



Shaping  
Care



THE HORSFALL



42

ND  
STREET

*chloe  
watts*

# SHAPING CARE AT 42ND STREET

A visual report on how 42nd Street supported care experienced and estranged young people to share their views, influence change and help shape Greater Manchester's Regional Care Cooperative.

The Shaping Care project 2024 to 2026: Through co-development, creative workshops, exhibitions and lived experience-led practice, we worked with care experienced and estranged young people to gather views and amplify their 'voice' to inform Greater Manchester's Regional Care Cooperative (GMRCC) of the needs of this group of young people.

Many young people face barriers to participation, particularly when asked to speak about difficult experiences. As a trauma-informed mental health charity, 42nd Street focused on reducing those barriers by creating supportive, youth-centred spaces where young people could feel listened to, valued and able to contribute in ways that felt safe and meaningful. Creativity was a vital part of this work, not only as a way of exploring ideas, but as a source of enjoyment, recognition and pride. The young people have the opportunity to see their work exhibited and celebrated.



## ABOUT

# 42<sup>ND</sup> STREET

42nd Street is a Greater Manchester young people's mental health charity with over 40 years' experience of providing free and confidential support to young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Our vision is for inclusive, accessible mental health and wellbeing support and opportunities for all young people. We support young people through a range of approaches, including one-to-one support, group work, creative activities, and youth voice and participation. Our work is guided by young person-centred, rights-based and inclusive practice, because we recognise that many young people face barriers both to accessing support and to being heard. 42nd Street aims to create spaces where young people feel listened to, valued, included, safe and unique. Creativity, participation and lived experience are central to how we work.

In the presentation developed for the Child Exploitation Conference, our approach to youth-led social action was described as youth-led, ambitious, authentic and inclusive, supported by principles such as embracing diversity, addressing inequities, supporting lived experience, and recognising young people's power. These values shaped our contribution to Shaping Care and helped us create environments where young people could participate in ways that felt meaningful, supportive and genuinely valued.



YOUNG  
PERSON  
CENTRED







## Recipe for a successful group:



# What is estrangement?

"LIVING INDEPENDENTLY WITHOUT FAMILIAL SUPPORT."

"GOING NO CONTACT."

"IT IS DIFFERENT IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE"

"WHATEVER THE YOUNG PERSON CONSIDERS TO BE ESTRANGED."

"A YOUNG PERSON NOT BEING SUPPORTED BY PARENTS OR GUARDIANS."

# THE EXPERIENCES AS ESTRANGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Estranged young people are people with little or no contact with parent and carers.

When describing their ideal worker, they explained that professionals from a similar cultural background would be helpful as they could have a sense of understanding and make the young people feel understood.

