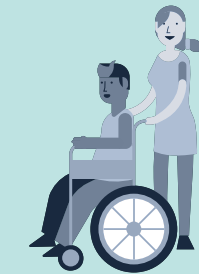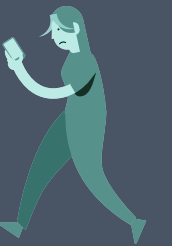# Bright lights and warm relationships

SCALING THE IMPACT OF
SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS
INTO SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

catch
22

deepr.

This report is a synthesis of some of the most impactful practices we have identified in the **Bright Light** service delivered by Catch22 & **The Children's Society**, as well as those found in other innovative services within the sector. We then ask the question 'How might this impact be scaled across the UK?'.

Rather than a cost/benefit analysis of the critical success factors within the Bright Light service or elsewhere, the report should be viewed as a provocation piece with recommended next steps. Some of the practices highlighted will be very familiar to those working at the frontline and yet, frustratingly, many challenges still remain in mainstreaming them. Our recommendations seek to move this forward.

The research and development underpinning the report was developed by **Deepr** on behalf of Catch22. The report itself has been jointly authored by both organisations.
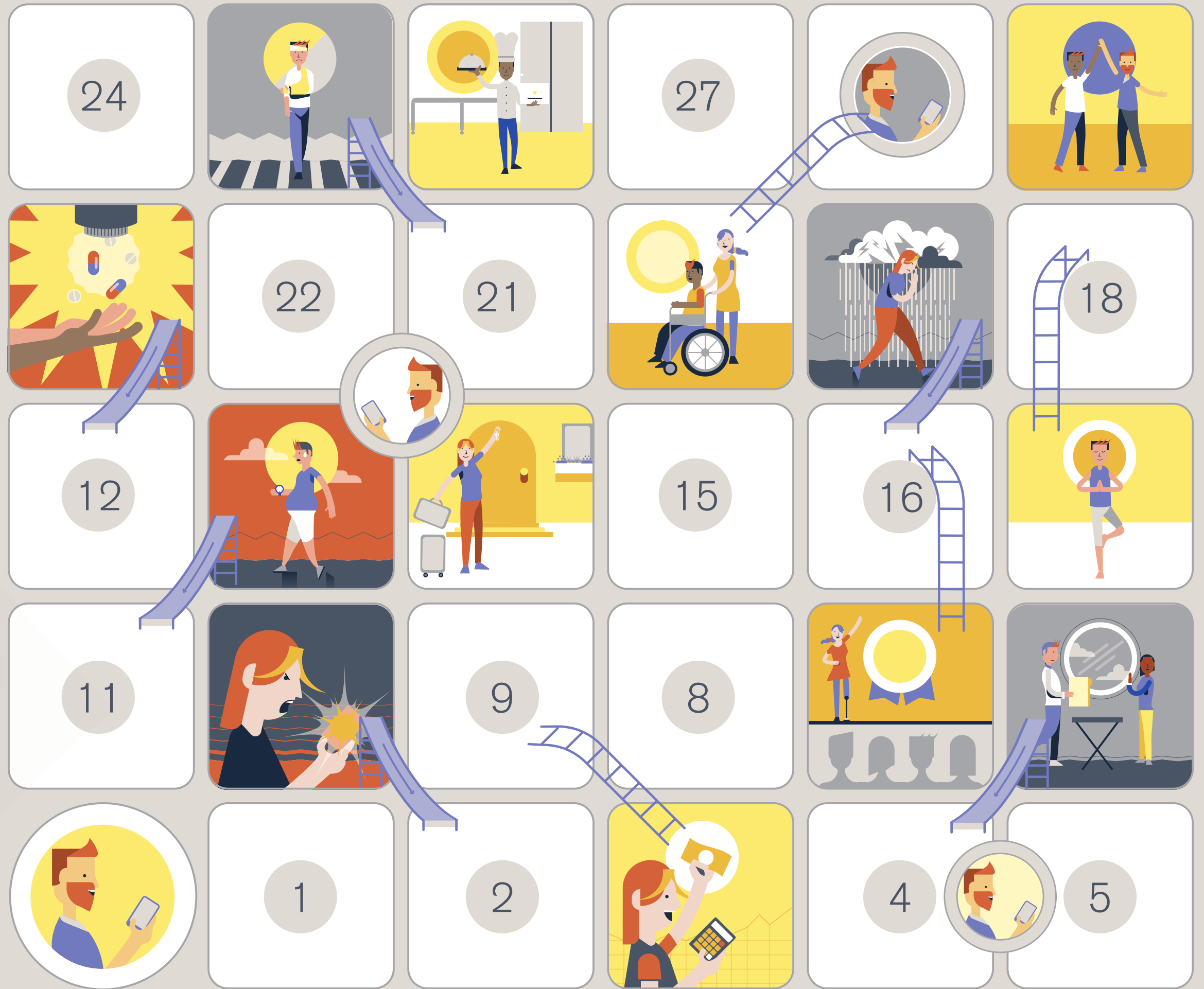
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Catch22, a UK-based charity and social business, and Deepr, a social innovation and design studio, have come together to gain a deep understanding of a key social issue - how care experienced young people access meaningful, sustainable work and training.

We know that care leavers are far less likely to be in education, employment or training **(EET)** than those in the general population **(NSPCC 2021)**. According to research carried out by the Rees Centre, U. Oxford, leaving care takes a toll on young people's mental wellbeing, with a higher percentage of care leavers reporting low wellbeing than children in care. And we've known for some time that stable housing, wellbeing and other factors support care leavers to achieve good outcomes in education and employment **(Wade and Dixon 2006)**. With a principle focus on Bright Light, but including research into a number of other innovative approaches, this piece of co-design:

- Takes stock of some of the most impactful practices in current service provision.
- Identifies blockers for scaling that impact nationally.
- Makes recommendations for overcoming those blockers.

> **"** *The culture needs to change so that 'care leavers' do not receive a second class service to those 'in care'. The motivation for each LA needs to be there."*
>
> - Local authority manager

Bright Light is a partnership pilot project between Catch22 and The Children's Society, supporting 16-25 year old care-experienced people to find sustainable careers via jobs, apprenticeships and higher education.

The report is based mainly on the qualitative research developed from a mixture of 23 depth interviews and four workshops with a range of internal experts at Catch22 and The Children's Society, 10 care-experienced people, local authorities, employers and external service experts at the Department of Health, **Leicestershire Cares** and **Sheffield Futures**. The findings have been further validated against the evaluation research carried out by **NFPSynergy** on behalf of Bright Light's funder, The Clothworkers' Foundation, for which we are very grateful.

