



A Culture Book

Why are we doing this?

We have a vision for Wigan Borough to be a confident place with confident people. This means helping all our children and young people become resilient and self reliant adults. To achieve this vision we know that we need to work with our young people, to transform our services, create opportunities for them and help them to flourish as confident adults in a place they can belong.

We have worked closely with our young people, staff and partners to create the ATOM Team which ensures that, through one keyworker, young people access the right services at the right time and in the right place to meet their needs. It builds on their strengths and assets to ensure that their needs, no matter how diverse, are addressed within a single team of trusted and skilled workers who are there for our young people, no matter what. This integrated team stays with the young person throughout their journey, be it to help them find a place they can call home, to support them and help them find strength in a moment of crisis or help them to try new things to find activities that they love and can look forward to. It ensures young people are not passed from service to service, but have a dedicated, multidisciplinary, highly trained team surrounding and supporting them.

“It provides a team who have a consistent trusting relationship with young people, and who stick with them, no matter what, as they move further into adulthood.”

How to use this Culture book

This is a Culture book, or a guideline for staff, that gives an overview of ATOM – what we do and why we do it. It has been designed so that individual sections can be read on their own. It also works well if you read it in one go. The guideline covers all the basics you'll need to know and should be read as part of your induction, and as something you are encouraged to re-read from time to time to refresh your memory. This guideline is, however, only as good as the conversations that it inspires in you. So please read, talk and ask questions.

We hope that this helps you understand why we do things in the way that we do, and how you can make your best contribution.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ATOM

- Message from the young people
- Our Deal
- How ATOM was created
- Who it's for and what makes it different
- Vision and principles

THE CORE OFFER

- Building strong relationships
- Developing resilience
- Preparing for adult life
- Finding a place to belong
- Staying safe

THE TEAM

- Keyworker
- Lifecoach
- Communication support
- Police community support
- Hub foster carer
- Social worker
- Portfolio lead
- Supported lodgings

THE SERVICE

- The service
- Operating model
- Placement options

Message from young people:

“What matters to us”

The ATOM project came from the idea of putting the young person at the centre of everything and building around them and creating strong bonds between young people and workers.

For us the most important elements of ATOM are:

- Building trusting relationships
- Time out period on our terms
- Support for young people to access services
- More opportunities
- Young people at the centre

We want to be supported by staff who :

- Are less formal
- Do the job but are friendly
- Feel trustworthy
- Come across as confident but not over confident
- Get to know us and are interested
- Listen
- Don't judge
- Look at our strengths

We want people making decisions to:

- Remember it's our life
- Judge us on our strengths not our weaknesses

Our Deal, written by our young people

You will (team):

- create a positive atmosphere for young people
- be professional but friendly – “you want to feel like staff know what they are doing”
- be nurturing, helpful and supportive
- think about the past, present and future and be working to all 3 aspects in a young person's life
- create new and exciting opportunities and support them through learning and changes
- invest in strong and ongoing relationships that you sustain and persist with, no matter what
- believe in young people and inspire them to achieve
- be fun and make young people feel individual and special
- make young people feel equal

We will (the council):

- create a positive atmosphere for our team and foster carers
- appoint leaders who nurture and support our team to persist with children no matter what
- believe in our team and inspire them to achieve
- provide training that promotes learning
- create a 24/7 wrap around service that provides a whole team of support for every young person and the foster carers and staff supporting them
- ensure foster carers get the training and support that they need to persist with children no matter what
- make sure the Hubs feel cozy, warm and homely
- listen to staff, young people and foster carers to learn how to improve the service

An introduction to ATOM

This section gives an overview of ATOM and what makes it unique. It also highlights what we want to achieve.

How ATOM was created

Creating this service has been a collaborative exercise

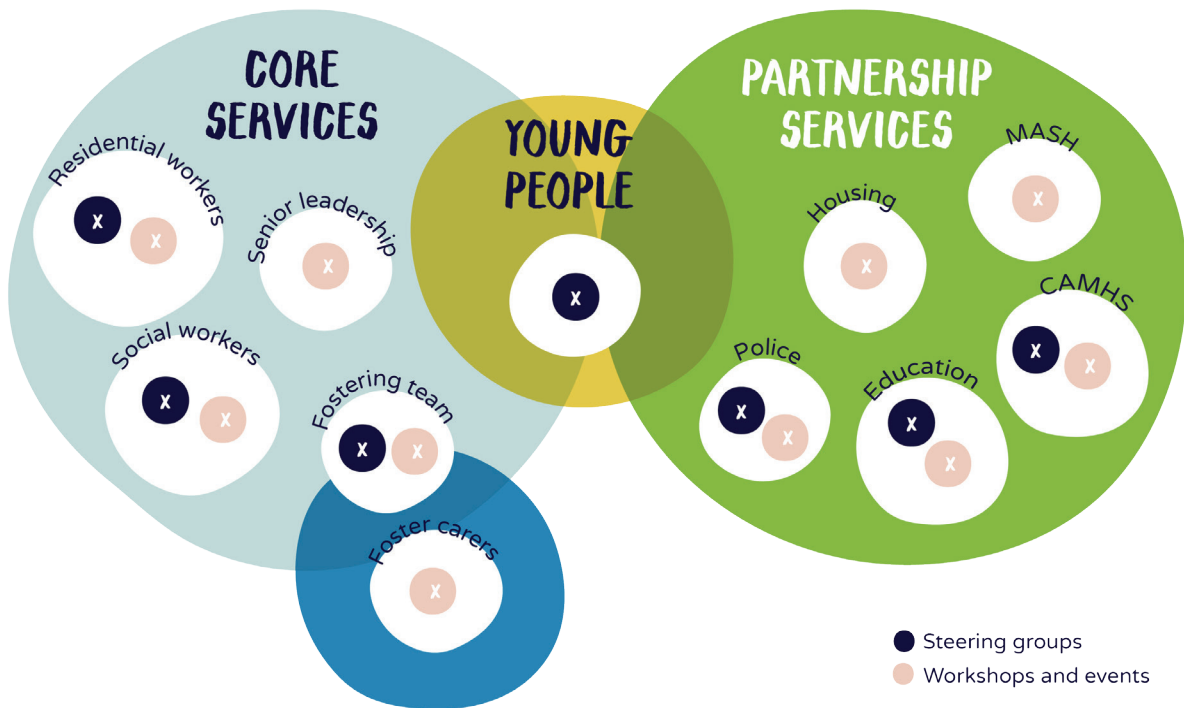
Young people, foster carers, staff and partners worked together over a period of six months in 2017 to develop ATOM. We started with what we know works – in particular the SHARE and ACT innovation projects that were funded by the Department for Education. We wanted to create an ‘asset based’ approach. This means starting with young people’s strengths and the positive things in their lives that could help them (for example personal skills and social networks). It is based on a successful model pioneered from 2015 by North Yorkshire County Council called No Wrong Door, which was supported by the Department of Education’s Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme.

