

GLASGOW KELVIN COLLEGE**Learning and Teaching Committee - 20 November 2024****Student Support Services Update and STAY Evaluation Report****by Head of Student Support Services****1. Introduction**

The college provides a range of Student Support Services including Advice & Guidance, Learner support, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Library Services and Student Engagement.

In November 2023 we reported to the committee an update on service provision and an overview of numbers of students accessing counselling and wellbeing supports and an outline of new approaches to supporting learners with wellbeing and resilience skills introduced for session 2023-24.

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on service provision for Mental Health and Wellbeing and an overview of the partnership the college has with the Action for Children STAY project.

2. Mental Health and Wellbeing ServicesCounselling Provision

The College counselling service has two qualified counsellors and a small team of trainee placement counsellors who support students with mild to moderate mental health conditions.

Wellbeing Provision

The college employs one Wellbeing Officer. The types of issues referred to wellbeing officer include anxiety, suicidal thoughts, mental health problems such as BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder), issues with eating and sleeping, overthinking, previous trauma, arguments with parents and more.

As part of the 2023-24 College Quality Enhancement Priorities, the College continued to fund existing Wellbeing Officer and Counsellor roles to maintain services as a level consistent with previous years. These posts were continued using SFC Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund, this was a 1-year fund and the posts are currently fixed term until June 2025.

We introduced a particular focus for session 2023-24 to build the resilience of students and provide techniques and tools to support them deal with health and wellbeing issues. The Wellbeing officer also works closely with the Active campus coordinator and have started a joint lunchtime walking group and joint wellbeing and exercise workshops.

This enhanced self-help activity may account for a slight reduction in direct referrals for support as shown on table below. However, numbers requiring support and interventions continue to be high.

	Session 2021/22 Total referrals	Session 2022/23 Total referrals	Session 2023/24	Session 2024/2025 (as of 31st Oct 2024)
Counselling	155	246	231	74
Wellbeing	89	119	112	46
TOTAL	244	365	343	120

3. Action for Children STAY Project

Action for Children offer tailored one to one support to care experienced students and can provide support in many areas, including, assisting with any barriers to engagement, budgeting support, advice with time management issues and support with mental health. In addition, the STAY worker can help learners with ongoing issues out with college such as housing, employment, homelessness, family disputes and liaising with other professionals.

The STAY project has had workers in the college since 2019 and was jointly funded by GCRB, Action for Children and Inspiring Scotland to support care experienced students.

In 2020 additional funding from Glasgow City Council Education Department, this was part of 'Towards Better Futures' to support young people transitioning from school to college.

In subsequent years funding was also received from Robertson Trust to support vulnerable young people at college and extended support beyond Care Experienced students.

Funding for the project is under review and may change the nature of support available. There are currently 3 full-time Action for Children STAY workers embedded in the GKC Student Support Services team.

The STAY project has recently undergone a full Evaluation and the Final report outlining supports available and impacts is attached for information (Appendix 1)

4. Resource Implications

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. However, future funding of the STAY project is currently uncertain and may impact on service delivery.

5. Impact on Students

A high proportion of students require support to enhance their ability to study and successfully complete their course.

6. Risk and Assurance

If current services and staffing are not maintained, this could have a negative effect on students, this would in turn increase risks of students withdrawing and leaving their course early.

7. Equality

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report

8. Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising directly from this report

9. Environmental and Sustainability

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising directly from this report

10. Recommendations

Members are recommended to note the contents of this report

11. Further Information

Members can obtain additional information on the contents of this report from Monica McKerlie, Head of Student Support Services

Final report

EVALUATION OF STAY
ACTION FOR CHILDREN

JULY 2024

Research Scotland

www.researchscotland.org



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1

Introduction

About this report

This report sets out findings from an evaluation of the STAY project for Action for Children.

About the STAY project

STAY is an early intervention service for young people in college, to support students to sustain their college place.

STAY provides one to one mentoring support delivered in colleges for young people with care experience, and other vulnerable young people. Mentors support vulnerable students who may be at risk of not sustaining their college place due to non-college related issues. Mentors offer support across a range of issues including budgeting, housing support, learning support, mental wellness, employment, access to services and wider support and advocacy. STAY services operate in conjunction with the college services.

The STAY service has been in operation since 2019. In the first year, STAY was allocated three year funding from the Glasgow College Regional Board, Action for Children and Inspiring Scotland to employ four college mentors, supporting students with care experience or who have barriers that make them less likely to sustain college.

In 2020, STAY secured additional funding from Glasgow City Council's education department. This funding was provided through Towards Better Futures, to support young people transitioning from a Glasgow school to a Glasgow college.

In 2021, STAY was successful in receiving funds from the Robertson Trust. This funding supports any other young person at college who becomes vulnerable as their circumstances change, beyond young people with care experience and those transitioning from a Glasgow school.

STAY activities

STAY provides three tiers of support to young people through:

- **warm handover** – for young people who are transitioning from school or need support in the transition to college
- **light touch support** – for students who have one short intervention from the service
- **intensive support** – for students who have multiple barriers and may require many support interventions.

STAY has grown over time, and now aims to work with 450 students each year.

In 2023/24, STAY provided 426 students welfare and financial support. In addition the STAY services provided 51 students with financial support. These 51 young people were offered wider support but wished to receive financial support only.

More widely, Action for Children facilitates a change group with key partners which explores what needs to change within the system to improve support to vulnerable students to achieve and sustain their college journey.

Evaluation method

To inform this report, we spoke with:

- 25 young people supported through STAY
- seven staff members who mentor young people
- eight partners who work with the STAY project.