We offer this work up to the wider sector, in the hope that it will open up fresh ideas, innovation and unlock impact. For ourselves, we want to know what works, why, and how we can help more care experienced young people across the UK thrive.

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

As part of our co-design approach with a wide range stakeholders, 10 themes repeatedly came through in interviews. Within the themes were two elements we consider to be the critical success factors of Bright Light.

> *[The Bright Light coach and I] really connected. It's good to know that someone cares about your future"*
>
> - Care leaver

1. **The relational and holistic (R&H) approach.** The unhurried and trust based approach that encompasses all of the young person's holistic needs is deemed essential by almost every stakeholder we spoke to across Bright Light and the sector.

   By spending real time getting to know each person (the relational), issues and needs such as housing, healthy eating, laundry and mental health (the holistic) that may affect their journeys into work, can be identified, then mitigated or met.

   Additionally, there is considerable qualitative evidence that R&H supports engagement, motivation and focus whilst saving employers' time and identifying potential challenges early. This R&H approach has been facilitated in Bright Light by lower caseloads for career coaches (c.50% compared with conventional approaches), lower targets into employment/

training as well as budget flexibility due to Covid related underspend (e.g. on travel).

2. **Meeting employers' end-to-end needs.** Fulfilling the initial and ongoing support needs of employers was key for all initiatives, employers and most local authorities we spoke to.

   This support is necessary from the point employers begin considering working with care leavers to at least one year into placements. The support delivered includes training managers who worry about "saying or doing the wrong thing" and ongoing ad hoc help in dealing appropriately with relational issues, mental health, time keeping and other challenges. Employers also need help with their recruitment policies and practices, which are often not fit for purpose, even within organisations with ring fenced opportunities for care leavers.

> *Relationships are more important than everything else - to young people, employers, local authorities and within the team - time spent and the intensity of the relationships"*
>
> - Bright Light team member

On the basis of these insights, we developed and tested a number of potential ways to scale some of the impact brought about by the two critical success factors. We've refined those that tested well into the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1
The relational and holistic (R&H) approach

The principal critical success factor we found in Bright Light (and all other initiatives researched) was the R&H approach. However, the additional time spent with care leavers, supporting their holistic needs in a warm and unhurried way - and the micro outcomes this supports - are not recognised in the dominant metric of 'placement start' with a six-month follow up. Our research highlights the many achievements and setbacks that mark the journey of a care leaver into a career, many of which are recorded to some degree in the qualitative 'distance travelled' Workstar used by Bright Light. Others are harder to chart and often have a 'two steps forward and one step back' pattern.

1a. A NEW IMPACT MEASURING FRAMEWORK AND EVIDENCE TOOL

We see a clear disparity between the way support is measured and the reality of good practice towards best outcomes. The current reporting framework does not:

- Account for the long term positive outcomes attributable to R&H
- Sufficiently recognise the incremental milestones and setbacks that make up the journey towards a sustainable career

We recommend that Catch22 convene the sector to develop, test and establish an impact framework and quantitative evidence tool that will satisfy funders, investors and the UK Government as an accurate and complete measure of the journey. Achieving this goal will bring recognition of the 'true cost' of effective long term support for care leavers and open the door to R&H approaches in and beyond the leaving-care space.

1b. THE TOOLS AND TRAINING TO MAINSTREAM THE PRACTICE

We saw the R&H approach in multiple projects and it was viewed as 'good sense' by practitioners. However, across the sector, there is no standardised or codified practice guidance for it. We recommend that Catch22 develop the learning and tools to codify and disseminate the good practice of the R&H approach. We suggest that, working with a number of sector experts, Catch22 develops a suite of tools to support local authorities and VCOs to test and learn the R&H approach. We think that it is likely to consist of:

- A framework that demonstrates the key concepts of R&H
- A step-by-step guide, or 'playbook', with individual methods and their suggested usage
- A peer-orientated training that, over the course of several months enables professionals to test and implement new behaviours in their work

1c.   DEVELOP CAPACITY WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Many funders of social sector organisations are reluctant to fund what they deem to be a statutory service. It is clear that local authorities have a role to play in bringing a R&H approach to this work at scale. However, we heard from experts and local authorities that although they recognise the R&H approach as valuable, there are several reasons that suggest developing training and tools will not be enough:

- PAs have too many cases resulting in too little time
- PAs' focus is too broad, so they are unable to specialise
- PAs don't necessarily have the correct skills or, crucially, a pathway to develop them

We recommend that with sufficient evidence, Catch22 should feed this through to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, via the NLCBF. The aim of this is to achieve national legislative change whilst influencing policy to reduce the caseloads of personal advisors within local authorities. This would enable PAs to play a more unhurried, relational role in the support of care leavers into education, employment and training.

Read this recommendation in full **here**

> " *I think frontline leaving-care workers know this is what will help the most but without reduced caseload and/ or getting rid of some of the structural challenges they work within, this could just increase frustration."*
>
> *- Sector expert*

> *We find it difficult to do this kind of work but really want to. What our managers worry about the most is saying or doing the wrong thing."*
>
> - National employer

RECOMMENDATION 2
End-to-end employer support

We have heard from a variety of experts, local authorities, service providers and national employers that there is a need for initial and ongoing, ad hoc and varied support for employers working with care leavers. This support is needed from the point they begin considering employing care leavers to, at least, one year into employment. These challenges are idiosyncratic and often appear to be unique.

Read this recommendation in full **here**

2a.   UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT THE MARKET

In order to scale the impact of the current Bright Light work with employers, we need to provide initial support that also helps us to understand more about the employer needs and level of demand nationally.

We recommend that Catch22 develops a prototype national advice service for employers. In the first instance we recommend this is a telephone service. The service should provide information and field questions from employers, ranging from initial interest calls to difficulties relating to existing employees. Crucially, beyond the effective and low risk value that this service will provide to employers, it is a means to gain valuable strategic insights into all aspects of the market. The advice service will:

• Map viability/demand for employer support, where and how might it be best delivered
• Create a central database of problems and solutions from which to create support at scale e.g. guidelines
• Identify employers keen to work with care leavers who can then be referred to relevant Catch22 teams or external partners supporting care leavers

2b.   DEEP SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS IN AN ONGOING WAY

Support delivered currently to employers is one-to-one, costly and deals with single issues. We recommend that, with sufficient evidence gathered from an advice service, Catch22 should consider scaling that service to meet demand and develop a series of regular peer groups of employers to facilitate deep and ongoing learning.