The creation of ATOM involved over 40 workshops or co-design events, and engaged 300+ staff members, bringing together:

- Research evidence to draw on the latest learning of what works in supporting children edging away from care;
- Advice, insights and contributions from North Yorkshire’s No Wrong Door team;
- A steering group of Wigan residential and fostering staff to develop the model;
- Ongoing involvement of partner agencies, for example: health, education and the Police;
- Support planning sessions with frontline and managerial staff;
- A new children and young people’s steering group;
- A multi-agency, all staff ‘inspiration event’ to share progress and invite input on the new vision
- A programme board chaired by Wigan’s Director of Children’s Services that includes senior leaders at partner agencies and external advisors

300+ people engaged from across Wigan

The creation of ATOM involved over 40 workshops or co-design events and engaged 300+ staff members



Who it's for

The creation of ATOM involved over 40 workshops or co-design events, and engaged 300+ staff members. ATOM is for young people aged 12 to 15 edging away from care. This includes young people who:

- Are on or close to the edge of care who may need support and are close to becoming Looked After.
- Are in 'wobbly' fostering placements at risk of breaking down; ending in an unplanned way.
- Have been placed out of borough who would like to come back and live in Wigan.
- Are in families that already have one child in care and who may also be at risk of becoming looked after.
- Have recently moved to supported or independent accommodation.
- Are already staying in one of our hubs.
- We work hard to support these young people towards permanence in nurturing family settings.

What makes it different

ATOM is different because young people's aspirations drive our practice. The lived experience of the child is at the centre of all our conversations, meetings and actions. One keyworker sticks to each young person no matter what. We are persistent. We believe in our young people and never give up on them. Trusting relationships make us successful, not professional staff structures or hierarchies.

We are one multi agency team with one manager. We work on an equal footing with partner agencies. We make sure that our team has the training and skills to work in a restorative, strengths based and therapeutic way to help transform the lives of the young people you are working with. We support our team to use their judgement to make the right decisions for young people. Sometimes this means being creative, thinking differently, and trying things out for the first time.

We are always working towards permanence for young people. We are happiest when our hubs are empty and young people feel settled within a family or a community. We support them after they have left ATOM.

Vision

Every child and young person becomes a confident, resilient adult.

Every child and young person wants to:

- Feel safe
- Feel they belong in a place they can call home
- Have trusting relationships, and are connected to people and places that matter to them
- Feel able to explore opportunities that matter to them
- Have confidence they can do great things, now and in the future



To deliver a service that successfully transforms the lives of young people, this vision needs to steer every action we take.

Our young people have told us what you need to do to make this vision a reality. And we have identified what the Council will do to support you.

Principles

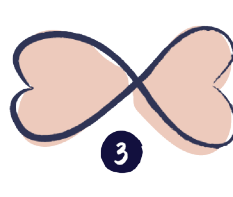
The following principles guide every action and decision:



1
We are passionate about helping young people - we care no matter what



2
We know the young person - insights about their story and identity



3
We treat the young person as if they are our own - understand, accept, normalise



4
We put the young people at the centre - genuine co-production



5
We start with strengths and assets - including family and community



6
We build a relationships based service and culture - positive and trusting



7
We collaborate between professionals as equals - for flexible support planning



8
We learn, develop and evaluate practice - always solution focused



9
We invest and believe in staff and carers - let them use best judgement and take action, give them time and space to practice



10
We stick to young people - We are there for them always, at all times and don't give up on them



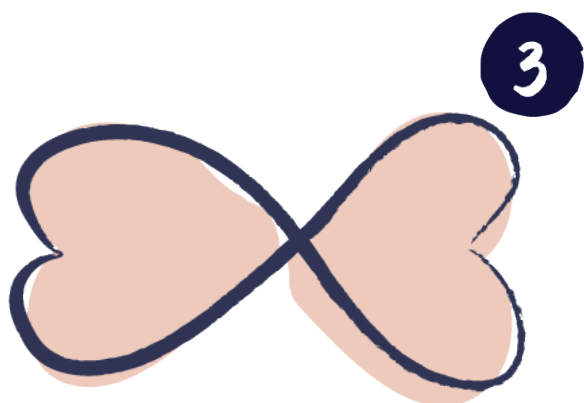
Passionate about helping young people - believing in them no matter what

We care deeply for our young people and we don't give up on them, however hard things may feel. This means believing that all young people should live in a real home, either within a family or in the community, whilst in the short term making sure that they have someone to turn to or somewhere to sleep when things get tough.



Know the young person - understanding their story and identity

We work hard to understand the whole person – their story, family, interests, relationships, hopes and fears. We share our knowledge of each young person with everyone who has a need and a right to know, so young people don't have to keep repeating their story.



Treat the young person as if they were your own - understand, accept, normalise

We parent, however challenging that can be. We know that adolescents can express strong emotions and engage in risky behaviours. All adolescents do this; ours are no different.