The young people took part in interviews either face to face, online or over the phone, and each received a £10 voucher to thank them for their time.

We also analysed responses to an online survey administered by the STAY team. This survey explored the outcomes achieved by young people as a result of the service. In total:

- 17 responses were gathered in 2021/22
- 31 responses were gathered in 2023/24.

2

Impact

Introduction

This chapter explores the difference that the STAY project made to young people in terms of:

- engaging with learning
- supporting wellbeing
- accommodation
- finances
- next steps.

Engaging with learning

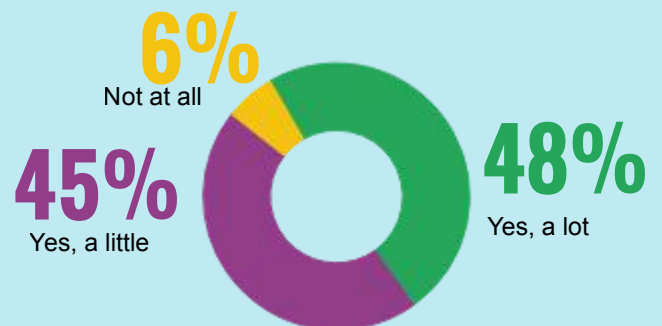
Since I started working with a STAY mentor:



93%

feel more positive about continuing on their course

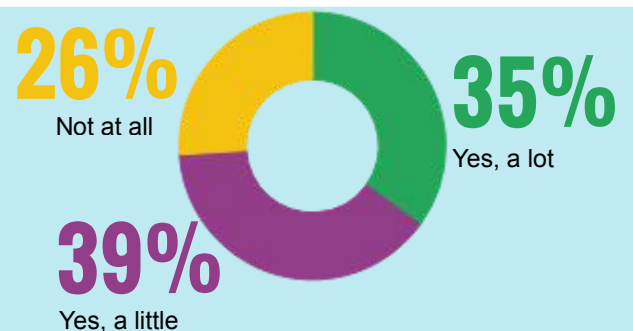
= similar to 21/22 figures



74%

said their attendance had improved

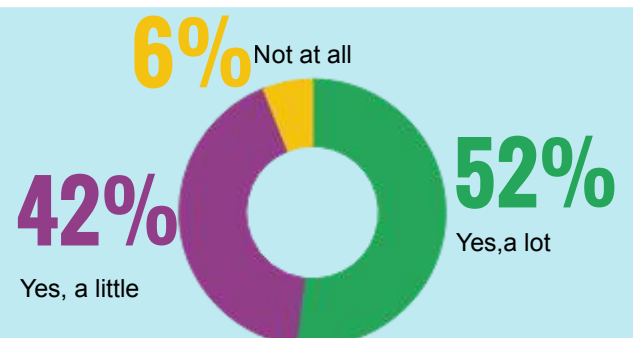
= similar to 21/22 figures



94%

feel more confident discussing concerns with college and teaching staff

= similar to 21/22 figures



Young people involved in this evaluation were clear that the support from their STAY mentor had helped them to engage effectively with learning at college. This included:

- **pre-college support** – including supporting people to complete their bursary application, helping people get references to support their college application, undertaking pre-college inductions, making sure people are enrolled properly in courses and have the right funding.
- **support with travel** – including supporting people to apply for a National Entitlement Card for bus travel, support with getting the ID documents required to apply for a National Entitlement Card, undertaking trial bus runs to build confidence, or providing additional support on the first day to ensure people get to college, build their confidence and can return in a more independent way over time.
- **providing learning materials** – for example STAY mentors provided stationery for young people to have the tools they need to learn, and helped young people to source funding for laptops which were crucial for their engagement with college activities.
- **providing encouragement** – for example providing support and motivation with studying and assignments, and helping young people to work towards deadlines.



It's like mental reassurance, just to make sure I actually get my assessments done. She's also helped me with exercises to like calm myself down...She helps me to keep my focus on what actually needs to be done."

Young person



Even when I was lacking motivation and stuff like that, she was kinda like helping to like motivate me, trying to look through different ideas to get my work done. Instead of just being overwhelmed by it, she helped me to break it down into small manageable chunks."

Young person

Young people mentioned that transition support such as being shown round the college, helping with the enrolment process, connecting them with student services, and explaining how the college system worked were particularly valuable as they moved from school to college. A few said that without that support they wouldn't have felt able to attend college.



All the stuff I know about college today is mostly because of my mentor."

Young person



We've had some students who couldn't get on the bus to come to college and by working with the STAY team, they've been able to travel independently and come in on the bus."

STAY partner

In particular, a number of young people who were new to Scotland mentioned how valuable the support from STAY was in helping them to apply for college and apply for funding to support their time learning.

All of the support is aimed at reducing practical barriers to attendance, and build a positive and welcoming environment for the young person so that they feel confident and know where to go for support. STAY mentors are able to keep an eye on young people's attendance, and get in touch if attendance is reducing. This means they can proactively work with the young person to address any issues. This includes working with colleges to give young people a bit more time to improve their attendance, and opening up lines of communication between young people, tutors and lecturers to help young people to discuss issues and seek support.

Mentors emphasised that often young people's needs are high and immediate, and it is about supporting them to get through the day or week, address wider problems and crises, and then build a positive foundation for learning.



Once there's nothing else going on in the background they can focus on their course."