Our research suggests that the NLCBF model of peer learning with local authorities is a valuable way of developing buy-in for Pathways into Work (PIW) support at various levels of the local authority as well as upskilling key staff, ultimately positively impacting the outcomes for care leavers. There is a large body of research and practice that indicates that learning with and from people on similar journeys is a very effective way of developing skills, confidence and energy to make a change. Building on the model developed for local authorities via the NLCBF by the consultant Janet Grauberg, we recommend that one full time facilitator can run up to eight groups.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Gather more data

Any opportunities to scale the impact of Bright Light must include a call for more data. The outcome data indicates that Bright Light is impactful in terms of engagement and placements. The financial data suggests that Bright Light is more costly than conventional approaches. These two findings are further supported by the qualitative data developed as part of this work.
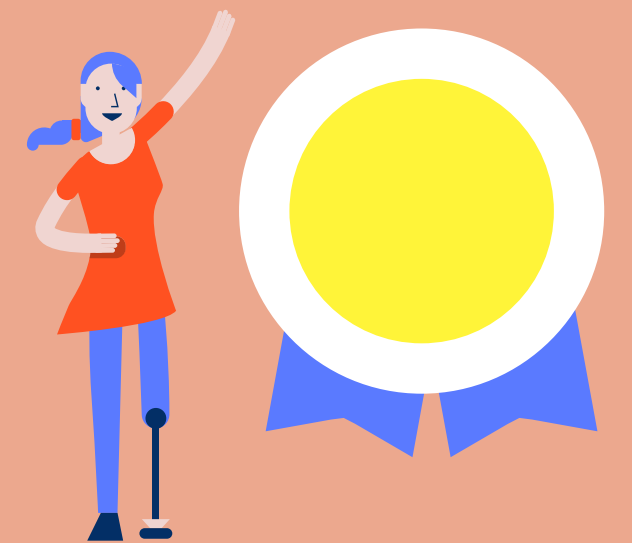
However, going forward, Catch22 will want to develop more quantitative data generally around longer term outcomes for care leavers and, in particular, a cost/benefit analysis of the two critical success factors identified.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Catch22 believes that to thrive, everyone needs good people around them, a purpose and a place to live (our 3 Ps). Work can bring all three of these vital components together. We know that unemployment, poor quality work and low wages are damaging for health and health equity **(The Health Foundation)** and that work can be the difference in someone's life.

Youth unemployment in the UK was poor before the Covid-19 pandemic hit (11.8% for young people compared to 4% for whole population, **House of Commons statistics**). Since then, finding and sustaining employment has become even harder for young people. In parallel, the UK economy has faced drastic challenges and a skills shortage. Employers are struggling to fill entry-level vacancies and apprenticeships. Young people are struggling to find meaningful work.

Care experienced young people experience a sharp cliff edge of support when they reach 18. Government support changes and young people are launched into independence, expected to find work, a living situation and emotional maturity, without the support network of a stable family.

Catch22's programmes aim to tackle these problems, head on. We've spent decades working with care experienced young people. We create innovative practices to complement government delivery. Now, we want to gain a deep understanding of what works, why and how we can reach more young people.

We want to scale the impact of our innovations, support UK employers and help our sector think bigger. This report aims to give us some key steps forward. We hope you'll come with us on this journey.

The report is based mainly on the qualitative research and co-design within a mixture of 23 depth interviews and four workshops with a range of internal experts at Catch22 and **The Children's Society**, 10 care-experienced people, local authorities, employers and external service experts at the Department of Health, **Leicestershire Cares** and **Sheffield Futures**. The findings have been further validated against the evaluation research carried out by **NFPSynergy** on behalf of Bright Light's funder, The Clothworkers' Foundation, for which we are very grateful.

With more time, we would have liked to speak with those within other key organisations doing vital and exciting work in this area such as Become, Drive Forward, Spectra and Staf. Unfortunately this was beyond the scope of this project and we would welcome the opportunity to come together to discuss this report.

Bright Light is a partnership project between Catch22 and The Children's Society supporting 16-25 year old care-experienced people to find sustainable careers via jobs, apprenticeships and higher education.

The 2.5 year pilot started August 2019 and ends in February 2022. It was conceived and developed as an experimental learning project to find out 'what works', 'why' and 'how'. It is exceeding all its target engagements and placements aside from apprenticeships, which have been disrupted by COVID-19 and the Kickstart programme.

KEY FEATURES:

- **Career coach -** caseload of 30 (50% average) weekly contact, delivering additional broad support with life challenges
- **Partnerships manager -** dedicated to source and support employers seeking to employ care-experinced people up to one year after job start
- **Cyclical approach -** recognising that care leavers may have setbacks or may drift away and need to go back through the process
- Access to **wraparound support** services e.g. talking therapies

OTHER INITIATIVES RESEARCHED

- **The Apollo project,** delivered by Sheffiled Futures, is a service for 100 care leavers (19-21 years old) that consists of peer support, career coaching and employer support. Funded by a DfE social impact bond, this enabled them to be agile e.g. they designed and delivered their own accredited training to overcome limited training offers and participant confidence issues.

- **Leicestershire Cares** offers a range of employment skills training to care leavers, a 12 week mentorship programme with local business leaders and a structured, tiered membership scheme for local employers that acts as a pipeline for employment.

- **National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum** (NLCBF)facilitates a well-designed peer learning group of 10 local authority representatives meeting six times a year to support each other in addressing local challenges in leaving care support. It features guest speakers, shared resources and collaborative learning.

- **The Department of Education** annual Care Leavers Internship employed 450 interns in 2021 across Government departments, throughout the UK. Starting with 1 intern in 2015, it has been developed iteratively with a thoughtful design-led approach. It hosts an internal peer network of care leavers.