Young people at the centre – genuine co-production

Young people are involved in the design, delivery and management of ATOM, from job roles and recruitment to our name and brand. We listen to young people with open ears and open eyes. And more importantly, we act on what they say.



5

Start with strengths and assets - including family and community

We always start with a young person's strengths and aspirations. This doesn't mean ignoring the difficult circumstances that they might face - we help them to develop what they are great at so that they can confidently take on what life throws at them. We know that the people around them are their most important asset, so we work closely family, friends, former rugby coaches and great aunts to make sure young people are connected into their communities.



6

Relationships based service and culture - positive and trusting

Relationships or 'bonds' - with young people, families, carers, partners and our team – drive our success. We grow a culture of trust and openness. We support key relationships; we make introductions to new professionals only when essential.



7

Collaboration between professionals as equals - for flexible support planning

The ATOM team and partners collaborate energetically to find creative solutions to supporting young people. We respect each other for what we know and what we each contribute. And we make decisions together, as a collective, so we are able to better manage and reduce the risks to the young people we support.



8

Learn, develop and evaluate practice - always solution focused

We strive to continuously learn and develop our practice so that we can achieve better outcomes for young people. ATOM is built out of a rich evidence base and we continue to seek and learn from new information whether that be feedback from young people, new published research, performance data from the service or ideas from the team.



9

Invest and believe in our staff and carers - let them use best judgement and take action, give them time and space to practice

We know our staff and carers are what make us great. We invest in them so that they can invest in our young people. We trust them to make hard decisions, think creatively and give them the support to do this including a robust training strategy, therapeutic support and a culture of reflective learning, rather than blame and shame. We trust you to use your judgement to find creative solutions to support young people.

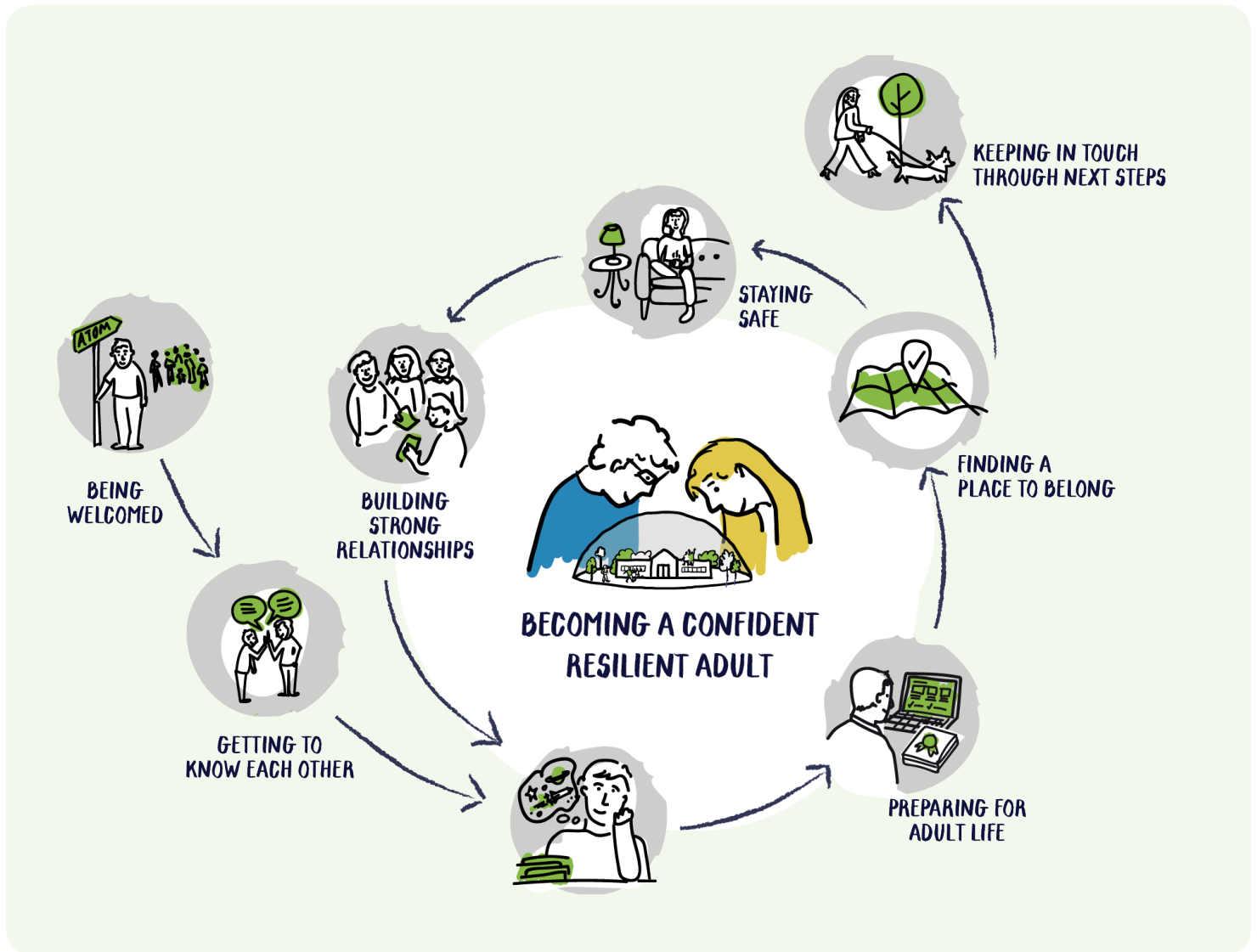


10

Stickability to young people - be there for them always, at all times and don't give up on them

We stick with our young people. This means that young people can build a trusting relationship with the same worker across different accommodation moves and different teams and partner services.