Student mentor

Example: Course funding and administration

Kate* received lots of practical support from her STAY mentor as she had some issues with the administration and funding of her college course. She was working towards a Social Care HNC, but the college realised she had previously been funded to complete a different HNC and Kate was notified that she would have to pay for her current course, or leave. STAY supported Kate through dealing with the finance team at the college, and arranging for her course fees to be paid. STAY also arranged for Kate to receive Tesco vouchers when she had no money to buy food.

Without support from STAY, Kate says she would have had to leave her college course. She wasn't able to explain the situation to the college team, while the STAY mentor was able to speak with them and sort out the situation.



There's been lots of times when I felt like giving up, but I feel like (my mentor) like motivated me to like stay."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Understanding the system

Lilya* is new to Scotland and did not understand how to navigate the college system, or how to sort out her housing situation. A STAY mentor helped with applying for housing, applying for college, completing college projects and providing food vouchers when Lilya did not have money to buy food. Without support through STAY, Lilya says it would have been hard for her to continue at college. Lilya says the best thing about STAY is she feels her mentor cares for her, and helps her feel less stressed.



Before I don't have anyone to help me and now...if I need anything I have someone to go and speak with."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Resolving issues

Mia* was about to be suspended from college when she got involved with STAY. Her mentor was able to come to meetings at the college to discuss the potential suspension. Mia found the meetings very difficult and frustrating, but her mentor was able to speak calmly on her behalf and resolve the issues.



Just knowing that I had somebody to talk to, that understood me and wasn't going to judge to be honest. Just the way (my mentor) was, he was so kind and compassionate...and he did help me a lot."

Young person

Mia was able to go on to complete her college course and feels better equipped to deal with problems as they come up, including asking for help and support. Mia is now going on to study a new college course.

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Applying to college

Deena* was new to Scotland and found the process of applying to college and understanding the funding available very difficult. At that stage she did not have indefinite leave to remain in the country. With her mentor's support she was granted a college place and a bursary.

Deena's mentor showed her around the college and connected her with others in the college. Now Deena feels safer, less anxious, less stressed and less depressed, because she feels she has someone to turn to. She also has more confidence to try to sort out any problems herself, by approaching others in the college for help.



I don't feel confused and I don't feel anxiety anymore, because I know I have somebody who can help me anytime I want."



I was so scared, I was so blank, everything was blank, I didn't know how to handle things - how to go to class, where's café, where's library and he showed me everything. From him I learned so many things, like how I can be responsible...he made a huge difference in my life."

Young person

Deena feels that without support from STAY, she wouldn't be at college. She feels she would not have been able to navigate the system, and would have given up on her dream of studying.

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Towards Better Futures

The Towards Better Futures team was set up in Glasgow to improve post school destinations for all, in line with the young person's guarantee. One of their key roles is to track school leaver destinations. As part of this work, the team was finding that many young people were saying they had a college place in August, but by October the statistics would show that a lot of the young people hadn't taken up their college place. Reasons for not starting college included:

- not understanding the enrolment process
- anxiousness/nervousness
- not having English as a first language.

The second snapshot measurement in April was showing that a lot of young people had dropped out of college.

Glasgow City Council funds three STAY mentors to work with a caseload of school leavers from April and throughout the summer, to support them with:

- applications for college
- bursary applications
- campus tours/building confidence to start college
- signposting to other services.

Young people experiencing poverty and deprivation, are supported by STAY. A range of practical support is provided including:

- help applying for Young Scot cards to access free bus travel
- help to access IT equipment and Wi-Fi
- individualised support around mental health, anxiety and confidence.

The team has received positive feedback about the difference STAY makes to the young people involved, particularly for students with English as their second language. For those who struggle with written and reading English, the enrolment process can be daunting and hard to understand, and therefore without support can lead to many young people dropping out before they even get started at college.

The project has seen a significant improvement in the number of young people transitioning to college and sustaining their college journey. Three quarters of the young people who had a mentor (77%) stayed in college, and Glasgow's positive destinations figures for young people leaving school increased to 97%.

Supporting wellbeing

Young people involved in this evaluation said that a key focus of the support they got from their mentor was supporting emotional and mental wellbeing. Young people highly valued having someone who listened to them, supported them and cared about them.



I think it was actually just having somebody that actually cares and just wants to help like, cause I've worked with a lot of people in my life through being in care and stuff and at school, and people generally don't want to help you, and like they're not willing to listen to you...and (my mentor is) the first person I've actually ever worked way that actually fully does care about people."

Young person

Young people highlighted how comfortable they were with their mentor, and how they were quickly able to build up trusting relationships. Some said they consider their mentor to be their friend, or like family.



I feel like I get more support, even outside the college, even like everything related to my health, to my education, for me, I feel like that's like kind of parents for me that project."

Young person

This trusting relationship made young people feel that they could be open and honest, and talk about the barriers and problems they experience in their lives. Young people felt they had a space where they could express anxieties and problems, understand their emotions better, and develop strategies to work through these.



Just talking to someone about stuff, not even mental health stuff, just normal stuff, and trying to get someone else's perspective on stuff, it's helped me a lot - it's gave me more confidence"

Young person



Having my mentor there, it's actually made me able to identify how I'm feeling, and be able to take steps to manage it compared to just letting it all like bubble up."

Young person

Some young people talked about their mentors supporting them to access wider support for their mental health issues, and others felt their mentor helped them to better deal with generalised anxiety, social anxiety and panic attacks.



It definitely helped way my mental health, coz a would have probably took a mental break down if it wisnae for (my mentor)."