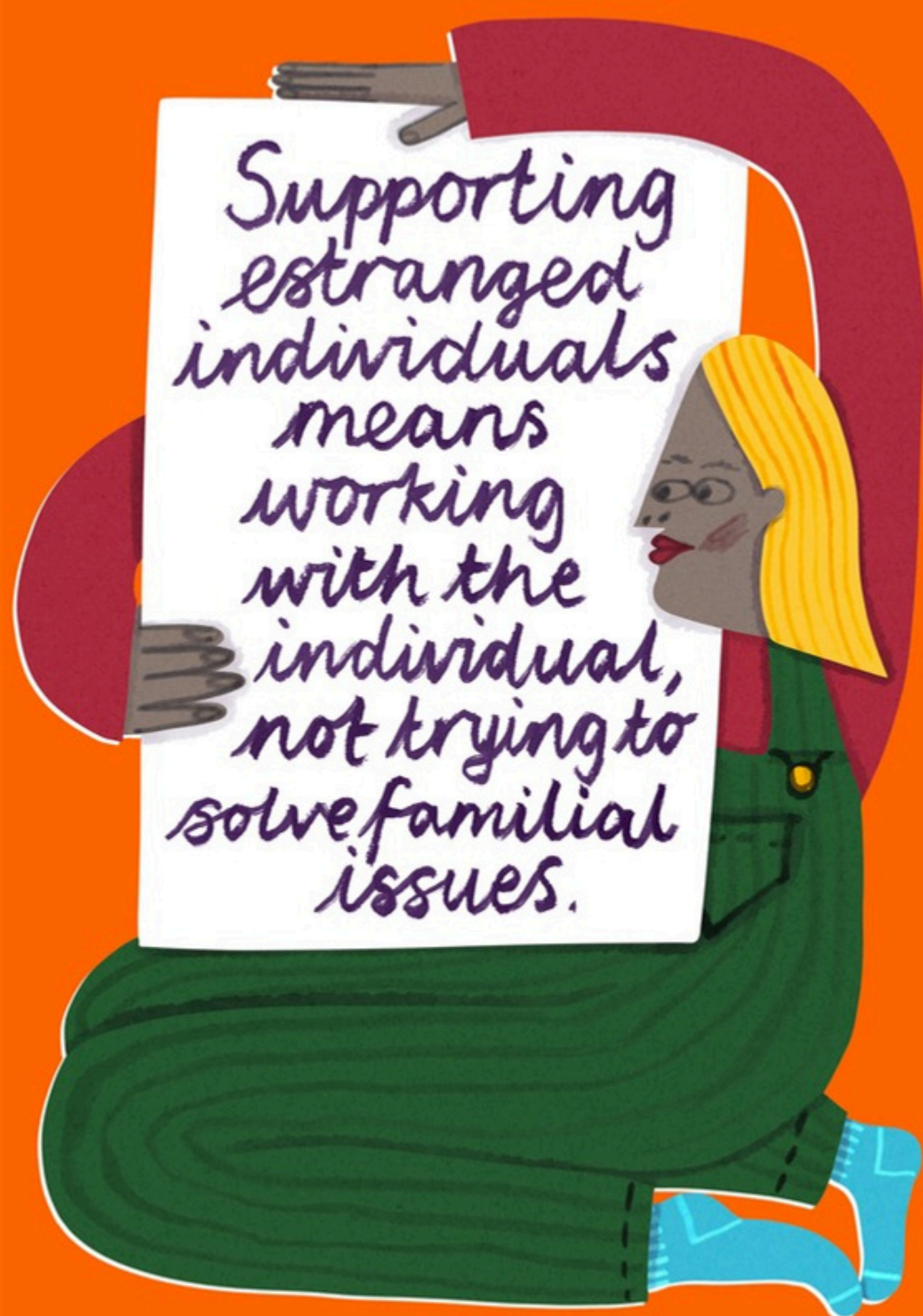
It is also important for estranged young people that police and other authoritative figures should know that home isn't always a safe option, so there should be greater empathy, increased mental health awareness and de-escalation training may help to aid in high tension interactions.

Social workers and teachers can play an important role by believing young people, maintaining confidentiality, providing encouragement, and connecting them with appropriate support services. It is also especially important that professionals don't assume that academic success means a young person is not struggling.

Our estranged young people reported mixed feeling when it came to some professionals, such as police. Some described it as a positive experience while others described it as being distant, inaccessible or as a barrier to further support, they explained that the power dynamics affected their communication, comfort in speaking up and general apprehension of police made it difficult to report issues that affected them.

Young people are asking for a wider understanding of the experiences of estrangement. Services such as housing professionals, police, education and social care need to have a stronger knowledge of housing systems, benefits, grants, and bursaries, and ensure young people do not feel like a burden when seeking help.

**Recognising that reconciliation with family is not always possible. Young people need trust building through active listening and consistent and individualised support.**



# WHAT MAKES A GOOD WORKER?

Our young people said an ideal support worker or Personal Adviser (PA) should be supportive, reliable, caring, and respectful, while remaining friendly but professional and punctual.

Their support should be tailored to each individual, with workers taking time to understand the young person's interests, needs, and personality.

They should also be able to listen to young people's voices, keep promises, and prioritise their wellbeing, rather than just following rules and checklists. Young people also value workers who know what support they are entitled to, help with paperwork, advocate with services, and provide emergency contacts.

It was clear that our young people have missed out on opportunities, bursaries or experiences due to the lack of communication they had with their workers.



Quote from Cloud 42 Young Person

PAs should help develop life skills normally taught by parents, such as managing money or daily responsibilities.