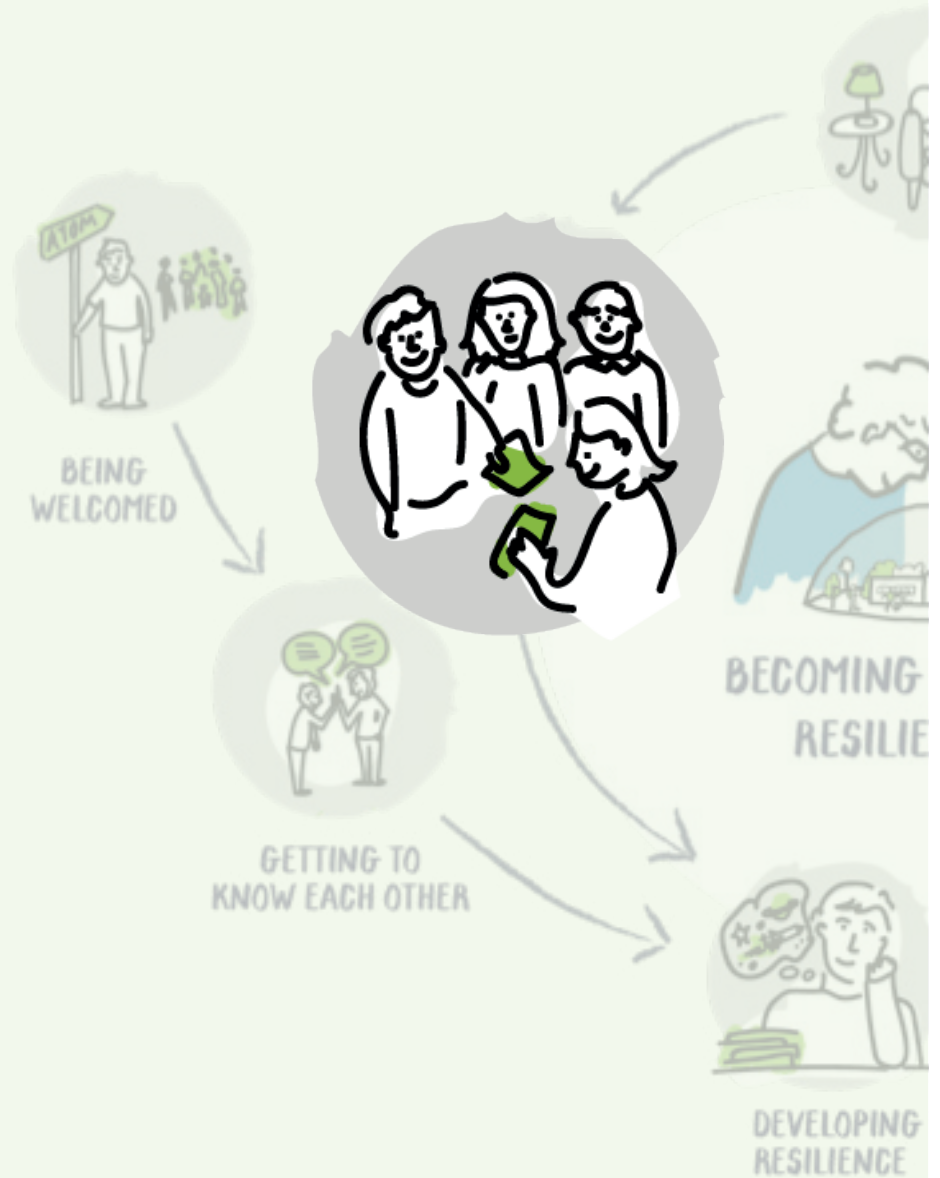
The core offer



Above all else, ATOM focuses its work on supporting young people around five areas, which, together, are fundamental to supporting young people to become confident resilient adults. They are:

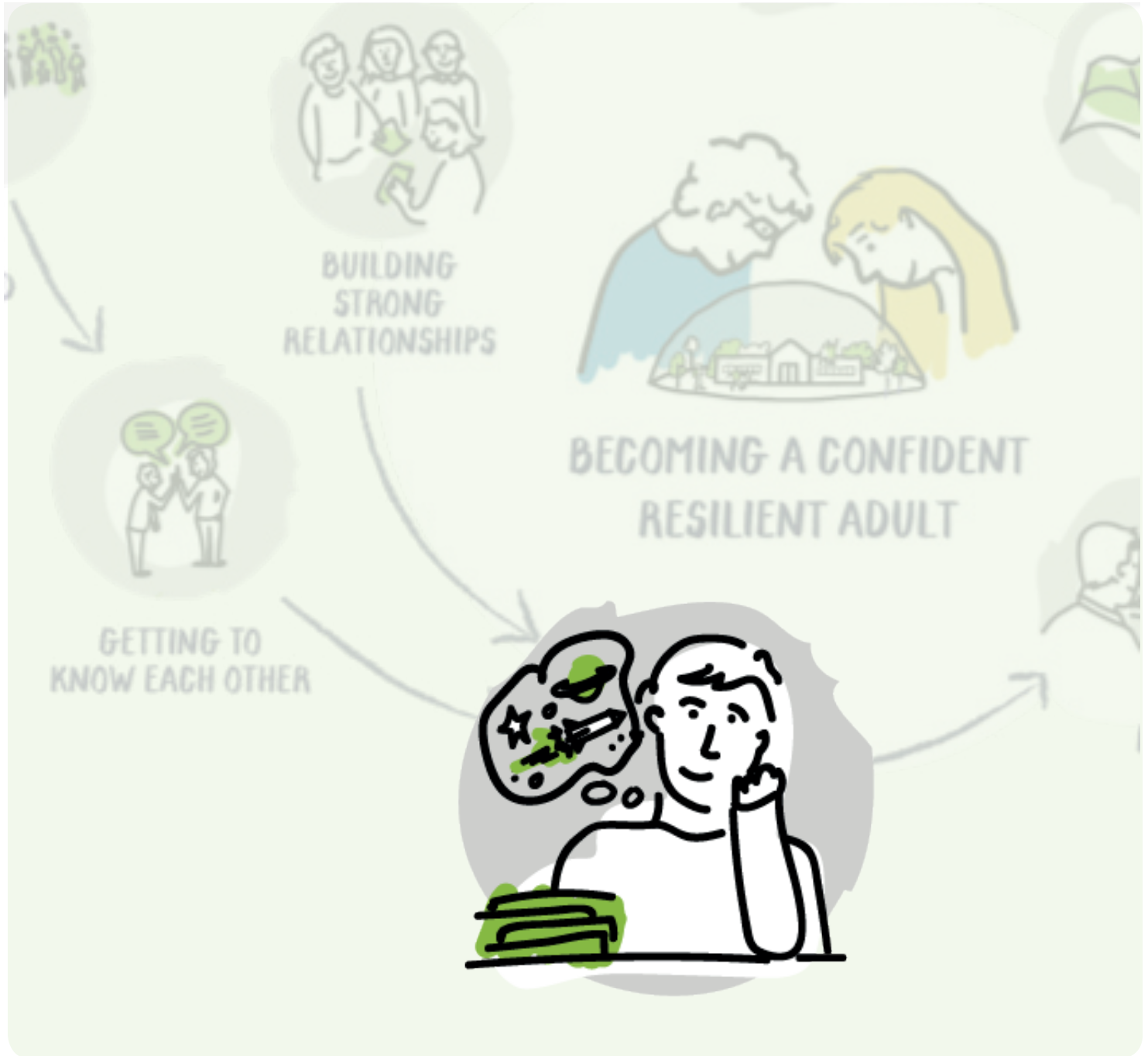
- building strong relationships
- developing resilience
- focusing on aspirations
- finding a place to belong
- staying safe

