

**Appendix 3:**

**HOUSING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE BORDERS**

**QUALITATIVE STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS**

**MAY 2018**

indigo house

## 1. Brief and method

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### 1.1 The brief

An independent evaluation is being carried by Indigo House Group to capture the housing needs and aspirations of young people in the Scottish Borders, and to understand the factors that shape this. Young people's voices are central to this study and the research team are very grateful to the six schools who put themselves forward to take part in the first stage of the research and the support of social work in facilitating an interview with a young person with experience of being in care. The following report presents the methods adopted, findings and conclusion of this aspect of the study.

### 1.2 Method

#### Focus groups and qualitative interviews

Six focus groups took place across the Borders at Kelso, Jedburgh, Galashiels, Eyemouth, Earlston and Hawick with those aged between 14-18 years old, and in addition one young person aged 21 who had been in care was also interviewed. One of the challenges of doing the research was that many 16-17 year olds were away on study leave at the time, and so an additional focus groups took place specifically for this age group. Schools were asked to bring together a group of people of mixed ages, backgrounds and ideally a gender split. It would be fair to say that in most schools, the most academically promising young people took part. However, in one school, in an attempt to try to give a more balanced view, they purposely chose the children receiving extra support and who were struggling in school. This was very helpful in terms of teasing out some of the differences in views, life choices and also some of the underlying reasons for these.

Notes were made throughout the focus groups that lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, and the depth interview with the individual one hour. These notes were then sent back to the school so that pupils had an opportunity to give further feedback if they wanted to. No further feedback was given.

#### Demographics

- 48 young people took part in the focus groups, namely, 23 boys and 25 girls. The following table presents the breakdown of ages.

Age	Number (n48)
14	22
15	15
16	5
17	6

As can be seen the younger age groups were overrepresented but there was no real discernible difference identified in views, and therefore age did not seem to be a factor influencing decisions, other than there were two young people aged fourteen who did not have any idea where they would live after leaving school.

#### Analysis

The analysis was informed by grounded theory with the notes coded and key messages identified.

## 2. Findings

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### 2.1 Stay or go?

Of the 49 young people who took part, the following table summarises their position about living in the Borders after leaving school. For the sake of clarity and as was explained to the young people, 'Committed Stayers' are those who plan and are satisfied at living and working in the Borders. 'Reluctant Stayers' are those who will also stay but do not really want to. 'Reluctant Leavers' are those who think they will leave but do not really want to and 'Committed Leavers' are those who are keen and felt that they will move away.

Description	Number
Committed Stayer	9
Reluctant Stayer	1
Reluctant Leaver	6
Committed Leaver	31
Don't Know	2

As can be seen, the majority of young people, 63% were committed to leaving the Borders. In two groups every young person gave this answer. All said that they would move to a Scottish City, with the majority mentioning Edinburgh and a smaller number discussing Glasgow, with one school closer to the Border also citing Newcastle as a desired option.

### 2.2 Reasons for Staying

The main reason for young people wanting to stay, and four of them came from the group receiving additional support, was because of their friends. One young man also said that he didn't get on with his family but his friends were really important to him. All four also said that they could get jobs in the Borders that they would be happy with and mentioned working in shops or fishing as options. Three other young people from different schools wanted to stay because they too felt that the work that they wanted to get into work available in the Borders, specifically rugby, a bike mechanic and 'working with horses'. One young man, who was the only one of his group to say that he wanted to say, simply said that he liked the quiet. The young man who had grown up in care said that now he was back living near his family he would never leave them again. Secondary reasons given by three young people were that they felt that the Borders had a sense of community. They said:

*People here are friendly, I couldn't live in a city like Glasgow.*

*I like living here because I have neighbourhood conversations.*

One person in another focus group who has been defined as a 'reluctant stayer', said that they would be happy to stay because of their friends but also did not think that they could afford to leave.

