Just a really angry person. Learning how to deal with certain situations has helped a lot. There was constant reminding by the Youth Connector about the job I wanted to do, because I'd always forget and then just go "fuck it". Obviously having someone there to fall back on and always message you helped a lot.

I feel like I'm at a really good place at the minute and I hate blowing smoke up my arse, but I feel like I've smashed it so far. I just want to keep it how it is at the minute. I've set two goals for this year: get my licence and get a job.

Since this year, I haven't really spoke to them, to be honest. I've just been so busy. But it's nice, it's someone to fall back on. I could just go off and do my own thing and then just have a net to fall back on if I needed it.

What could be improved?

I personally wouldn't go the way they went about it [transferring into the service], but I get it because they just wanted to get it done ASAP. It was easier transferring for me, because I've had so many professionals, but I feel like for other people, it needs to be worked on more.

Like I'd met the Youth Connector the same day and that's it. I'd never met anyone before this. It needs to be like, not chucked straight into the deep end. It's new people, isn't it, that you've got to get to know?

Young person

Story 3: 'It just lifts you up'

What changed?

In school I was really anxious. And then after school, when I hit 16 was when I hit rock bottom with drugs, so that anxiety just gets pushed to the bottom when you're high all the time. I didn't care about anything or anyone, or if I hurt anyone with my actions.

I was involved with drug dealers and drugs and stuff so social services became involved. And then I turned 18, so social services had to give me some support through the Transitions Service.

The Youth Connector has helped me a lot, because I was in a bad place. Just having them there to support you, even though she's not there every second of the day, you know in the back of your mind that they're there and it's quite comforting. That time of the week when me and the Youth Connector see each other, it just lifts you up. It's just having that consistency and someone there that you actually think cares about you, someone you can trust. That's what's important. You couldn't just throw in some Tom, Dick or Harry and have the same relationship. She's very open-minded, and also the way she communicates, it's not like talking down to you, you don't feel belittled or anything. It really isn't the job, it is the person.

Since then, I've done equine therapy, which helped with my self-confidence and self-esteem. The way I deal with things is because of how I was treated when I was younger, so the mental health team are doing trauma stabilisers to help with how I process it and triggers. The Youth Connector helps me go to my appointments at the job centre. I have a sick note and I'd forgotten to get it, so she came into the doctor's. Even the sexual health side of things, because I can avoid that because that seems scary.

We're focusing on getting me into education this year, because I dropped out of college in my third year, so I couldn't get my Maths and English. This year is the year I'm gonna get my Maths and English, hopefully. Before, I wouldn't even think about doing my GCSEs because I was so let down by myself not passing. Whereas now I believe I can do it. So we're just going to try and do that.

Having a support worker is essential for me. Living in shared housing, it can get very lonely. Having constant support is crucial for my wellbeing and ability to function. The Youth Connector helps me in many ways, with daily tasks like managing my schedule, attending appointments, even food shopping, which can be very overwhelming with anxiety.

What could be improved?

When my last support worker [Youth Connector] left, I was so stuck and worried without that guidance and stability. My mental health slowly declined. It was just a reminder of how much you do rely on the support. We need our support workers. It's been taken away already once. And if that happens again, I'll take it up with social services myself.

Young person

Story 4: 'I just wish all the young people had somebody like this'

What changed?

I am mum to a daughter who made a disclosure. It was all completely out of the blue. We would never have thought we'd be in this position. We would never have thought our daughter would be in this position.

Initially, obviously police had to be involved and social services and that sort of thing, and then, all of a sudden, she had a social worker, she had various other workers, a police person who worked within that particular type of crime. The support was there.

She then hit 18, and there was nothing.

Before my daughter got involved with Future Projects, if she got stressed about something or really upset about something, she would run off. She would literally pack her bags and she'd be gone, and we didn't necessarily know where. We didn't really know what she was doing.

Eventually somebody put us on to Futures, and they've been invaluable to us. My daughter had a support worker, the Youth Connector, who she actually grew to really trust. It was really good for her.

The Youth Connector was really supportive, she would assist her with applications for things, she'd take her to doctors' appointments, she helped her when she was trying to get counselling. The Youth Connector would go to first meetings with her so she didn't have to go into things cold, in a sense, and there was a familiar face. Things where, at 18, when you're an adult, you actually don't want your parents doing everything. She was a really good mentor to her. I think it's probably helped her more than she thinks it's helped her, having somebody else who's nearer her age to sound off to, to talk to when it's got really bad.

Futures have been the place that she has turned to when she is in a real muddle. They've been somewhere where she's been able to go "Look, this is the situation", and then they have contacted us or worked with us in trying to put together a little bit of support and help her in that situation. For us to know that there is somebody else there means it just takes the pressure off. It means that we're not constantly panicking. It's helpful to have somebody else who's outside the situation who could say to us, "Actually, I think you're wrong", you know, or "How about trying it this way?" They can just bring in a whole new element that that we can't as parents.