Building strong relationships



We know that the key to becoming a confident resilient adult is having positive relationships. The ATOM team supports young people to strengthen and build trusting, lasting relationships with foster carers, family and friends. As well as supporting positive relationships, we do our best to make sure that young people can have positive relationships with the ATOM team. Every young person supported by ATOM will have a keyworker who will stick with them no matter what. The keyworker will work with the wider team to develop a plan and also seek advice from specialists (e.g. the life coach) so that they feel better able to understand and support the young person. Even once the young person has moved on, the keyworker will still be on the other end of the phone.

Developing resilience



ATOM supports young people to develop emotional wellbeing, overcome past trauma and regulate emotions. Often this also means supporting families and carers to develop their resilience and strategies in order to better support the young person in their care. We help young people identify and understand their strengths; communicating a belief in them and ensuring they get positive affirmation to raise their self-esteem. We ensure that young people get any emotional support they need to develop a range of adaptive coping strategies for building resilience, including support to try new challenges. We also ensure they can engage in a range of positive activities and have things to look forward to.

Preparing for adult life



ATOM helps young people to think about who they want to be and how to get there. This means making the most of strengths and assets in a young person's life and not falling into the trap of only worrying about perceived risks and negative behaviours. It also means finding practical ways to empower young people to take control of their own lives. For example, we help young people find opportunities and resources to pursue their interests and things they are good at. We work with the young person's school, college or education provider to ensure they attend regularly, and get the right support to develop their skills, interests and talents. We provide practical support to help young people access further and higher education, apprenticeships, work experience and employment with the aim of helping them to become independent in the future. We also support young people to learn practical skills that will help them to live independently as adults.

Finding a place to belong



ATOM helps young people live in a place and community they can call home. We believe that all young people can find loving, stable homes. Sometimes this means we support young people within their families or foster placements to resolve issues and get things back on track, other times it means working with the young person and people around them so they can carefully identify and move to a place to call home. We will continue to provide a place to stay when needed so we can work with young people to help them find the right place to live or so that they can cool down after something's gone wrong before returning home. As well as the physical building where a young person lives, we know that a big part of belonging is the community around us. This is why we support young people to connect into their local communities and find their own way to contribute to them, whether that be through relationships, a job, volunteering or sports club.

Staying safe



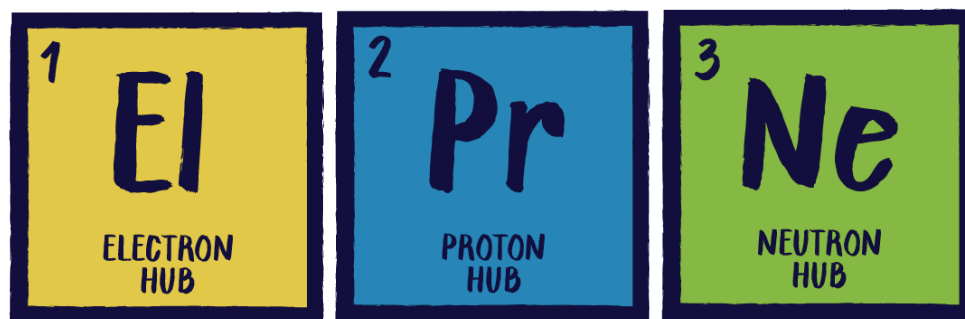
ATOM helps young people to think about ways of keeping themselves safe. This includes helping young people to understand what is safe behaviour on the streets and staying safe when in contact with drugs and alcohol, helping young people to resist peer pressure and understand their limits. The team will also help young people to distinguish between positive and negative relationships, including and understanding of gangs and of sexual exploitation. They will also be helped to engage with the police in a positive way and to stay out of crime. We also support young people through moments of crisis, wrapping intensive support around them quickly, for example to support foster placements to continue.

The service

ATOM rethinks the role of residential care by developing a 'hub' approach that is focused on early intervention and prevention. We have 3 'hubs' that operate as a team, a network of relationships, rather than purely a physical place. Most of the support for young people will happen via outreach in the communities where young people are living. There is also an option for a small number of young people to stay in one of our hubs when needed.

