“I didn’t really want to talk about what went on at home at the time, but now it’s a bit easier because it’s starting to feel like something that happened in the past.”

Young Person
Aged 12-15

“EVERYONE HAS A STORY”

An Action Learning Project

The Overview Report and Components can be found at www.ltsb.foundationforscotland.org.uk
Everyone Has a Story focuses on the voices of young people.
The purpose of the project was to address a specific gap in knowledge, support and evidence based on a participatory and consultative approach. The aim is to improve the support for children and young people whose parents are in recovery and look to:

- Increase awareness of the views from children and young people.
- Increase understanding of support needs for children and young people.
- Enhance practitioner skills to deliver supportive models based on evidence of need.
- Increase in strategic planning and policy developments in this area.
- Increase applications to PDI that will recognise the needs and views of children and young people.
- Contribute to the improved long-term wellbeing for children and young people.

Key Messages
Children and young people's stories;
- don’t talk about recovery
- tell us they love their parents
- understand change
- show their need to cope better

Practitioners tell us;
- children and young people know very little about recovery
- children and young people have big concerns about their parent relapsing
- parents worry about their parenting

The findings from this project tell us:
- the importance of listening to children and young people before acting; our assumptions need to take a back seat
- there is little in the research that tells us about the impact of recovery on children and young people
- young people should have control over how to access and share information; they have ideas and thoughts on how to share their story
- we need to continue to look at ways to improve joined-up approaches between adult and children and family services
Why is this different?
No other research has set out to develop a variety of methods to hear the voices of children and young people.

We have not only listened but also collaborated with young people and practitioners to develop:

- **5 key questions for active listening**
  (found in the Overview Report)

- **A template for capturing stories**
  (in Component 1)

- **A blueprint designed by young people on how they want to share their story**
  (in component 3)

- **An ethical framework for this process**
  (in appendices)

What does ‘Everyone Has a Story’ consist of?

**Overview** -
provides an overview of the Everyone Has a Story project and summarises the evidence from the 4 components.

**Component 1:**
What we hear from the stories and experiences.

**Component 2:**
What practitioners tell us.

**Component 3:**
How young people could share their story.

**Component 4:**
What the evidence tells us.

**Appendices**
Components can be found at [ltsbfoundationforscotland.org.uk](http://ltsbfoundationforscotland.org.uk)
Component 1:

What we hear from the stories and experiences – the insights of children and young people who consented to sharing their feelings and experiences with their trusted worker.

A group of nine practitioners worked with Evaluation Support Scotland to look at more effective ways to collate, reflect and analysis stories shared by children and young people.

Key Findings

We need to improve our skills in listening first, our own assumptions need to take a back seat.

We need to give the time, space and support to enable children and young people to share.

Critical first step is helping children and young people understand and manage change.

“Change is change in living situations, change the family dynamic and change in family relationships.”

Joy Barlow, Chair

Everyone Has a Story

“At first I refused to work with her (worker) and would often swear at her. She never backed down and always saw the good in me. I could phone her any time and she was always there to listen and she never judged me.”

Female, aged 18

Trying using the following five questions developed through this component to assist you in considering the experiences, thoughts and feelings of children, young people and families you support.

1. What are we noticing?
2. What matters to the young person?
3. Who else is involved?
4. What’s our part?
5. What’s the conclusion?
Component 2:

What practitioners tell us –
an understanding of what practitioners are doing in terms of support, seeing change in young people and families and what they feel is needed.

An online survey was completed by 207 practitioners primarily working with children and young people whose parents are at any stage of their own recovery journey (or parents still have a drug and alcohol related problem).

Key Findings

There is a strong desire and commitment to ensuring children and young people’s needs are central to a parent’s own recovery journey.

We need to improve our approaches to joint working between children and adult services.

We must look at ways to support the worries and anxiety felt by many children and young people.

“My life has changed and I like having my Dad more normal, but I always worry that those days are going to happen again.”

Young Person, aged 10 - 11

21% of practitioners felt children had concerns about parental relapse.

36% of Children lived with their parent.

Only 4% of practitioners felt children had a strong understanding of parental recovery.
Component 3:

How young people could share their story –
an innovative exploration by a small group of young
people that looked at how they may want to share a story.