Young person

Student mentors emphasised that they did not provide specialised mental health support, but they could help young people to feel more positive about themselves, change the narrative in conversations and support young people to navigate positive decision making. Student mentors emphasised that they don't have all the answers, but they promote autonomy and independence in young people and work with them through the process of working through problems and finding things out.



While we're not counsellors, a lot of the students benefit from just having someone to listen."

Student mentor



We help them to start believing in themselves."

Student mentor

As a result, survey responses clearly show increases in confidence, problem solving and relationships.

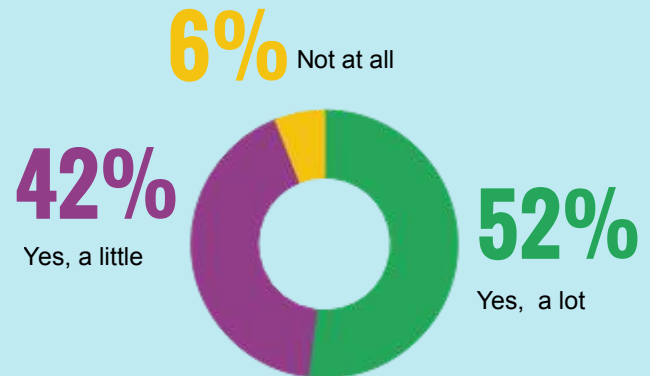
Since I started working with a STAY mentor:



94%

feel more confident in themselves and their ability

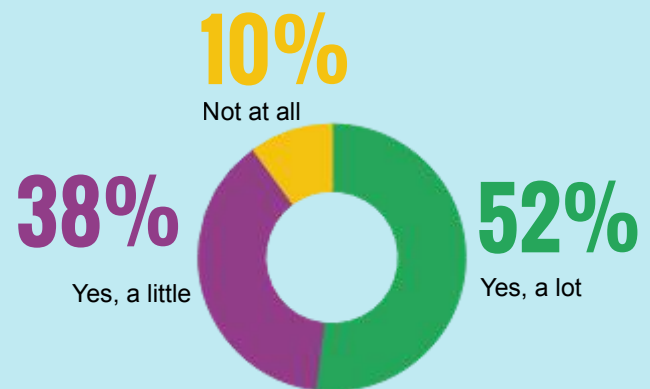
+ increase from 21/22 figures



90%

are coping better when things go wrong and could overcome problems

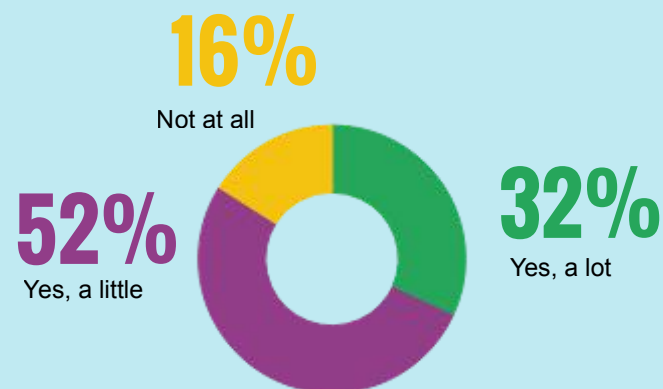
+ increase from 21/22 figures



84%

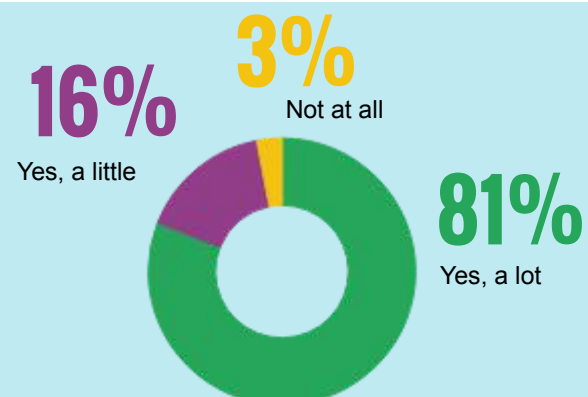
feel better about their relationships with family, friends and support

= similar to 21/22 figures



97%

feel they have a lot of support around them if they need it



A few young people highlighted that support with stress and mental health also supported positive physical health. For example one young person had physical health issues which were triggered by stress, so the support she received made her physical health issues less likely to flare up.

Example: Sharing problems

Joanne* got involved in STAY because she had a lot of things going on outside of college, in her personal life. She found the combination of her personal problems and trying to keep up with her college course were overwhelming her and making her feel anxious.

For Joanne, the main support her mentor provided was listening. Joanne and her mentor built up a rapport really quickly and Joanne felt able to share her problems. Joanne felt she had someone to talk to who would listen and support her.



It mostly helped by like just speaking to somebody and them listening to me and like giving me more support...and just having someone to speak to and get my feelings out."

Joanne's mentor also contacted some lecturers on her behalf to negotiate extensions on some assignments and to let them know that she had difficult personal issues going on. Joanne managed to complete her first year of college, and continue her learning with support from her mentor. She feels she would have struggled to get through the year without her mentor's support, and now feels more confident about managing her second year at college.



I feel like more comfortable and like more relaxed like about going into this year."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Supporting wellbeing

Isla* is the primary care giver for her siblings. Due to high pressure caring responsibilities, serious family illness, bereavement and related mental health and anxiety issues, Isla was falling behind at college. This was causing her a great deal of stress.

Through her STAY mentor, Isla has received support with her mental health and safety, as well as day to day college activities. Isla didn't find it easy to talk to the college about the difficulties she was having at home, but with support from her STAY mentor she was able to communicate with her lecturers and access support. Isla felt that the college became more understanding and supportive.