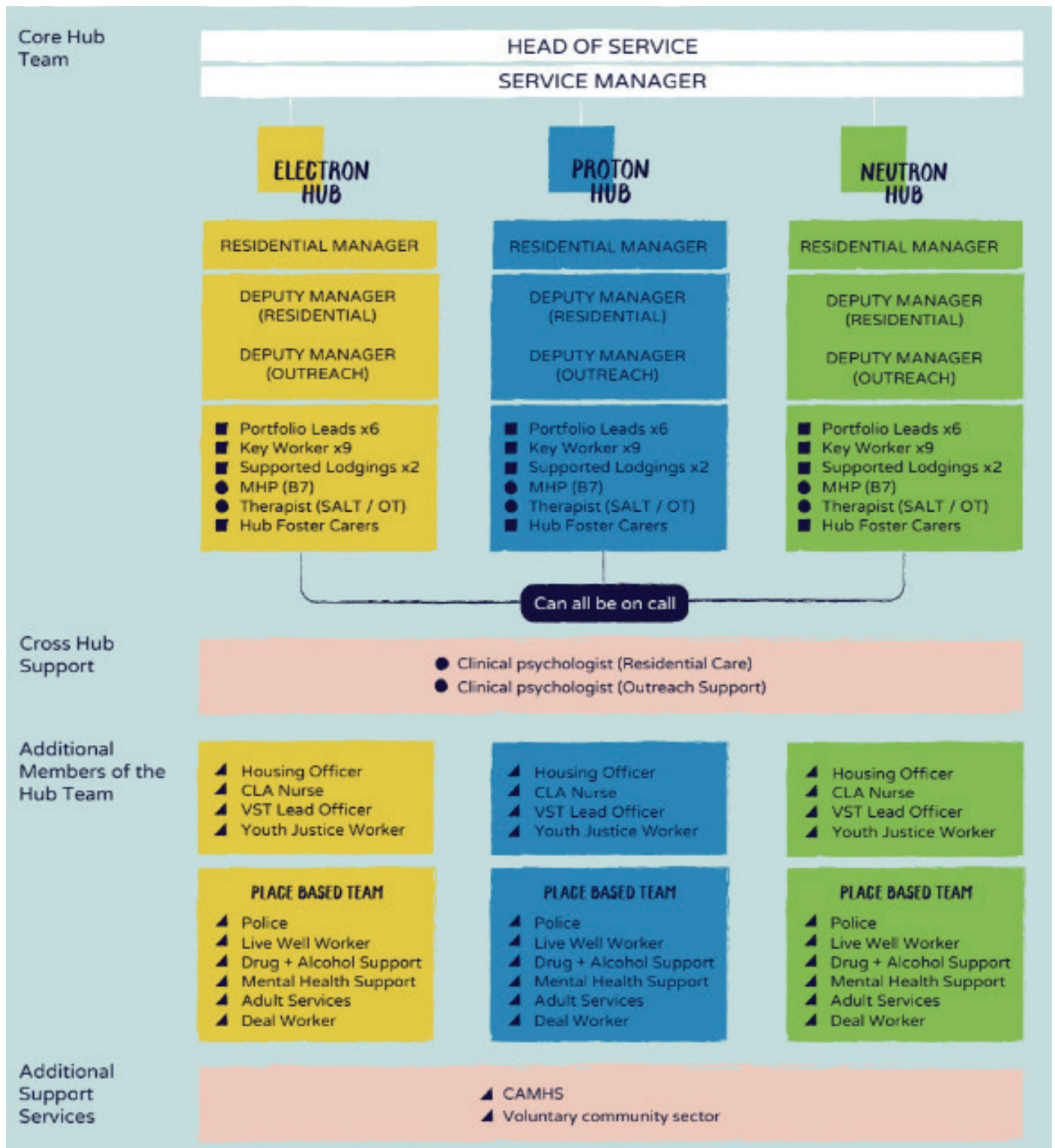
When young people do come and stay in one of our hubs we will work with them to help them find a place they can call home back in the community. Once they've moved, we'll stick with them until they don't need us anymore.

ATOM's multi-agency, co-located team sits under one management structure, alongside a close network of partnership services. This means we can provide support to young people and our staff that work with them - responding to both therapeutic and professional needs. One worker is assigned to each young person - someone who will stick by them no matter what.



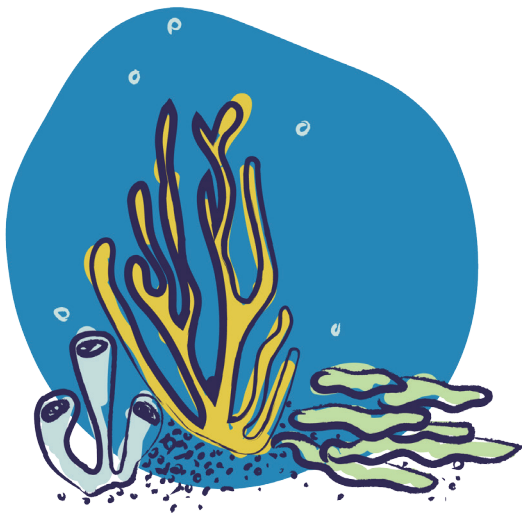
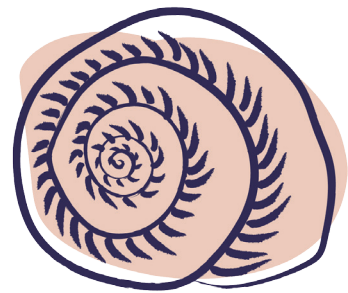
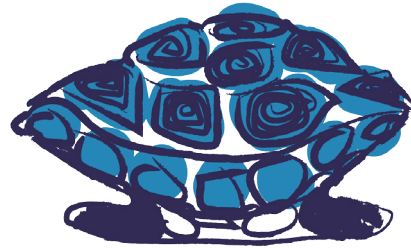
Operating model

The staff are divided across the three Hubs. Each Hub is managed by a residential manager and two deputy managers, one of whom focuses on young people in residential care, the other on outreach. Each Hub is staffed with the team described above and is linked with other support services. All Hubs are managed by a head of service and a service manager.