### 2.3 Reasons for Going

The main reason given for leaving the Borders was to get a better job in the future and access further education. In one group they also spoke about how staying in Scotland was important to them because the education was free. Seven young people had already identified specific courses available in Edinburgh or Glasgow that they could not access in the Borders, such as photography or marketing. When asked if they would stay if the course existed in the Borders they replied 'no' and that they would still leave. This highlights that the 'pull' factors of living in a city discussed, of the perception that 'there is always something to do',

'the city is exciting', they have a chance to 'meet new people', access to 'better amenities' and 'be away from parents', 'be independent' were actually more important. In one group a few of the young people also said that they were keen to move away because they felt that the people in the local area were 'small minded.' Four other young people in different groups felt that there were 'too many old people' in the Borders and they were keen to get away to somewhere where as one young woman put it 'there isn't four old people to every one young person.'

Two young men from the group receiving additional support felt that in the city more and better jobs were available. They did not discuss university as an option but were keen to move out and neither saw themselves coming back.

*I want to leave to somewhere not so rural, I hate it. I want to go to somewhere busy like Edinburgh. If I want to get there I will get there.*

Four in one group wanted to be closer to family that lived in a different city. Two also wanted to move away to places they liked, one being Devon and the other Australia.

One young man wanted to move to join the Navy.

The theme of wanting to live abroad for a time after University emerged in two different groups with sixteen young people keen to do this in the future and they spoke about the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and wanting to 'see the world.'

Six young people defined themselves as reluctant leavers, with five moving to get a job but feeling they would miss their family and friends. One young man also said that he worried about how he would cope when he was away from home.

In one group all the young people spoke about being worried about how to pay bills and cook, and reflected that they wished they were taught these skills at school or at home. The young man who had been in care spoke also about how helpful it had been to have a transitional support worker to get a flat and practice developing life skills in the 'trainer flat.'

## **2.4 Views of people who stay and go**

Two groups said that they viewed people who never left the Borders negatively and described them as 'boring', 'drop outs', 'small minded.' In addition one young man in another group said that they could be seen as 'stubborn.' The other groups said they had no views either way, with one young women even saying 'no one cares.'

## **2.5 Importance of Housing**

Everyone who took part in the study said that their main priority is getting a job and no one mentioned housing as a priority in the open discussions, however, when asked, they said that housing is important, but less important than getting a job, and reasoned that by getting a job you could get a better standard of housing.

*The big thing for me and my priority is getting a job, then you have money, and then you can think about getting a house.*

## 2.6 Views on where they will live after leaving school

Those moving away are ready to compromise on housing and even look forward to sharing with other young people. However, most said that they want to live somewhere that is still 'good' and they are proud of it.

*I think even your first flat should be somewhere you are proud to be in and somewhere you want to be.*

They also expected that they would afford to buy for quite some time and some were concerned about the cost of renting.

*Not even thinking about it now. I am not even thinking about buying a place yet as it is so expensive and all I can think of right now is about renting...it's expensive.*

For those planning on remaining in the Borders, they felt they had limited housing options and some said they would probably stay with their parents and others despaired at the housing on offer affordable to them.

## 2.7 Coming back to the Borders

Of the 37 who said that they would leave the Borders, 21 (57%) said that they would return when they were in their late twenties or thirties. The main reason given for returning was for family and friends. Young people also spoke about their attachment to the area, feeling a part of the community and viewed the Borders as a good place 'to settle' and bring up children. It was noted that generally young people wanted to move back to their specific area. Some felt that they would miss the quiet and welcome returning after being away. Almost all felt that if they moved back it would be to buy a house.

In one group they discussed how they also felt that the area they lived was changing, with younger people viewed as being not as innocent as they had been, growing up too quickly and drugs becoming an issue. They were concerned about the future of their area and suggested that parenting courses would be a good idea.

## 2.8 Affordability and Housing Options in the Borders

All felt that renting and buying in the Borders was more affordable than the city, however, some also reasoned that it was likely you could earn more money in the city too. In two groups they observed that housing was becoming more expensive in the Borders. One young man lamented, 'My mum bought her first house for £75,000 that just does not exist anymore.' He further added that he felt middle class young people were forgotten about with schemes and support available only for those most deprived. The young man who had been in care also complained about the challenges young people face, with their benefits less and the cost of housing increasing.