OUR DESIGN PROCESS

We have approached this work in the form of a design sprint, run over 10 weeks. We've followed the Design Council's Double Diamond process to arrive at recommendations that are based on thorough research and co-design with a broad range of stakeholders.
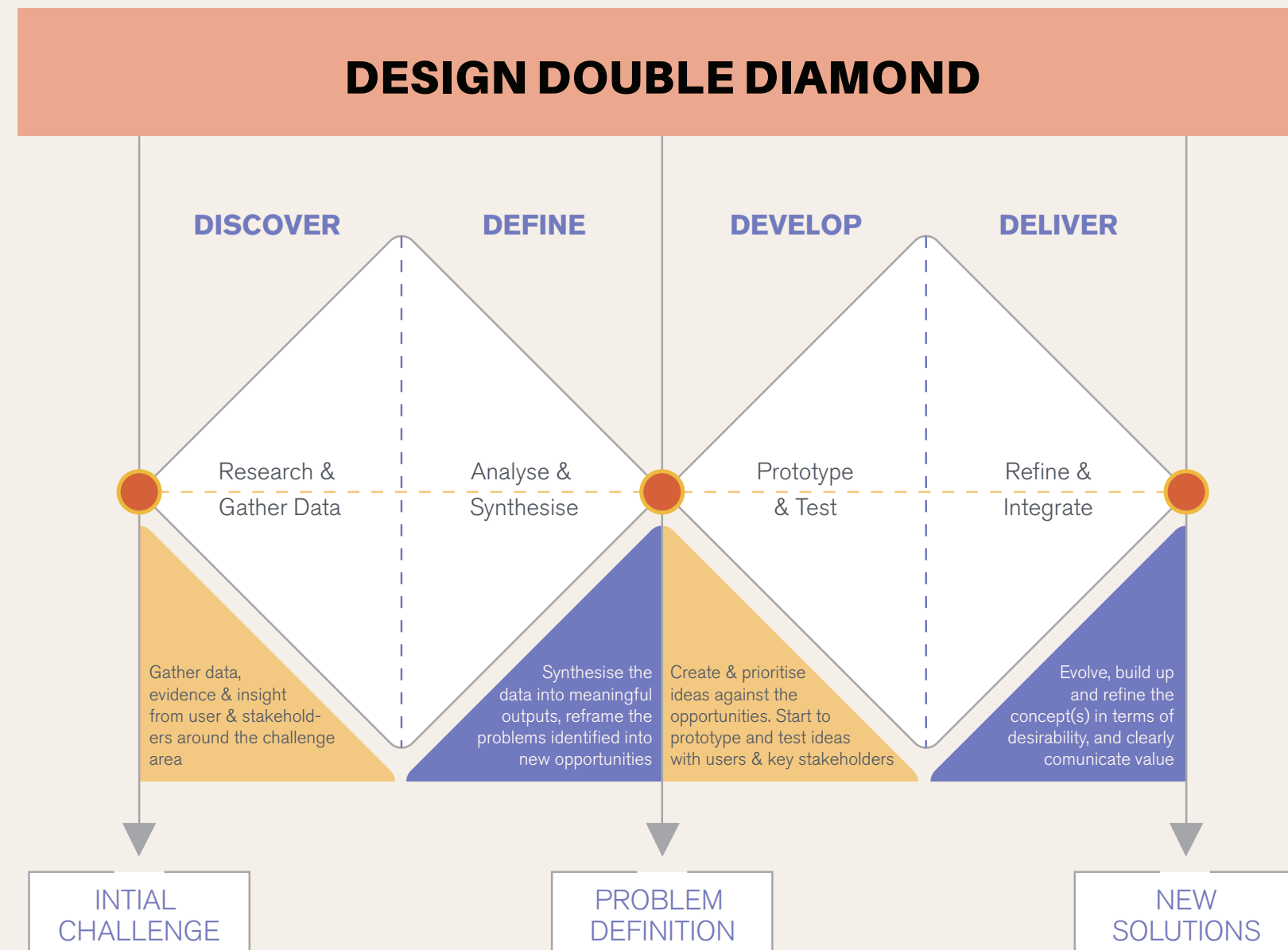
DESIGN DOUBLE DIAMOND

DISCOVER   **DEFINE**   **DEVELOP**   **DELIVER**

Research & Gather Data

Analyse & Synthesise

Prototype & Test

Refine & Integrate

Gather data, evidence & insight from user & stakeholders around the challenge area

Synthesise the data into meaningful outputs, reframe the problems identified into new opportunities

Create & prioritise ideas against the opportunities. Start to prototype and test ideas with users & key stakeholders

Evolve, build up and refine the concept(s) in terms of desirability, and clearly comunicate value

INTIAL CHALLENGE

PROBLEM DEFINITION

NEW SOLUTIONS

WHAT WE LEARNED

Having synthesized our initial research we saw 10 themes emerge. These came up repeatedly in interviews, have been validated across multiple stakeholder groups and, where relevant, the evaluation work of NFPSynergy. We've broken these down into:

- Two we consider to be the *critical success factors* of Bright Light.
- Four we suggest are important *design principles* - qualities that should guide any further developments of Bright Light and other similar initiatives.
- Four general insights that should inform further work in this area

What are the critical success factors of Bright Light?
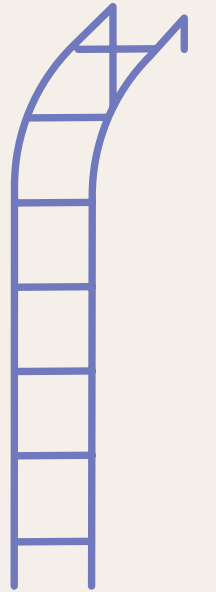
How might the impact of the critical succes factors be scaled?

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 1
The relational and holistic (R&H) approach

The unhurried and trust based approach that encompasses all of the young person's holistic needs is deemed essential by almost every stakeholder we spoke to across Bright Light and the sector.

> *Many care leavers wouldn't know the name Bright Light - they know Carl or Allison."*
>
> - Catch22 Manager

We've learned that by spending real time getting to know each person (the *relational*), issues and needs such as housing, healthy eating, laundry and mental health (the *holistic*) that may affect their journeys into work, can be identified, then mitigated or met.

This R&H approach has been facilitated in Bright Light by lower (c.50%) caseloads for career coaches and lower targets into employment/training as well as budget flexibility due to Covid related underspend (e.g. on travel).

Specifically, we heard that this relationship-first approach is impactful because:

- Supporting care leavers to meet their wider needs (e.g. eating, housing) affords them **more focus** on their pathways into work.

- Supporting care leavers' wider needs (e.g. stable housing, long term relationships) sets them up for more **long term career success.**
- The R&H approach builds trust and **increases the chances of a care leaver coming back to the programme** having not engaged for some time.
- Providing some services as part of the holistic care (one initiative provides access to a washing machine and a quiet place to work) **enables care leavers to meet several of their short term needs in one place** - which increases the motivation to engage.
- Since there's greater disclosure to coaches in an R&H approach, **employers say this saves them time** in that only suitable candidates are put forward for roles.
- Being a source of care leavers' relational wellbeing **increases engagement in the process.**

More broadly, evidence for the efficacy of a R&H approach in leaving-care services (as well as the structural challenges in working in this way) are now both widely researched and understood (Ingram/Smith 2018) and there are also early stages how-to guides, like the Relationships, Empathy and Love toolkit, a leaving care resource created by Staf.

> *She knows about my pets, she knows about my lifestyle...she got to know me on a personal level if that makes sense, but obviously within professional boundaries."*
>
> - Care leaver

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 2
Meeting employers' end-to-end needs

Fulfilling the initial and ongoing support needs of employers was key for all initiatives, employers and local authorities we spoke to.