Placement options

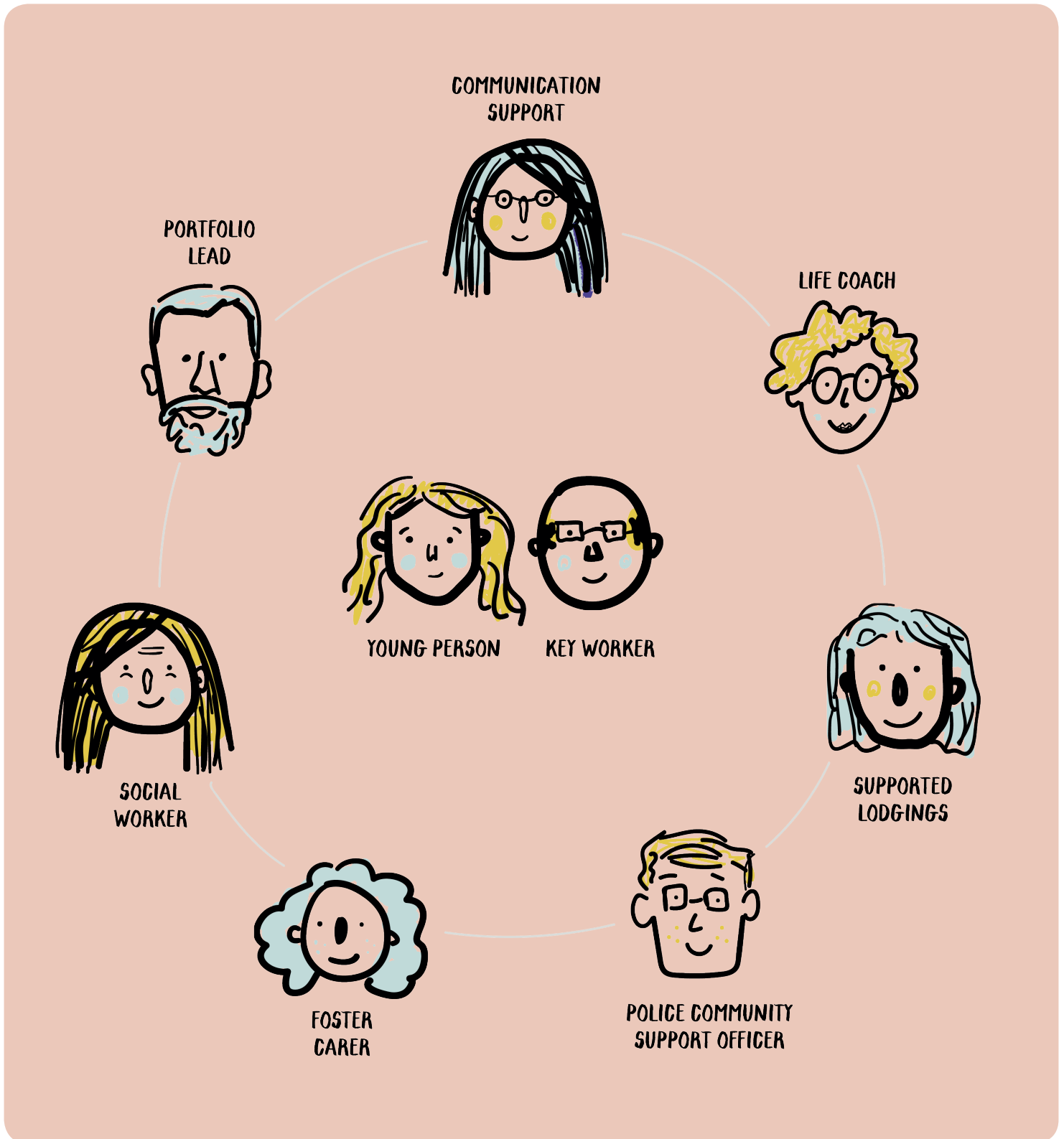
- Residential home
- Foster family placements
- Supported accommodation
- Supported lodgings
- Bespoke placements



The team

This section involves explaining the Hub team, their different roles and responsibilities and how the team works with other services.

Team structure



A multi-disciplinary team work together with young people under one management system. This means that people across different staff specialisms are working with continuity and a common approach with the same training and same management system. The different roles can be viewed below:

Keyworker



The core purpose of my role is to proactively provide the support and interventions young people need so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes in life. I am responsible for the direct day-to-day care of young people within a residential home.

Additionally, I also provide support to young people egding away from care, accomodated in the various other Hub placements, and care leavers. My core task is to develop a trusting relationship with young people, to understand their needs, to look out for them and to help them believe in themselves. I take time to get to know them and understand their ambitions and their strengths.

I also coordinate the support of other professionals who support them to ensure a seamless service. I will be the constant point of contact who supports them, even if they experience unplanned endings. I am persistent and stick with them through the challenges they experience.

I also ensure that they are engaged and involved in key decisions that affect their lives and that their voice is taken seriously. I work within a defined culture and intervention practice model and adopt a solution focused and restorative approach.

Life Coach (MHP)



My job involves supporting children and young people to flourish and become resilient adults. I work in a team with two other colleagues and between us, we have a range of different mental health intervention skills such as cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness, anxiety management, family therapy and other coping strategies.

We help keyworkers to support young people to manage and regulate negative emotions and develop positive coping strategies. I am creative about ways of supporting them and able to do outreach or direct intervention when this is needed.