*I think the housing here is quite expensive...I earn just over the threshold so I don't get housing benefit and it is hard. There aren't many affordable options for people my age...A third of my wage goes on rent right now. I manage.*

The current housing affordable to the young people was not viewed as the housing they would want to move into.

*You don't want to be embarrassed taking someone into your flat and I think right now a lot of them are like that.*

Across all the groups they spoke about these flats as being in areas with 'bad' reputations with people living who had substance misuse issues and not safe.

*I wouldn't want to move there, into a junkies flat.*

*Right now the flats here are really old and junkies live there.*

*Every place is what you make it but they do have a bad reputation.  
I think a lot of the affordable housing here is full of people who take drugs. I wouldn't care it was  
cheap as long as it was secure, but with people like that you don't know, if you got on the wrong  
side of them.*

*Everyone judges it.*

*Council houses - they are not nice.*

*It feels at the moment that they put all the bad people together...other folk are ruining the flats.  
I feel things are very segregated between the rich and poor.*

Everyone felt that the current housing 'all looks the same', 'big plain brown buildings' and for the future they hoped it could look more aspirational, 'modern', 'small houses with gardens'.

*I would make housing more affordable.*

*I would knock a forest down and build houses.*

*The other thing I would change is that the materials that they use in the buildings, stop making them the  
same. The Queen opened the bus station down the road and now the Home Bargains is the same.*

## **2.9 Suggestions for improvement**

The views across the groups were that the Council should build modern, affordable, aspirational housing.

*I would like them to build modern flats but better.*

The concern raised with modern flats in two groups was that they felt the soundproofing was poor and the materials used cheap.

In one group they also suggested that there could be a small area of amenities, such as a shop, café, restaurant onsite.

*Build houses not too big because then it would be a waste, modern style with gardens, life around it. "Not  
grey' and not like the flats in Gala – no one would want to stay there.*

In the group in Hawick they spoke about liking the flats built near the B&M Homestore on the river that had balconies.

The overriding feeling is that the housing should be aspirational as well as functional.

The young man in care felt that the flat he was staying in which had a concierge and support in place was a good stepping stone for young people and would be helpful to many young people as a first flat, not just young people who had been in care. He also pointed out that for him this particular housing was only available for a year and he was concerned about where he might move. He also pointed out that not every landlord accepted people on housing benefit and this was a challenge.

In two groups they said that it would be useful if rents were capped and young people better supported to get mortgages.

The group of young people receiving additional support asked the researcher directly what would happen with their input and were sceptical about the study having any meaning. They said:

*Is this information going anywhere, I feel like what we want won't happen.*

### 3. Conclusions

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Of the 48 young people who took part in the study, 63% are committed to leaving the Borders and moving to a city after leaving school to access further education, get a better job, meet new people, experience new things, have better amenities and strike out on their own.

There was a divide between those young people who were more academically promising and those requiring additional support, who have lower aspirations about the type of work they would get into and the options open to them, choosing to remain in the Borders, and this is worth exploring further.

In two groups they viewed those who remain in the Borders negatively, seeing them as ‘drop outs’ and ‘small minded.’

The priority for young people is to get into work and housing is important but less so than this, and those moving to the city are willing to compromise on where they live and look forward to sharing with friends. They also felt that even their first rented flat should be somewhere they are proud of.

Housing in the Borders was viewed as being more affordable than other areas but some observed that it was becoming more expensive. It was also reasoned that if you lived in the city you could earn more and so the cost balances out.

All the young people felt that the current housing options for young people remaining in the Borders are poor, with the flats affordable to them viewed as being in ‘bad’ areas where there are high levels of substance misuse and unsafe.

Young people want the council to build more affordable, modern, aspirational housing that does not all look the same. A smaller number felt that rent should be capped and more support given to help young people afford rent and buy their own properties.

In one group the young people spoke about wanting to be more prepared for living on their own, and were concerned about how to pay bills and cook. The young man who had experience of care felt that all young people should have access to transitional support and was grateful that he had learned these life skills through support from services.

Of the 37 who said they would leave, 21 (57%) also said they would return to the Borders in their late twenties and thirties, generally to raise a family because they viewed it as a good place ‘to settle’ near family and friends, with a sense of belonging and community. They also felt that at this stage they could buy a house there.