Overall, young people wanted person-centred support and simpler systems. Otherwise services can leave them feeling isolated and that services are not for them. They want workers who genuinely care about helping them to begin to lead an independent life.



The ideal worker is subjective and should be allocated as such...

"I WOULD LIKE SOMEONE WHO IS TRAINED IN NEURODIVERSITY."

"FOR ME, IT'S NOT ABOUT WHO THEY ARE - IT'S ABOUT HOW THEY CARE."

"I GET ON BETTER WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T OVER-PROMISE."

"I WANT SOMEONE WHO I CAN RELATE TO AND RELY ON."

"I PREFER HAVING A FEMALE WORKER."

## HOW ARE LIVED EXPERIENCED WORKERS HELPFUL IN GROUPS?

"It was evident that our young people were more open to share their ideas and stories on why these changes should be implemented. The fact that lived experienced workers (LEW) were present made them feel comfortable enough to share their vulnerability because we were also able to relate. For example, when speaking about accommodation and discussing the struggle of having accommodation in an inaccessible area we were able to joke, complain and brainstorm practical plans that would have made the situation easier to handle or live through."

-Lived Experience Worker

"My personal experience, being a lived experienced worker during this project was incredibly affirming. Listening to the young people express their frustration; joyful moments; and seeing the group act like a support system while being active in creating plans for change made me realise that these issues aren't unachievable. The main aspect of this was the lack of respect that they have all experienced, me included, while they were being 'supported' by the system.

It was empowering to listen to their stories, hearing what did help in the meantime and what would have made their experience less stressful, less dismissive and more inclusive." - Lived Experience Worker

# ACCOMMODATION FOR ESTRANGED INDIVIDUALS AND CARE/CARE LEAVERS.

Young people said accommodation should be safe, supportive, and close to essential services, such as supermarkets, affordable community grocery options, shopping centres, GP surgeries, job centres and education or work so they do not have to travel far for basic needs. For estranged young people, housing should also be located far enough away from the family home they are estranged from while still being close to their school, college, or workplace.

Practically, accommodation should be well connected to transport, services, and activities in the local area. Young people suggested training on how to use buses and transport, as well as tours or guides to local services and resources. Reliable phone signal, internet access, and backup connectivity are also important. Some suggested creating an app for estranged young people and care leavers that could provide useful information and discounts for essentials such as food or insurance.

It's important to note that when discussing accommodation for estranged young people and care leavers, there is a focus on where care leavers would live. It was raised that accommodation for estranged individuals also needs to have a focus. Estranged young people need a place to stay when they become estranged from their family, this usually resorts to staying in homeless shelters, domestic abuse shelters or becoming homeless.

**Every young person in crisis deserves a safe environment to live in.**

Accommodation should include spaces that support independence, such as computer or study rooms for CV writing and coursework, cooking facilities or cafes that could also offer skills classes and job opportunities. A donation rooms for food and clothing from local businesses, guidance on managing expenses, help with moving, including storage options when moving to smaller accommodation and accessible information like Q&A sections on arrival.

Housing should be inclusive and adaptable, with support for neurodivergent individuals, options for pets and personal decoration, and practical features like cleanable furniture and snack areas. Some suggested specialised spaces or offers for groups needing additional support, such as young parents or refugees to ensure more individualised care and community support. Housing should also consider age differences, with more age-separated groups (e.g., 16–17 and 18–25) and self-contained flats with private kitchens and bathrooms to support independence.

## How should accommodation feel?



Young people said accommodation should feel inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of mental health. It should provide clear access to help, such as contact numbers for different types of support. Young people would ideally value on-site mental health support through a range of offers



# The Ideal Accommodation

BUILDING WORK COMPLETE BEFORE MOVE IN

SPACE FOR:

- KIDS
- REFUGEES
- NEURODIVERSITY
- MOTHER + BABY
- LGBTQ+

MOVING IN/OUT SUPPORT

INCORPORATING MINORITIES

FEELS SUPPORTIVE



OFFICE THAT ISN'T LOCKED

DOORS WITH LOCKS

CAN BE DECORATED AS DESIRED

PETS ALLOWED

SMALL AGE RANGE



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

CAN LEARN LIFE SKILLS

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

COMPUTERS

**This booklet was co-created by**


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