This support is necessary from the point employers begin considering working with care leavers to at least a year into placements. The support delivered includes:

- Refining recruitment policies and practices. Employers with ring-fenced roles for care leavers often have recruitment policies that are set up for hard qualifications (e.g. GCSE) and need to be reworked to a) encourage care leavers to apply and b) enable them to apply (e.g. to be able to include relevant life experience in lieu of a qualilfication).
- Training for recruitment managers and line managers. Beyond the commitment of employers and their HR departments, supporting managers to develop skills around celebrating successes, pastoral support, coaching and mentoring is vital for employment to be successful in the long term.
- Ongoing *ad hoc*, urgent help in dealing with a variety of problems to do with housing, relational issues, mental health and time keeping.

> " *[Ongoing support is] a big thing for us - an independent third party who knows the young person. And potentially for them to speak to them as well on some occasions. Our HR teams aren't trained in this support."*
>
> - National employer

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. **Meet care leavers 'where they are'.** Keeping services voluntary, ensuring the locus of control sits with the care leaver as well as enabling them to drift away and return all had a positive impact on outcomes.

2. **Use digital communication where it works best.** Though there were instances where this wasn't the case, in the overwhelming number of instances digital communication created low barriers for engagement, with noticeable benefits in almost every stakeholder group - mentors, speakers, employers and care leavers.

3. **Be agile. Be flexible.** Providers needed to respond quickly to changing care leaver, employer and local authority needs as well as employment markets.

4. **Reduce separation with local authorities.** Local authorities and initiatives spoke of the positive impact that being co-located, attending shared meetings and working on the same spreadsheets brought to their work.
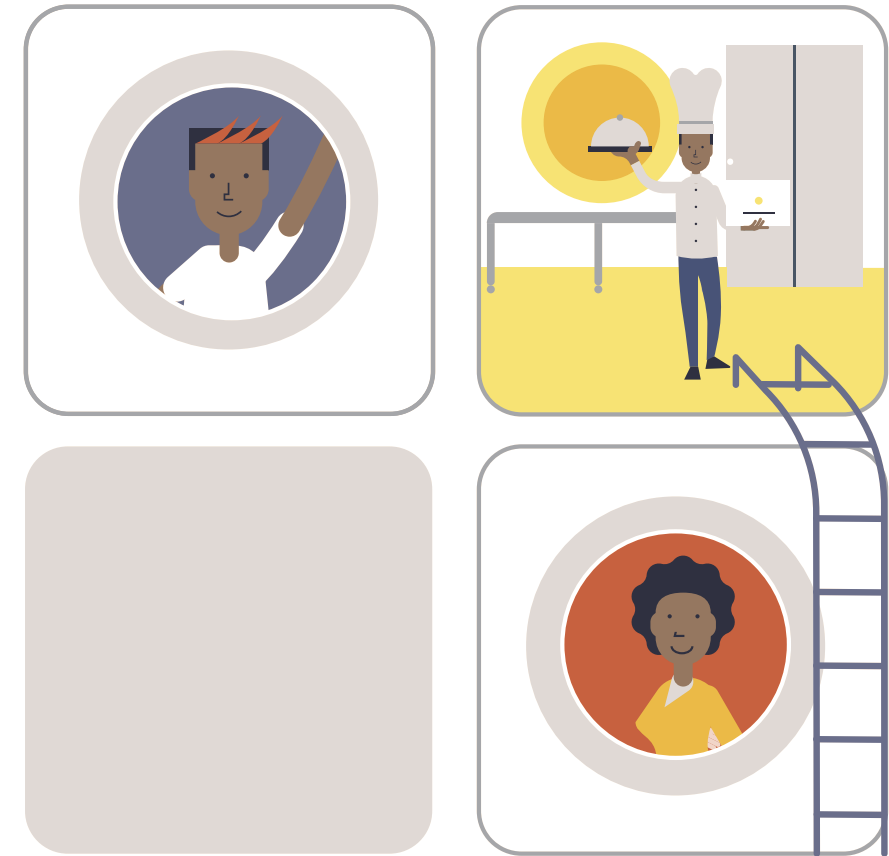
GENERAL INSIGHTS

1. **A long journey of many steps - measured at the half-way point.**
   We heard many professionals talk about the timeline of the work
   required to support care leavers into sustainable careers. It needs
   to begin (for care leavers and employers) far earlier than the
   point of applying for a job, college place or apprenticeship, and
   that it continues at least one year into that placement. We heard
   about all the small but significant successes and setbacks that
   care leavers experience along the way. We viewed this in contrast
   with the relatively static reporting data of Bright Light based
   on engagement and placement with some follow-up after six
   months.

   Another initiative, Apollo, funded with a Social Impact Bond, goes
   one step further, **reporting** on a number of outcomes: improved
   accommodation, financial stability, mental health and wellbeing,
   resilience and confidence alongside conventional metrics.

2. **This is necessary work that local authorities have no capacity
   for.** Local authorities recognised the value to them from Bright
   Light. We heard that, due to caseloads, budgets, PAs having too
   broad a focus and, in some instances, a lack of necessary skills,
   delivering this work themselves is not currently possible.

3. **Engaging care leavers as part of the delivery process.** Although
   this wasn't evident in Bright Light delivery, it was raised by many
   stakeholders as an important element in this work - whether
   this was engaging care leavers by organising peer networks,
   developing peer coaches or employing care leavers with the
   delivery team.

4. **There is no 'one-size fits all' model for scale.** Each local offer,
   employment market, transport network, internet coverage and
   local authority team set-up is different.
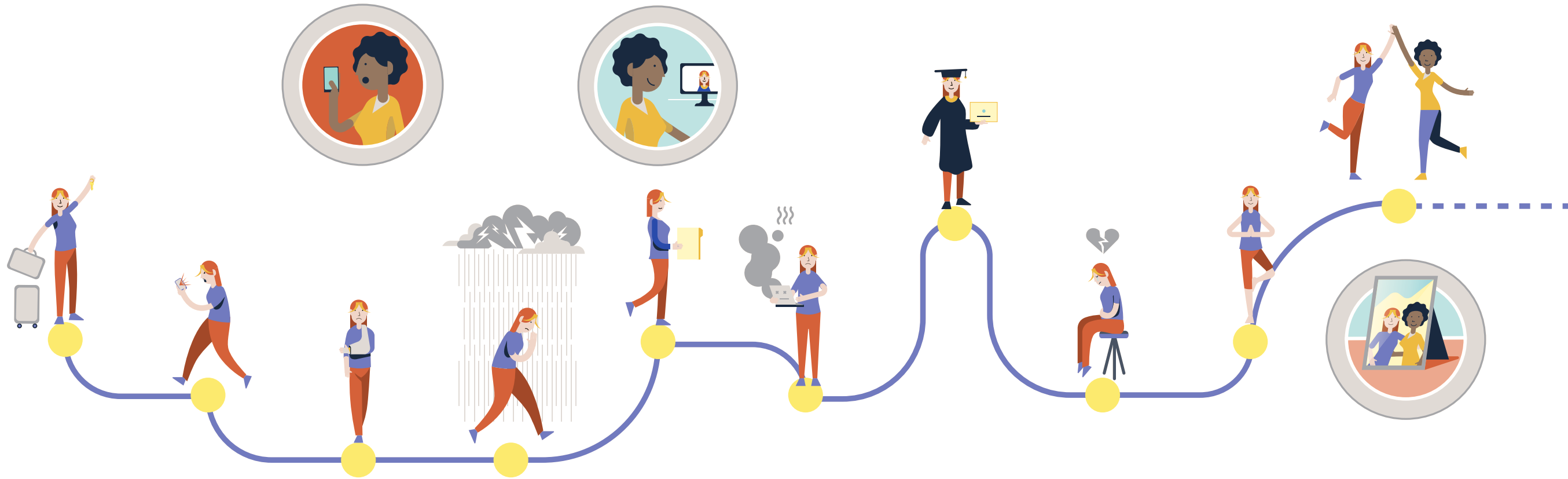
YEAR 01

