

## TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

# EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH AN EXPERIENCE OF CARE USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

A visual report prepared by:

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This report is intended to illustrate new concepts for technology to support people with an experience of care to navigate transition to university. The ideas presented were developed in a participatory design workshop with members of the Independent Care Review.



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## TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE



After living with her parents in her early years, Sophie became looked after in 'kinship care' at the age of 7 when her school teachers raised concerns about her wellbeing, and she moved in with her grandparents who live on the other side of Scotland. With both her parents and grandparents unable to keep her safe and well, she was taken into foster care at the age of 9, moved between seven sets of foster carers and now lives in residential care with five other young people. She is 18, and despite the adversity she has faced in her early years, she has very real aspirations of studying Sociology at St Andrews University. Sophie is extremely close with her teacher, Ms Jones. They've built an excellent relationship over the years, know each other really well and plan to stay in touch beyond Sophie's time at school. She is applying to university.

In the current system, she faces a number of additional challenges that her peers wouldn't, including:

### CHALLENGES

#### ELIGIBILITY AND ACCESSING SUPPORT

In her application, Sophie will need to retell aspects of her story to UCAS, the University and SAAS which will likely feel retraumatising and stigmatising, when her peers won't need to do this. Sophie will need to understand that she has experience of care, and 'tick the box'. At university, Sophie will again need to retell her story multiple times to get support from something like a 'Widening Access' team, or to secure a Guarantors Letter from the local authority. She may not know when she started being 'looked after' in care - does she include the time she was looked after in kinship care? Will this affect what she is entitled to?

#### NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS

Sophie will need to organise all of the logistics for moving to university with her corporate parents, which may result in less support than her peers get from their families and support networks - as her residential unit isn't geared up to support this. This will include organising transport, removals and guarantor signatures etc herself. Sophie will almost certainly be unable to return back to her residential home to stay out of term time when often her peers are staying at home with their parents. Without the 'bank of mum and dad' to fall back on, she's likely to need to apply for support whilst at university (such as hardship funds) and this will require time and a lot of emotional effort. Because of her unsettled upbringing, she may be more likely to need some support with her health and she will need to navigate long waiting lists.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

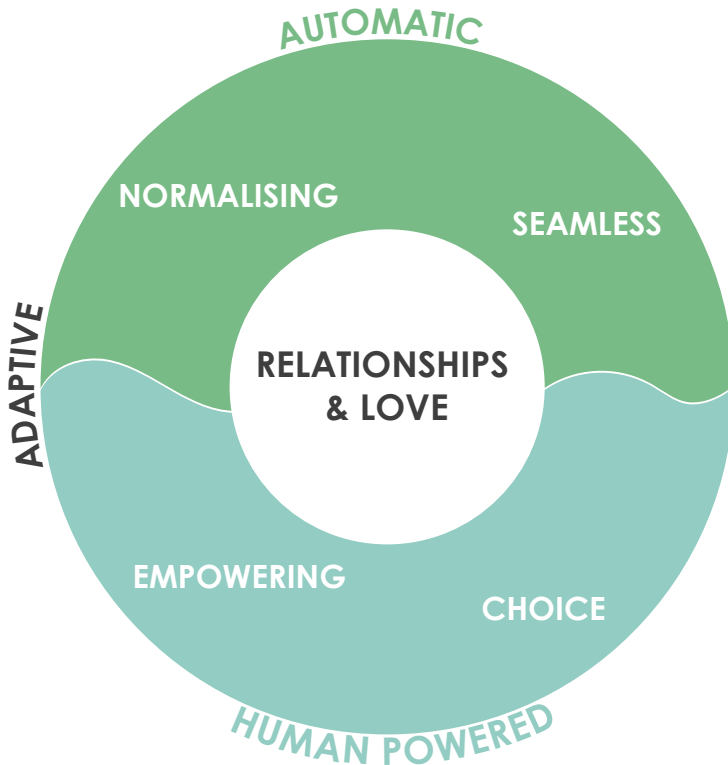
It may be difficult for Sophie to maintain her important relationships, and indeed her relationship with Ms Jones because she will be living in a different part of Scotland. It is still generally frowned upon for people to maintain relationships with people once they have 'moved on' from a service - the expectation is widely that one service has finished, and another should now begin. Sophie will need to prioritise building new relationships with supportive people - on top of everything else which is additional to what her peers will do.