I was doing stuff in March that was due back in November...but with my help I managed to get it done. Like I was so scared to go to my lecturers and stuff and say I'm behind...Now I can talk to my lecturers myself. I've got so much more confidence."

Isla feels more confident about facing problems, and knows she can ask her mentor for help if she needs it. She also feels that she can talk to the college and explain her situation. Isla values that her STAY mentor always discusses situations with her and agrees them before taking any action, and she feels very involved in decisions about her life.



Before she did anything, she checked with me first which I loved."

Isla has been able to access mental health support, which is making a big difference to her health and wellbeing. Isla didn't think she would get through her college course, but with support from her STAY mentor she completed her assignments. Isla says that without STAY she would have had to leave college.



I think I would have been kicked out of the college course, or I would have dropped out myself because the pressure would be too much and I do think my mental health would have got a lot worse."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Wellbeing support

Joe* was referred to the STAY project through his college, when he mentioned he had issues at home because of family breakdown. Joe felt very low, had multiple issues in his life and wasn't sure who to turn to for support.



I was at my lowest point before getting that help... I honestly can't tell you what would have happened."

Through STAY, Joe was able to talk about his issues and was referred for counselling support which he was able to access speedily. His mentor also supported him to get a diagnosis for his health issues, which Joe found extremely helpful.



I had multiple issues...(My mentor) has been helping me with getting myself diagnosed... which has been a massive thing for me. And I think honestly, having someone there to help me with all of that has been a massive impact on me."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Mental health support

Karen* was struggling with her mental health and got in touch with the STAY project to have someone to talk to. She was feeling overwhelmed and anxious in college, and felt that support could help her to stay in college.

Karen meets up with her mentor once a week to chat about how she is feeling and how her week is going. Karen understands that her mentor is not a mental health professional, but she is happy to have someone to talk to. Her mentor is able to reassure her when she feels anxious and overwhelmed.



It's made me a bit better knowing that I have someone to talk to during the week."

Young person

Without STAY, Karen feels she wouldn't have been able to sustain her place at college and would have dropped out.

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Health and wellbeing support

Sofia* was about to drop out of her course when a lecturer recommended the STAY project. Her mentor supports her at break and lunchtime, providing encouragement and reminders to eat, spending time with her and discussing strategies to manage anxiety.



I have an eating disorder and I find it hard to eat...and it helps quite a lot."

Young person

Sofia's attendance has improved and she feels more motivated to attend college because she will see her mentor. Sofia feels that without support from STAY, she would not be on the course.

*Name changed to protect identity

Accommodation and housing

The STAY project supported young people with a wide range of issues relating to their accommodation. The team highlighted that the cost of living crisis was having an impact on young people's ability to secure suitable accommodation. Many young people were experiencing crisis situations, including being made homeless.

Young people and mentors highlighted that the STAY project could make a significant difference in terms of advocacy, exploring options and supporting and guiding young people through the system. This included helping with housing applications, speaking to housing teams on behalf of young people, visiting potential accommodation with young people, and providing emergency accommodation support in crisis situations.

Example: Tackling homelessness

Artem* called the STAY project late one afternoon to say he had nowhere to stay that evening. He had left his foster home and had been staying with a friend, but this had fallen through. The STAY mentor worked to contact Glasgow City Council, the Simon Community and Glasgow City Mission to attempt to identify a bed for the night. The mentor picked up Artem, drove him to his emergency accommodation and went in to check in with the worker. The mentor also arranged to pick Artem up in the morning, and help him to find longer term accommodation. This included liaising with housing providers and support workers, and arranging suitable temporary accommodation until Artem was housed somewhere more suitable. Longer term Artem was able to secure a tenancy in a safe environment, and could then focus on attending college and continuing his studies.

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Tackling homelessness

Emma* contacted the STAY project when she was about to start college and became homeless due to ending an abusive relationship. Emma's mentor supported her with her housing application, acting speedily and efficiently. Through STAY, Emma also received support with how to deal with problems, and feels better equipped to deal with issues as they arise.



She really, really pushed them to get me a house, she did so much...I would probably still be homeless if (my mentor) hadn't helped me."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Tackling homelessness

Ben* got in touch with the STAY project while at college, when he started to go through a really difficult time with his accommodation. He was staying in student accommodation because he had come to Glasgow from abroad without his parents. However, his contract ended and he had to move to temporary accommodation. His housing situation was difficult and stressful and because of this he was struggling to focus at college.

Ben felt pretty hopeless and didn't know where to turn to for help. He didn't feel able to explain to the college what was going on in his life. Then, because he had been involved with STAY before, he approached them and was allocated a mentor.

The STAY mentor helped Ben a great deal. Although he generally found it difficult to trust people, he found it easy to talk to his STAY mentor. This was because they knew his background and he didn't feel he had to keep explaining every aspect of his life. In his mentor he found someone he could trust, and who he could turn to at any time.

Since receiving support through STAY, Ben feels he has seen a marked improvement in his performance at college. He now has someone to turn to if any problems or issues occur in his life. Ben feels that the project supports him in the same way as a family would.



I feel like someone else - I feel like I was homeless, I just lost hope, but right now after I share that information, that I get all that help... I'm feeling comfortable now, I'm focused on my studies."

Young person

*Name changed to protect identity

Example: Tackling homelessness

Ajay* approached the STAY project when he became homeless when he was at college. His mentor is helping him to apply for a council tenancy, and regularly checks in on how his housing applications are going. She also reminds him about important appointments, and checks in on his mental health. The support has helped Ajay feel more confident and able to speak to other professionals about his housing situation.