YEAR 02

YEAR 03

GENERATING AND TESTING IDEAS FOR SCALE

Though we did consider how Bright Light itself might be scaled*, our brief was specifically to look at scaling the impact that Bright Light is having. So, working collaboratively with stakeholders, we generated and tested a number of ideas that might be impactful for care leavers in the UK, focusing primarily on what we had learned about the critical success factors of Bright Light.

- The relational and holistic (R&H) approach
- Meeting employers' end-to-end needs

The following recommendations are based upon this process.

* An idea that gathered some traction within the co-design group was the possibilty of a crowdfunding platform to support care leavers into specific roles (based on Beam, a similar platform for people experiencing homelessness). Since it seemed to be an idea that had been floated before we tested it with care leavers and found:

1. The Beam platform shares, as part of each crowdfunding campaign, a profile and situation story from each participant. Care leavers we spoke to said they would not be comfortable sharing in this way.

2. Another premise of the platform is that each participant knows what job they want to do. Care leavers, like many young people, do not want to be pinned down to one job but want to try out a range of jobs as they find out where they want to put their long term focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE 'HOW' - A DESIGN-LED APPROACH

Alongside the following ideas for scaling impact and the actions necessary to realising them (the 'what'), we recommend that any developments within this field take a design-led approach (the 'how').

We use this term as shorthand to suggest a step-by-step exploration of the recommendations, with each step being a test that informs the next step in the process, co-designed by a broad and inclusive group within the sector.

We should start with low investment and low risk 'baby steps', investing more as we gain more evidence, more clarity and more confidence as to the best way forward. This approach mitigates risk and ensures solutions are well grounded, effective and readily adopted.

There are many unknowns remaining in the recommendations we make. The means to addressing those are designed into the implementation plan, as long as we follow a design-led approach.
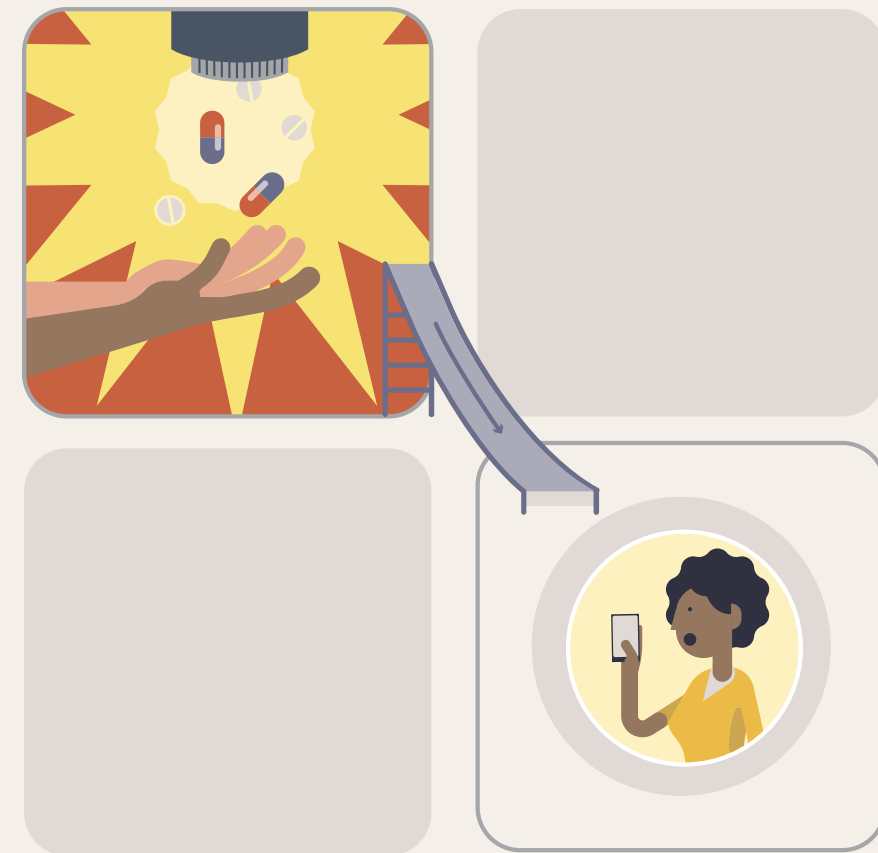
RECOMMENDATION 1
The relational and holistic (R&H) approach

The principal critical success factor we found in Bright Light (and all other initiatives researched) was the R&H approach. Almost every person we interviewed raised it, unprompted, and it was supported in the findings of NFPSynergy. Lower case loads of the career coaches have facilitated this approach and it appears to be the primary cost difference between Bright Light and conventional initiatives.

However, the additional time spent with care leavers, supporting their holistic needs in a warm and unhurried way - and the micro outcomes this supports - are not recognised in the dominant metric of 'placement start' with a six-month follow up. Our research highlights the many achievements and setbacks that mark the journey of a care leaver into their career - recorded to some degree in the qualitative 'distance travelled' Workstar used by Bright Light. Others are harder to chart and often with a 'two steps forward and one step back' pattern. These achievements and setbacks might begin eighteen months before employment and carry on at least one year afterwards.

We have identified three challenges to scaling the impact of the R&H approach. Each has its own recommendations but they are interdependent and should be implemented together in a sequence that is outlined below.

1a. A NEW IMPACT MEASURING FRAMEWORK AND EVIDENCE TOOL

A challenge to scaling the impact of an R&H approach is that this work is currently measured against a reporting framework that does not:

- Account for the long term positive outcomes attributable to R&H
- Sufficiently recognise the incremental milestones and setbacks that make up the journey towards a sustainable career

We recommend that Catch22 convene the sector to develop, test and establish a new impact measuring framework and evidence tool; a gold standard for benchmarking support for care leavers into sustainable, long term careers.