My daughter always had very high goals for herself and was set on doing certain things in her career. She wants to learn, she wants to succeed. She is incredibly bright. Her future, I think, is amazing, but her confidence is just rock bottom now. Life had a lot to offer and all of a sudden it feels like the rug's been pulled out. I think she would say she doesn't know what she's going to do now, because every avenue is closed to her in her mind. Actually, I know it isn't. I've been that age and I've lived many years since then, and I know life creates all sorts of other opportunities. But for her, everything's just sort of come to an end. To have somebody else who's not me and dad saying "It will be OK, there is still a future", and somebody to help her explore those avenues, that's great. It's that knowing how to move forward. I think if we didn't have Futures, we would feel a lot more pressured into "Well, you

must do this” or “You must try that”, whereas Futures are actually able to say, “Well, what are you interested in? Have you thought about this?”, stuff that we’ve never thought of.

For us as a family, it's meant that there's just been a calmness that we perhaps hadn't got before. We're not constantly stressed about where she's going to be and that sort of thing. We can't always know where she is. She's an adult, and we've got to let her have her own life as well. So it's meant that there's been less disagreements. We're a little bit more chilled because of the fact that they're involved.

I just wish all the young people had somebody like this. It's just been such a beneficial thing.

What could be improved?

My daughter had the previous Youth Connector for just under a year, and then the previous Youth Connector had to leave. It's been a bit harder getting her engaged this time.

There's a lot of stop-start. You have this person, you build trust with this person and after a couple of weeks you're ditched, or the rules change because of your age, and you're expected to do it all again. It's not a nice introduction to being an adult.

It's been harder, I think, getting her involved because she also knows that there was an issue with funding last year. She wasn't sure whether the organisation was going to get funding. If you're opening up to somebody, and getting them involved in your life, if you don't know that they're then going to be there, what's the point? So I think that's where my daughter's at in terms of engagement, I think she's a bit concerned that people might not always be there and then it's a risk building another friendship in that sense.

Family member

Story 5: 'I have gotten better with people, gotten better with basically everything really'

What changed?

I wasn't in a great place at first.

I didn't have any help at the time. – I was using like 25, sometimes 30, grammes of [drug] a day. At first, I was in such a bad place I wouldn't even leave the house at all. Self-care I was really struggling with, I stopped getting my hair done and my eating was really bad, too.

Me and mum were really on a rocky path. She didn't have anyone to talk to with about the situation that was going on with me. We were just arguing. I was going to go out and live somewhere else.

I've gotten a lot better since the Youth Connector's been here. She'll come to my appointments with me, my meetings. We've gone out for a meal, stuff like that, she makes sure I eat. She encouraged me to go and get my hair done. If I'm in a bad place the Youth Connector will get me out of the house. If I'm feeling rough the Youth Connector will know. Maybe she'll stay with me until I feel better. Even just going in the car, blasting music, it's just little stuff.

I'm a bit more confident, I have gotten better with people, gotten better with basically everything really. Before, I was so against going to these [substance use] meetings, I would not go. Now the Youth Connector goes with me, so I've got somebody there. I will go to them - I'll still be a bit moody in them, don't get me wrong, but it's better because I literally was so against everything I was against, like, even like talking to anyone. All my friends, I just cut them off to and the Youth Connector has got me to see, like, from both sides.

Now I'm only using only two grammes [of drugs per week] and I've kind of just done that by myself only with the Youth Connector's help. That's down to the Youth Connector getting me out to do normal stuff and getting me a routine. She would just take me out if I felt bad, so then I wouldn't have that urge to then go out and be like, "Oh, OK, I need to go use".

She's helped with a lot of home stuff too. Now mum knows that I speak to the Youth Connector, and that's calming, I guess. Obviously, we still bicker a little, but she understands a lot more. Like mum didn't get in her head that there was some stuff that she worded completely wrong to me and it made me go worse. And now Youth Connector explained to her a bit more. She's starting to understand. So she doesn't really have a go at me anymore.

I've never had a job, but I want a job. That's getting into another routine. I wanted to learn to drive, but I couldn't do it when I was using that much. Now it's an option again. So I was thinking about doing that because then that's something to focus on too. I've rekindled with my old mates too now, so it's just getting better.

What could be improved?

I was not going to come back, to be honest, when the previous Youth Connector left. Then I actually met the current Youth Connector and it was alright. But I don't really get along with meeting new people, having to explain everything again.

That's what I've always struggled with every single worker I've had, it was always constantly new workers. Just always having to sit there and they're reading up the notes, it's obviously not the whole story. It's like, "OK, I don't want to explain to you". Because the Youth Connector, she saw me like when I was at first in my rough stage. If there was somebody new, they wouldn't know all that and they'd think, "Oh, you're not that bad?"

Family member

Further information and contact

These powerful stories were collected using an adapted version of the storytelling evaluation method (Old Fire Station, 2025).

Storytelling interviews are designed to enable the people who use a service to tell those delivering it what matters to them, inviting them to share their views about:

- What changed for them?
- How did the change happen?
- Why was that change important?.

For additional information about this approach, please see the [Old Fire Station \(2026\)](#).

For further details about the research team's independent evaluation of the Transitions Service, please see the main report, which should be read in conjunction with these stories of change:

Allen, K., Stevens, L. & Cooper, L. (2026) 'It just lifts you up'. Evaluation of the Transitions Service. Institute for Social Justice & Crime, University of Suffolk.

For questions about the evaluation, please contact the research team:

Dr Katherine Allen, k.allen3@uos.ac.uk

Dr Laura Stevens, l.stevens@uos.ac.uk

Dr Linda Cooper, l.cooper7@uos.ac.uk