We also provide wider advice and support to colleagues and foster carers on strategies for building resilience in children and young people and how to manage their own emotions during tough periods so they can be even better at supporting children and young people.

Communications Support (Speech Therapist/OT)

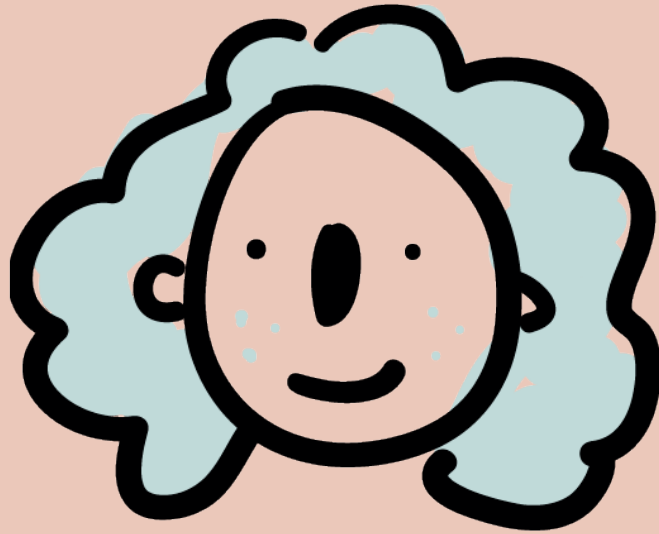


I am a speech and language therapist. My role is helping children and young people to communicate better. I am able to assess and diagnose young people's communicative skills and challenges, and identify strategies for improving young people's ability to express their needs and understand the language used by others.

I build relationships with young people to help them develop and practice improved communication skills, including providing communication aids where appropriate. I work with staff and carers to assist them in supporting the young people to improve their language skills and to help them deepen their understanding of young people's individual needs.

I also help young people develop their social skills.

Police Community Support Officer



I am a police community support officer and am based in the Hubs one day a week. Here I am able to work remotely.

Essentially my role is an intelligence role, rather than a safeguarding one. This role brings a new culture of understanding of what is really happening through the gathering of intelligence. We know what is going on in our community and we know our young people and build relationships with them and seek to engage them in positive activities which divert them from taking part in crime and antisocial behaviour.

We also help them to understand how easy it is to get on a risky path and help them develop the confidence to make safer decisions.

Hub Foster Carer

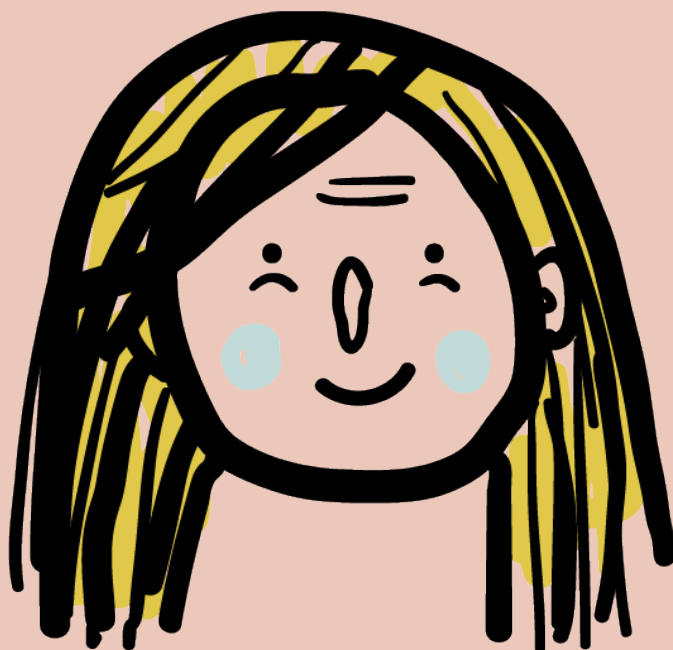


I am a Hub foster carer. This means that young people are able to move out of the hubs and live with me and my family. My role is to support the hub keyworkers and spend time in the hubs to get to know young people and build up supportive and trusting relationships.

The job means I can get to know young people before they come and stay with me. The role means I can either foster young people for a short period of time, or, provide a permanent family for them to live with.

I work within a defined culture and intervention practice model and adopt a solution focused and restorative approach.

Social Worker



As a social worker, I work with young people and carers to help develop young people's resilience, improve their lived experiences and ensure they are safe. My aim is to help young people make decisions about their own lives for both now and for the future.

In my role as a social worker I am a corporate parent and recognise that we need to act for this child young person, as if he/she was our own. I ensure I engage and involve young people in plans to achieve desired goals and make sure agreed interventions are undertaken and evaluated. I ensure that we persist even when there are challenges as the young person needs to be able to rely on us.

I work within a defined culture and intervention practice model and adopt a solution focused and restorative approach. I meet regularly with the other professionals in the young person's life to make sure that we are coordinating and communicating effectively with each other, and the young person, and their carers, to achieve agreed goals.

Portfolio Lead



The core purpose of my job is to proactively provide the support and interventions young people need so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes in life. I am responsible for the direct day-to-day care of young people within a residential home.

I also provide support to young people edging away from care, accommodated in the various other Hub placements, and care leavers. I work within a defined culture and intervention practice model and adopt a solution focused and restorative approach.

I support all aspects of care needs and interventions, in line with the young people's core assessments and care plans, and develop effective action plans with a focus on reducing risks and building on strengths. I most enjoy coaching young people to develop their resilience and life skills to enable them to successfully manage the transition to independence.

I specialise in a particular area but help young people with in all areas of their lives including physical/ mental health, employment and education, forming relationships, developing life skills and keeping safe so that they become confident, resilient adults.

Supported Lodgings



I am a carer who provides stepping stone for young people so that they can learn to live independently, but I welcome young people into my home, and provide emotional and practical support and help them learn the everyday, skills they will need for adult life. My role is to provide a safe environment, as a step towards fully independent living.