This should be a detailed quantitative framework that accounts for the whole journey care leavers travel in order to achieve sustainable long term careers. For use as a reporting model to funders, this should be based upon the notion of the Bright Light 'distance travelled' WorkStar, but rather than a self reported qualitative tool, we suggest creating a quantitative evidence tool (that includes input from significant people in each care leaver's life) that will satisfy funders, investors and the UK Government as an accurate and complete measure of the journey.

We have heard how difficult this will be to achieve; how different individual people's journeys are. It will certainly require considerable

national data on those journeys in order to establish patterns. With that we can then begin to map the significance of the many and varied achievements and setbacks that make up these journeys.

Fortunately there is valuable work already underway that supports this recommendation, most notably the Leaving Well **framework** led by Social Finance and Dr Mark Kerr. And there are some initiatives, such as Apollo in Sheffield, that have successfully moved their **reporting** on to include holistic measures that contribute to sustainable long term careers. These are both steps towards our recommendations but there is a great deal of work left to do.

A change from which many benefits will flow

Whilst the scope of this report does not stretch to a cost/benefit analysis of Bright Light or the critical success factors within it, provisional figures suggest that Bright Light is more costly than other similar but conventional services. Achieving Recommendaton 1 will bring clarity to the 'true cost' of effective long term support for care leavers and potentially open the door to R&H approaches in and beyond the leaving-care space.

1b.   # THE TOOLS AND TRAINING TO MAINSTREAM THE PRACTICE

Whilst apparent in multiple projects and seen as 'good sense' by many practitioners, there exists no standardised or codified practice guidance on a R&H approach, or relevant call to action within the sector. Additionally, PAs in local authorities do not currently have the capability to work consistently in this way.

We recommend that Catch22 develop the learning and tools to codify and disseminate the good practice of the R&H approach. We know that projects similar to Bright Light are keen to share their learning and approach, but lack the resources to do so. We suggest that, working with a number of sector experts, Catch22 develops a suite of tools to support local authorities and Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) to test and learn the R&H approach.

The process of identifying good practice and codifying it will identify the best model for the tools. However we think that it is likely to consist of:

- A framework that demonstrates the key concepts of R&H
- A set step-by-step guide, or 'playbook',* with individual methods and their suggested usage
- A peer-orientated training that, over the course of several months enables professionals to test and implement new behaviours in their work

Importantly, whatever form this takes, it must be designed so that we gather ongoing data to improve the tools and to identify new good practices; it should be providing value to the user and value to the work itself.

* A note on playbooks, toolkits, frameworks etc.

We, as people, are motivated by the drive to ensure our needs, big and small, are met. We prioritise our attention and time according to those needs. When designing resources like playbooks, we must make sure that we create the motivation within our audience to use them. We do that by discovering the needs of our audience and ensuring the playbook will meet some of their prioritised needs. Otherwise, the playbook will stay in their inbox and never come out to be played with.

1c.

DEVELOP CAPACITY WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Many funders of social sector organisations are reluctant to fund what they deem to be a statutory service. It is clear that local authorities have a role to play in bringing a R&H approach to this work at scale. However, we heard from experts and local authorities that although they recognise the R&H approach as valuable, there are several reasons that suggest developing training and tools will not be enough:

- PAs have too many cases resulting in too little time
- PAs' focus is too broad, so they are unable to specialise
- PAs don't necessarily have the correct skills or, crucially, a pathway to develop them

We recommend that with sufficient evidence, Catch22 should feed this through to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, via the NLCBF. The aim of this is to achieve national legislative change whilst influencing policy to reduce the caseloads of personal advisors within local authorities. This would enable PAs to play a more unhurried, relational role in the support of care leavers into education, employment and training.

" *I think frontline leaving-care workers know this is what will help the most but without reduced caseload and/or getting rid of some of the structural challenges they work within, this could just increase frustration."*

- Sector expert

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Recommendations 1a, 1b and 1c are interdependent and should be explored in the following sequence.

PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
ACTION	**PERIOD**	**ACTION**	**PERIOD**	**ACTION**	**PERIOD**
Publish this report and gather feedback (developing key strategic relationships)	**Year 1** Q1	Convene and maintain a community of practice around the R&H approach	**Year 1** Q3	Develop and test a prototype impact tool in internal projects in line with resources such as Government Outcomes Lab. Publish results.	**Year 2** Q3 - **Year 3** Q3
Develop initial national, sectorwide stakeholder community (e.g initial round tables x 4)	**Year 1** Q2	Gather sectorwide data for an initial impact framework + tool (internally and externally, publishing results).	**Year 2** Q1	Build the practice across the sector (prototyped playbook, training, peer groups). Publish results.	**Year 3** Q1 - **Year 3** Q3
Gather evidence data for the practice (internally and externally, publishing results.)	**Year 1** Q2 - Q4	Gather sectorwide data on good R&H practice for learning tools	**Year 2** Q3	Refine and demonstrate the efficacy of both the approach and the impact tool. Publish results.	**Year 4** Q1 - Q4
Internal policy work	**Year 1** Q1 - Q4	Internal policy work	**Year 1** Q3 - **Year 2** Q3	Internal policy work	**Year 2** Q3 - **Year 4** Q4

RECOMMENDATION 2
End-to-end employer support

We have heard from a variety of experts, local authorities, service providers and national employers that there is a need for initial and ongoing, ad hoc and varied support for employers working with care leavers. This support is needed from the point they begin considering employing care leavers to the point where they have the internal skills and resources to manage challenges as they arise. The type of challenges are idiosyncratic and often appear to be unique. Currently, in Bright Light, the support is delivered one-to-one by the partnerships manager. We've therefore considered how similar outcomes for employers (and therefore care leavers) might be achieved at scale.