*Sophie's story written by Jimmy Paul, Independent Care Review*

# TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

## THE GOAL

In order to understand how new digital capabilities could support experiences of care at key moments such as transition to university, we identified a set of principles to guide these new ways of working. They are visually represented below, and then we discuss how these principles would support Sophie to have a positive and empowering experience.



## PRINCIPLES

### BUILT AROUND RELATIONSHIPS AND LOVE

At the heart of what we want to achieve for Sophie is that she is supported through her transition by people she trusts. Any new digital capabilities should be developed with this in mind. There is an opportunity to develop resources (e.g. guides, visual maps) to support the different people Sophie chooses to involve in her transition. These resources could support good conversations about the different options Sophie might have, to help put the right support in place along her transition to university.

There is a role for new digital capabilities to **automatically** prove Sophie's eligibility without the need to share any personal details about her experience of care (see following page).

### NORMALISING

Automating the process of proving eligibility offers convenience for all young people transitioning to university, not just people with an experience of care, for example proving financial status or a disability. The goal of these these capabilities is to **normalise** the experience, without stigmatising people who have an experience of care. This also presents an opportunity to automatically trigger required support, creating a **seamless** experience and removing the need for Sophie to ask for support she is entitled to. This includes automatically setting in motion the logistical support Sophie's local authority need to provide for her move, any financial support she qualifies for, and making sure accommodation is available over the summer break.

### SEAMLESS

### CHOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

However in some cases Sophie might decide she does not want the support available, and the system should **empower** her to make this **choice**. She should be able to discuss options with the people she trusts, and decide what support she would like through transition.

### ADAPTIVE

Importantly the decisions Sophie makes along this transition should be able to be reviewed and changed with her changing circumstances.

# TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

## NEW CAPABILITIES



### DIGITAL TOKENS

The core capability we identified and explored can be thought of as a digital 'token' Sophie holds to automatically prove her entitlement without sharing any personal information or history. These tokens could be verified by third party 'trust brokers', and thereafter would form a reusable proof or credential. We saw the potential for tokens to be used to prove a number of different attributes (see adjacent list), and discussed how this might achieve some of the principles set out on the previous page.

### CONSENTS AND TRIGGERS

When filling out her UCAS form, Sophie can choose whether to 'activate' her tokens and automatically trigger the support they unlock. By making it clear what information will be shared with whom, and what support would be triggered, Sophie can give informed consent. She can also discuss these choices with a trusted person and change her mind if her situation changes.



### SMART FORM FILLING

There were some types of information that did not need to be verified by a third party, but would be of benefit for Sophie to hold digitally in order to pre-populate forms. An example of this was her address history, as due to her experience of care she may have many different previous addresses to remember, which might be difficult and distressing.

## TOKENS

### IDENTITY



Many young people do not have proof of identity e.g. a passport or driving licence. This poses problems for transitioning to university, particularly for people with an experience of care who may not have a parent e.g. to verify their identity to open a bank account.

### EXPERIENCE OF CARE



This token could automatically trigger support, e.g. the Widening Access team would contact Sophie when she arrives at university, and it would unlock bursaries and prove entitlement to accommodation over the summer. This would remove the need for Sophie to disclose the reason why she has these entitlements, e.g. a young person who has family in the military living abroad would also be entitled to accommodation over the summer.

### FINANCIAL STATUS



A token containing information about financial status (or ability to pay), could avoid the need for Sophie to repeatedly ask for proof from her local authority. For people who do not have an experience of care, this would overcome the need to repeatedly obtain evidence of financial status from their parents. This can also function to prove the local authority act as Sophie's guarantor for accommodation.

### DISABILITY



This token could avoid the need for any person living with a disability (e.g. a physical impairment, mental health condition or learning difficulty) to seek repeated verification from a medical professional or disclose parts of their medical records. Again, this would ensure they would not need to disclose the reason for any entitlements (e.g. additional time in exams).

### ACCEPTANCE TO UNIVERSITY



The logistics for Sophie's move to university would take time for the local authority to put in place. Using a token proving Sophie's acceptance of a place at university (perhaps verified by UCAS) as a trigger, the local authority could begin this process earlier to ensure she has everything she needs in plenty of time.