She's checking in to make sure I'm still alive. I do struggle a lot with mental health. That's one thing that eased off though, given the fact that I do have more support."

Young person

With support from his mentor, Ajay has been able to keep attending his college course. He felt he would not have been able to achieve this without his mentor.

*Name changed to protect identity

Money

Young people explained how the STAY project helped them with their finances and meeting costs. In emergency situations, young people were supported to access vouchers and other support such as food banks. STAY mentors also supported young people to budget and develop money management skills. However, mentors highlighted that the economic situation meant that financial issues were increasing, and it was hard to help with this as budgeting and money management didn't help when there simply isn't enough money available and some are not able to afford the food and daily the resources they need. While young people are supported to access crisis support, this is not a long term solution.

Example: Meeting essential needs

One STAY mentor supported Carly as a lecturer said she was being disruptive in class. The mentor discussed this with Carly, who said she was hungry as she was struggling financially in her new flat. The STAY mentor contacted local charities to secure food vouchers, and provided contact details for food banks and pantries. The vouchers helped Carly to get enough food to last the week meaning she didn't need to focus on worrying about eating. Together, Carly and her mentor discussed finances and created a budgeting support plan.

Example: Supporting through hardship

STAY supported a learner who was struggling due to a relationship breakdown negatively impacting their financial situation. The programme helped with utility bills and essential food, enabling the learner to continue to study during a period of stress and hardship. The learner's college attendance improved, in addition to experiencing increased motivation and confidence to continue studying.



STAY has been a great support. They listened and understood my issues and worked... to overcome some of my barriers. I can't believe they helped me pay off some bills, got me food and helped to keep me on track. I am looking forward to achieving my qualification and planning the next step of my life."

Pathways from Poverty: Colleges for Communities report, CDN, 2022

Example: Earning money

Isaac* was struggling to make his Educational Maintenance Allowance last to cover his costs. His STAY mentor explored options within the college to check whether he was entitled to any additional funds. Unfortunately, he was not. So his mentor helped him to develop his CV and look for part time jobs. Isaac had been looking for a job for a long time and hadn't had any success. With help from his mentor, he developed his CV and managed to secure a part time job. He feels this is helping him a great deal.

Isaac also received budgeting support through STAY, and feels more aware of how to deal with his finances. He feels more capable of dealing with issues that arise, and more confident about asking other people in the college for support. Isaac said that with out STAY he would have struggled through college. He is now enjoying his course and is less concerned about his finances.

*Name changed to protect identity

Next steps

As young people come towards the end of their college course, the STAY project is able to support young people to consider their next steps. This can include support thinking about options available, support applying for another college course, or employability support such as help with CVs and cover letters. The programme can also refer young people to others such as Skills Development Scotland for further employability support.

Young people mentioned receiving support with developing their CV, applying for jobs, work experience and thinking about next steps.

This support helped young people to feel better about their future and the options available to them.

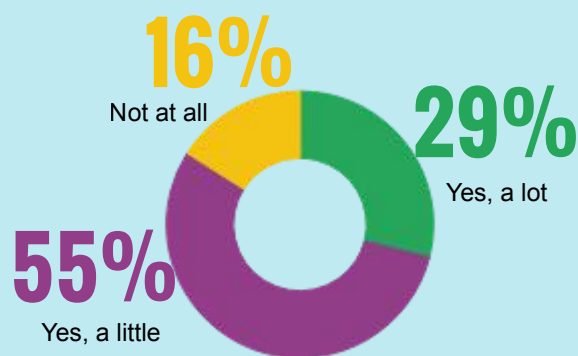
Since I started working with a STAY mentor:



84%

feel better about their future and have goals they are working towards

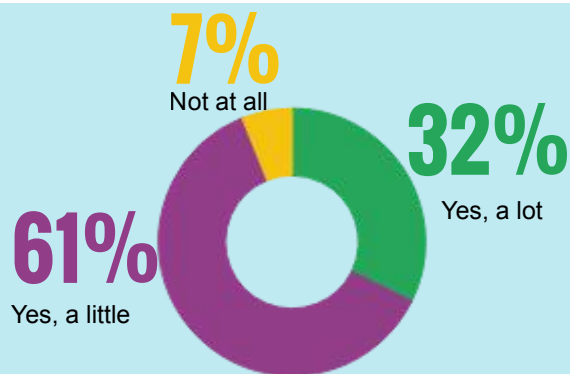
- decrease from 21/22 figures



93%

feel more positive about themselves, their lives and their future

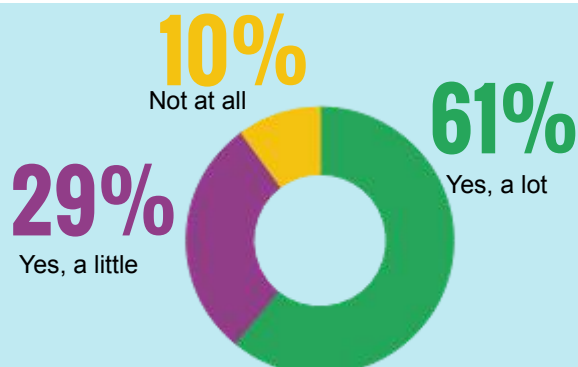
= similar to 21/22 figures



90%

feel more able to explore new support avenues

= similar to 21/22 figures



Student mentors highlighted that while they supported young people to stay in college, if during the course the young person decided not to carry on the support did not stop. The STAY programme can then help them look at other options, including changing courses or looking for a job.