A group of five young people from Clued Up in Fife worked with Icecream
Architecture to consider the question ‘How would you want to share your
story?’.

Key Findings
Young people were inspired by the possibility of sharing their story helping
others.

Young people said they were happy to share if they know why and who
it will be shared with.

How to share -
in a way that is accessible to us and we have control over our story.

Who to share with -
directed by the young person but people who they will have contact
with e.g. a teacher.

Why share -
it is important as it could help me and other people...

Designed a Blueprint for collating stories in young people’s own
words:

A text support service -
for support in crisis and day to day.

A phone based app -
to share stories, reflect and connect with others.

A website -
to access further information and track journey.

“… she seemed quite surprised and
shocked that someone wanted to
know what her experience was.

She said that it was really exiting
that someone wanted to learn from
her and that she was being seen as
an important piece of the jigsaw.”

young person aged 16

“We don’t use email”
Everyone has a Story
participant aged 16

“Don’t always
make it
negative ...
everyone has a
story!”

young person aged 16
Component 4:

What the evidence tells us – an insight into the existing evidence, from academic studies, our analysis of the practice surveys and other surveys conducted in Scotland.

A desk based literature and evidence review of studies that provide insight into the protective and risk factors for the support needs of children and young people.

Key Findings

The evidence supports the need for ongoing support for children and young people who face traumatic change in their life.

There is a lack of academic research in understanding the impact of parental recovery for children and young people.

More evidence is needed to support the understanding of the complexity of family structures and relationships.

Evidence could be gathered using the approaches designed by young people involved in Everyone Has a Story.

“She’s never going to change. I don’t know what’s going to end up happening to her. I don’t even care anymore.”

Female aged 12 -15

* All references can be found in the Appendices of the full resource
“Better understanding of what recovery means for children of substance using parents and how services working with adults make this connection in terms of a whole population approach.”
Participant, Consultation Event on Recovery Needs for Children and Young People March 2014

January 2015
Identified the gap
There is not enough evidence of young peoples and children voices

Provide real opportunities for shaping the project and for getting involved.

January 65 Practitioners Call to action event to frame the brief and recruit practitioners.

“I am keen to be involved and feel strongly it is a much needed piece of work.”

Consent and a common understanding of language was developed

5 Young People participate in 5 sessions supported by Clued Up in Life.

What have we learnt from listening:
Having the right approach to participation and consultation ensured the voices of children and young people were central to the work.
Having the right practitioners who were committed, enthusiastic and willing to be open to the action learning approach help embed the learning into their day to day practice.
Having the right approach to reflecting and challenging the findings ensured the work remained focused on children and young people.

April 2016 young people share findings with other group of young people

What is next?
November 80 People Attend Critical friends event for feedback on findings.

“Everyone has a story!”

April 2016
14 Practitioners participated in the first action learning session on how to collate the stories they hear from young people.

“Everyone has a story!”

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“Everyone has a story!”

2014
“When would you want to hear my story?”

March 2014
49 Practitioners Consultation to understand the gap

Outline approach developed

2016

“If one thing happened it should be the text helpline”

April 2016

“One girl was keen that the Government and the Queen heard her story....”
(shared as part of story gathering with young person’s worker)
Chloe’s Story (age 9)

“I don’t really think about it very often but when it happens, it happens and THEN I have to think about it.”

“When mum was ill she was drinking wine and she dropped the glass—the glass smashed to pieces—it was a pity because it was a really nice glass and had a gold rim around the top. Luckily we have others the same, but that’s not really the point.”

[Chloe then wanted to draw a picture for her story and make it into a sort of story book for others to read, she thought it would be a good idea for teachers to read the stories that children wrote so that if they had pupils who had a similar experience to her they would know what to do. She called the story ‘The Problem’, but because she used bubble writing there wasn’t enough room to fit the whole word in one line if it was all the same size, so her writing went really small. Chloe said this was like real life because the problem starts really big but then it gets smaller.]

“Because she has been sober for a year she is getting herself a new phone, but I think she deserved it at least a month ago! I think she should get a present every year and it should get better the longer she stays sober. It doesn’t have to be expensive...or even bought, it could be something I made her. Made presents are better because they are made by the people you love.”

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