### DISCLOSURE



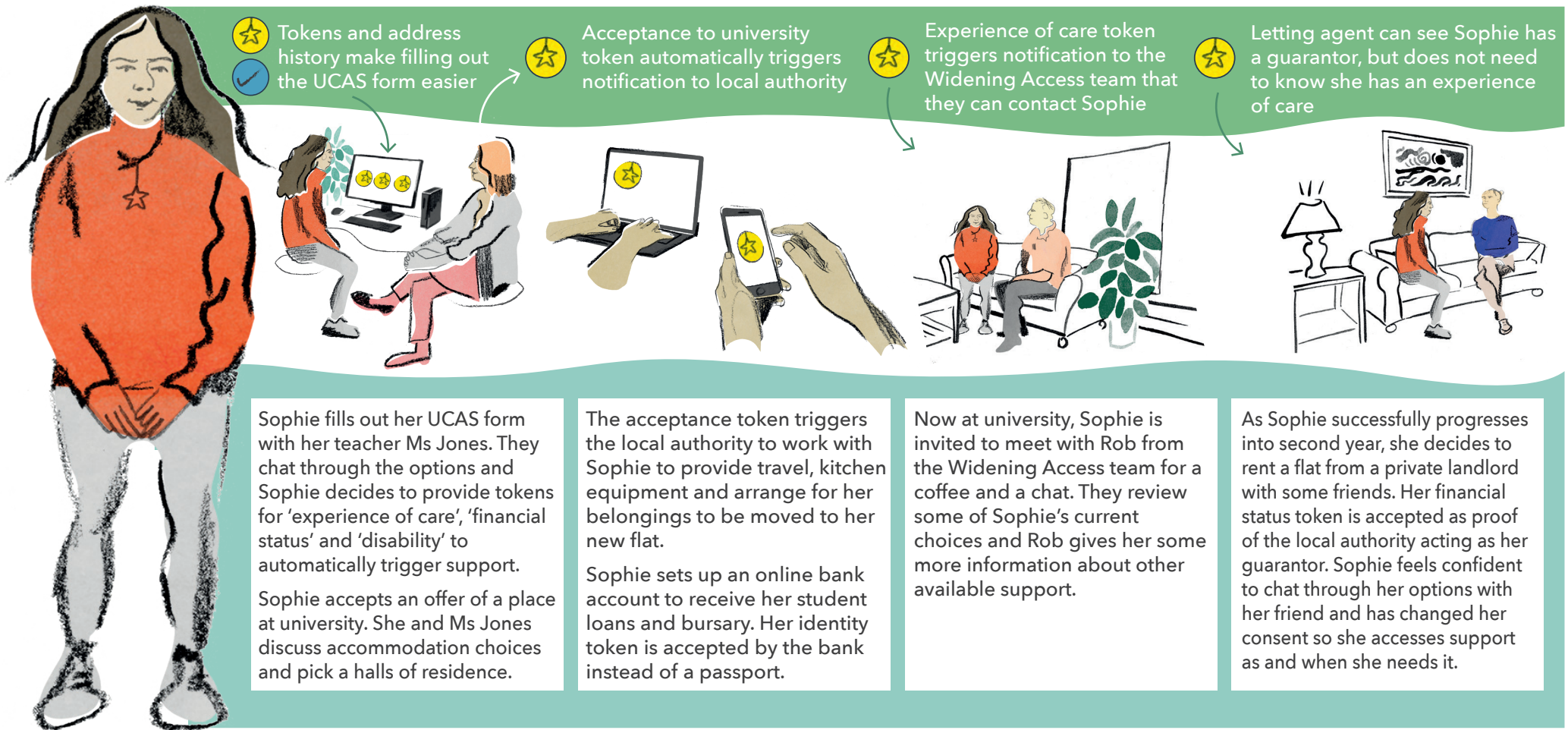
For young people who may need disclosure checks for their course (e.g. nursing, childcare), this would simplify the process and allow any special circumstances to be considered.

# TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY THE NEW EXPERIENCE

To illustrate how these principles and new capabilities might work in practice, we have developed the story of Sophie's transition to university.

## SOPHIE'S TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

**AUTOMATIC**



All illustrations adapted from an image bank created by Tessa Mackenzie, 2018

**HUMAN-POWERED**