Example: Supporting beyond college

STAY supported a learner who was displaying disruptive behaviour at college. With the support of STAY, the learner was able to find a more appropriate destination and continues to stay in education.



The STAY worker helped me fix out my situation as the course was not for me. They fixed my money out and helped me with my application to my next course. I was not settled but feel better now and to know that STAY are just a call away is so good."

Young person, quoted in Pathways from Poverty: Colleges for Communities report, CDN, 2022

Example: Supporting beyond college

Riley received help from STAY to remain at college and complete her college work. She then got help with developing her CV, and work experience opportunities. Riley's mentor helped her to build confidence for her first interview for a job, providing interview practice and support. She also provided strategies so that she could cope with different situations, and wouldn't become overwhelmed by things like having a job interview.



She was very motivational... she helped me find job opportunities. She was also like very caring in an emotional sort of way."



I've just not really had that type of sensible adult opinion to go to because I don't really have another adult in my life apart from that. (Without STAY) I think I would have just been a lot more disadvantaged."

Young person

3

Learning

This chapter explores what worked well and what lessons were learned in delivery of the STAY project.

What worked well

Overall, young people highly valued the STAY mentoring service.

When asked to rate the service out of 5, for the STAY participant survey, the average response was 4.4. This figure was the same both times the STAY service ran the survey of young people, during the 2021/22 and 2023/24 academic years.



Young people particularly valued that the service connected them with an individual mentor who listened to them, cared about them and was able to provide timely and useful support. Young people liked just having one mentor so didn't have to keep explaining situation to lots of different people.



My mentor has been one of the most supportive figures I have had in my time across my adult life. He has always been able to give support, feedback and info on just about anything."

Young person



He's not just someone doing his job, do you know what I mean? He's someone that's wanting to want you to come and talk to him."

Young person

Many young people said that they were able to build up a rapport, relationship and trust very quickly with their mentor.



I went to see her and honestly, instantly, she put me at ease...I very much felt like I was talking to a friend...it was easy to speak to her...I didn't feel as if she was judging me or anything like that, in fact I felt like she really had my best at heart."

Young person

Partners such as colleges and local authority colleagues highly valued the STAY service. Partners, and STAY staff, felt the service worked well because of:

In-depth support – Partners felt that STAY was able to provide extra, more intensive support on a more regular basis than college staff would be able to. Partners said that STAY mentors had time to support young people on multiple in-depth issues, providing a bespoke service and working with students over time to develop their skills, confidence and self esteem. Partners also felt it was helpful that STAY could explore other options with students if they feel they are not on the right path, both within college and beyond. Some college partners felt that they could now be much more proactive about offering support to students, as the range of support available and the capacity to support students had increased because of STAY.

Relationships – Student mentors felt the STAY service worked well because of the trusting relationships they were able to build. A key part of this was that the mentors each have a caseload, meaning young people are supported by the same mentor for a full year. Mentors also felt that connections were informal, safe and relaxed as they could meet outwith the college environment – for example at the shops or out for lunch. This helped particularly if there were issues with college, demonstrating that STAY mentors were impartial and able to offer unconditional support, and encouraging young people to be open and honest.



I did a home visit recently and I did more in that one hour home visit than I had in all the time I'd met them at college."

Student mentor



The regular check up makes the young people realise that they are cared about. I think just having someone who checks in on them and praises them is something that they might not have had before. It shows them that they are worthy and valued."

Student mentor



We get a lot of disclosures that other services don't get and I think that's because we have a different relationship with them."

Student mentor

Flexibility – STAY mentors felt able to provide the support young people are looking for, and had autonomy and flexibility to provide this in a person-centred way. This included being able to meet in person, over the phone or via text.

Young people having direct access to their mentor through their work mobile phone was seen as a key element of support, as many prefer texts and calls and respond well to this. Support is also available outwith college time, over the holiday periods, which helps to maintain the connection and relationship. Partners valued that STAY could respond immediately to requests for support, the ability to support students in and out of college, and the provision of support during college holidays.



We have noticed that learners are responding well to the more 'wrap around' support the STAY programme is able to offer. Some learners also enjoy the ability to be able to meet STAY workers in external settings they feel comfortable with."

STAY partner

Partnership with colleges – Colleges felt that they had developed a strong partnership with the STAY service. All felt that STAY complemented the wider student services available within colleges. Over time, many felt that STAY had become integrated and embedded into college services, rather than being seen as an external service – by staff or students.

Colleges felt that STAY mentors were part of their team, and that staff members learned from one another. Some mentioned their teams had become more trauma informed, understood the issues young people faced better. Staff in one college team undertook continuing professional development on new topics around trauma and care experience because of their partnership with STAY.



She works with us, she really feels part of the team, she's really interacting with all of the college's systems and the information that's available, really interacting with the curriculum areas, supporting a young person, so that integration has worked really well."

STAY partner

Most mentors felt that the STAY service worked very well with colleges. College staff were generally very happy to chat if mentors wanted to feed back on issues, or wanted more information. STAY mentors sit within the college teams, can share information about the young people and have access to college systems. This means mentors knew when to check in with young people, when to recognise achievements, and when to see how young people were doing – for example if their attendance fell – and also didn't have to ask young people about situations they had already explained to others. Generally, mentors felt that STAY services were well respected within colleges, and that colleges were open to reshaping services if key systemic barriers were identified.



They're not an add on, we are complementary in the work and the practice that we do. They give a significant added value and significant added resource which is brilliant."