There are existing opportunities for employers to sign up to care leaver employment support through initiatives such as the Care Leaver Covenant. But, these do not currently address the ad hoc, urgent needs that arise during placement e.g. relational or timekeeping issues. Nor do they support the complex problem-solving needed to tackle problems such as housing or mental health.
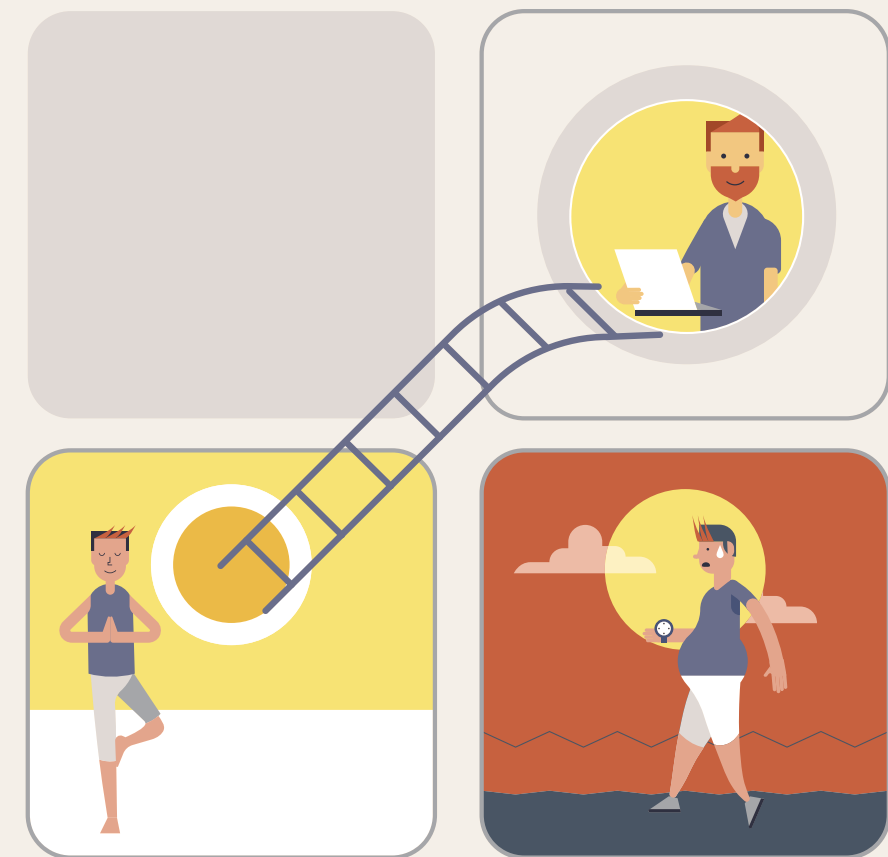
2a. UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT THE MARKET

In order to scale the impact of the current Bright Light work with employers, we need to provide initial support that also helps us understand more about employer needs and level of demand nationally.

We recommend that Catch22 develops a prototype national advice service for employers. In the first instance we recommend this is a telephone service. The service should provide information and field questions from employers, ranging from initial interest calls to difficulties relating to existing employees.

Staffed by a support consultant with first hand experience of working with both care leavers and employers, this can fit initially into an existing role and is a cost effective and low risk way to provide value to employers. Testing suggests this should be paired with a 'Top 10 FAQs' webpage.

Crucially, beyond the effective and low risk value that this service will provide to employers, it is a means to gain valuable strategic insights into all aspects of the market. The advice service will:

- Map viability/demand for employer support, where and how might it be best delivered
- Create a central database of problems and solutions from which to create support at scale e.g. guidelines
- Identify employers keen to work with care leavers who can then be referred to relevant Catch22 teams or external partners supporting care leaver

2b. | **DEEP SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS IN AN ONGOING WAY**

Support delivered currently to employers is one-to-one, costly and deals with single issues.

We recommend that, with sufficient evidence gathered from an advice service (2a), Catch22 should develop a series of regular peer groups of employers to facilitate deep and ongoing learning.

Our research suggests that the NLCBF model of peer learning with local authorities is a valuable way of developing buy-in for Pathways into Work (PIW) support at various levels of the local authority. It also upskills key staff, ultimately positively impacting the outcomes for care leavers.

There is a large body of research and practice that indicates that learning with and from people on similar journeys is a very effective way of developing skills, confidence and energy to make a change. It is also a relatively economical way of achieving this.

Employers we spoke to told us that they would value being connected to other employers who are working with care leavers, in order to manage some of the challenges they face..

Building on the model developed by Janet Grauberg and Catch22, we suggest that one full-time facilitator can run up to 8 groups. These groups should be convened with our general insight "There is no

'one-size fits all' model for scale" in mind to ensure complementary groups are formed.

> *It would be useful to connect with like-minded employers - virtual get togethers would be great. Then we could help each other out."*
>
> - National employer

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Each group size should be 8-10 members
- Participating employers nominate a 'care leaver champion' with their organisation to attend
- Meetings take place every 6 weeks for 2 hours during office hours
- Participants bring a specific medium-term challenge to work on over the course of one year (this can change but is a useful focus)
- Participants receive some basic coaching training
- Participants share their work, progress and challenges in a light touch Peer coaching / Action Learning format
- There is a scheduled 'buddy' meet-up at each 3 week mid-point
- Guests (e.g. CEO / Recruitment Managers) are encouraged to attend in order to widen the buy-in / consciousness within employers
- Each session has a relevant guest speaker, bringing insight / discussion e.g. someone who is care experienced. This should be pre-recorded / shared as advance preparation in order to make most of peer time 'in the room' and to be able to reuse recorded content across multiple peer groups and in marketing to provide 'social proof' to other employers
- Participants receive early access to bespoke tools and innovations created for employers (e.g. policy templates, accreditation badge)

RECOMMENDATION 3
Gather more data

Any recommendations for scaling the impact of Bright Light must include a call for more data. The outcome data currently available indicates that Bright Light is impactful in terms of engagement and placements. The financial data suggests that Bright Light is more costly than conventional approaches. These two findings are further supported by the qualitative data developed as part of this work.

Going forward, Catch22 will want to develop more granular, quantitative data generally around longer term outcomes for care leavers and, in particular, a cost/benefit analysis of the two critical success factors identified.

DATA RECOMMENDATIONS

• Often it's not possible to know where interesting data patterns might emerge from. Going forward, **adopt the approach of 'capture everything',** sharing 'warts and all' with a third party or investing internally in the skills to query and interpret the data.

• **Longitudinal data research** into the relative costs and benefits of conventional vs. R&H approaches to support. This should be panoramic and include factors associated with benefits, healthcare and income tax paid.

• **Carry out deep cost/benefit analysis** specifically of Bright Light's short, medium and long term impact in contrast with

that of other, conventional approaches. This should include a granular investigation of each critical success factor and each budget line (for example, the wrap-around support on offer within Bright Light) and, as far as possible, its contribution to specific outcomes.

• Consider hosting some projects (e.g. Recommendation 2a, the Employer advice service) as a strategically **effective and low cost way to gain data** on elements in the leaving-care space (e.g. the level and nature of demand for support services by employers).

Some of the recommendations in this report will not be quick or easy to achieve and, with many questions remaining to be answered, it will be a learning journey for the sector. However, we hope this provocation will spark an active drive within the sector to bring about the systemic change that will lead to more care leavers fullfilling their true professional potential.