College partner, quoted in
Pathways from Poverty report



I just want to say how great it is. Our school leaver destinations are the best they've ever been and it's due to all the collaborative work we've been doing through these projects."

STAY partner



We have a mutually beneficial understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities."

STAY partner



It's been an absolutely flourishing partnership."

STAY partner



It complements the services we have."

STAY partner



Our partnership with Action for Children ensures care experienced students are provided with tailored one to one support in each of our four campuses. The benefit of this relationship is that students who may previously not have accessed support, feel more comfortable with doing so, and that a more robust support package can be provided due to the relationship between Action for Children and the College's own support departments. It also guarantees that students at risk of dropping out of college will receive better help to progress to a positive destination."

STAY partner

Connections with other organisations – Student mentors felt that the network of other organisations able to support young people helped them to deliver their services effectively. This included working with housing providers, anti-poverty organisations, equality organisations, employability projects, food banks and digital inclusion projects. Partners also highly valued the ability of STAY to provide fast crisis response support, including vouchers, funding, food and hygiene packs.



Having a wide range of partners ultimately means that you're going to provide the best support to that young person."

Student mentor

One college mentioned that because of their positive relationship with STAY and their learning about this type of service, they had entered into another similar arrangement with a rape crisis support service.

The team – Student mentors were positive about the STAY and wider Action for Children team. Staff felt that they were offered good training on key topics, and also had access to wider support through colleagues if a situation they had not previously dealt with arose. Student mentors also felt that it was valuable to be able to refer young people to other services within Action for Children, such as the employability focused Positive Choices project. Partners were very positive about the STAY team, feeling staff were good communicators, solution focused, non-judgemental, practical and supportive.

Learning

Young people re-iterated that they highly valued the support, and couldn't think of much that could be better about the STAY service.

Partners and student mentors suggested a few potential improvements to strengthen the STAY service for the future.

Emerging needs – Student mentors highlighted that mental health issues and financial issues were a big challenge for a lot of young people at the moment. STAY offers wellbeing check-ins, but if the young person needs more intensive mental health support this can involve a lengthy wait. Significant issues like suicidal ideation were emerging from young people's discussions with mentors, which required intensive support.

Similarly, STAY offers budgeting support but staff are not qualified to answer questions about benefits.

A few student mentors suggested that it may be useful to invest in advanced mental health training and benefits training for one or two of the mentors, so that they can provide more specialist support in this field. Staff recognised that this would require funding and staff time to dedicate to training, but felt this could help to deliver a better service.

Travel – Student mentors also identified travel as an emerging issue. The Young Scot bus pass now has a six month backlog, which leaves students without a way of getting to college. Mentors felt that there was a need to consider ways of providing alternative and additional support with travel in the interim period, as this impacts significantly on attendance and anxiety.

English language support – Mentors indicated that many young people don't have English as their first language, so English language support, learning support and translators would be useful.

Referrals – Mentors felt that it was positive that young people could be referred to the service by the college, by external agencies or could self-refer. However, mentors indicated that the referral process could be variable, and sometimes referrals were made with limited detail included. Some were working with their college to develop a new referral system and to build up the profile of the service to tackle stigma in asking for help and support. Partners also mentioned that while colleges and STAY worked well together, there could be issues with data protection and information sharing between all parties involved.

Staffing – Partners felt that high turnover within the STAY service had impacted on capacity and relationships, requiring time to be taken to develop relationships and ensure students don't fall through any gaps in provision. Partners also felt that high turnover meant it was more difficult to deliver the 'one trusted adult' approach for young people, with a consistent mentor over time. Partners recognised the wider factors affecting turnover, and felt this was an issue beyond the STAY project for many other organisations.

Wider client group – Over time the STAY service has expanded to support vulnerable students, beyond those with care experience. Colleges welcomed this change, and felt that it was a positive example of the STAY programme adapting to wider changes in the needs of young people. However some felt there was a need to prioritise support for those most in need, and manage supply and demand on the service. One college mentioned a successful triage service which had helped ensure that referrals to STAY were appropriate and met individuals with the highest levels of need.

Scaling up – Mentors were keen to see the service expand to meet needs in other colleges and universities. One option suggested was a peer support and student buddying approach, which could scale up the project in an effective and efficient way. This would require funding to pilot the model, but could lead to the needs of more young people being met.

Partners indicated that they would like to see the service expanded, and multi year funding made available. This would help with recruitment, with posts being more attractive and less short term, and would mean the service could be developed in a sustainable manner.

Improving the system for young people with care experience – Partners had also been involved in a Partners in Change project, which aimed to facilitate discussion and action relating to wider issues for young people with care experience at college. This involved a series of themed group discussions involving a range of partners involved in the system.

Partners recognised that the Partners in Change approach aimed to bring about long term change and champion solutions to poverty and trauma. They recognised that system change would take time, and most likely wouldn't happen for many years. Partners also felt that they were working in a difficult landscape in terms of young people's needs, funding for public services and college funding – which could make it particularly challenging to bring about long term changes.



Change projects like this take time and resource to implement and are probably more long-term than three years funding, to actually establish what needs to be done and get up and running."

STAY partner

Partners felt that they were at the early stages of this project, but were keen to share ideas and learning. Partners found the group discussions very useful, and felt it was valuable to have funders and decisions makers such as Robertson Trust and Scottish Government present.



They're on point, they're relevant, it's the right people round the table. There's good sharing of knowledge and information exchange. They're one of the more valuable meetings I attend."

STAY partner