

From Care to Independence: Improving employment outcomes for care leavers



Welcome

Reed in Partnership is one of the leading employment and skills providers in the UK, we work with unemployed individuals in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Britain.

We know from our own experience that young people who have been in the care system frequently move onto our employment programmes having spent a considerable amount of time out of the labour market. This report aims to help create a debate about what more can be done to achieve better employment outcomes for young care leavers.

In March 2010, over 64,000 children and young people in England were living in care services. Of these young people, 21% were 16 and over - at the stage where they will either continue education, start training, or look to enter employment. Despite some progress following the Children's Act in 2000, the prospects of a young person in care remain bleak and the most recent statistics reflect a failure to improve.

Reforms to the welfare system present a unique opportunity for the Coalition Government to review and improve the policies surrounding the lives of care leavers. While there was no shortage of political will surrounding this issue in the previous government, the policies and funding have not yet made a sustained difference to the lives of these young people.

As the Government moves ahead with the creation of an integrated Work Programme, we believe there is an opportunity to trial a longer-term employment intervention strategy, drawing in all government departments with an interest in this policy agenda. Given the constraints on public spending, this is not about additional funding but rather about creating a system in which results matter and current spending can be more adequately utilised.

We know that young care leavers need a tailored and multi-faceted approach involving help with housing and benefits along with a greater focus on putting in place the right employment and training support. With the government focused on getting more people involved in work and society in a meaningful way, now is the time to consider new approaches in order to help young people leaving the care system to fully play their part.



Chris Melvin
Chief Executive
Reed in Partnership
January 2011

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Executive Summary

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There is a pressing need for the Coalition Government to look at what further policy interventions can be made to improve outcomes for young care leavers. Over the last 10 years, we have seen new legislation, additional funding and a focus on innovation and improvements to the way that government supports care leavers. However, the results have been disappointing.

There are still too many young people leaving care without the qualifications, skills or ability to find and sustain work. Long term unemployment encourages problems with criminal behaviour, teenage pregnancy, poverty and social exclusion.

This report looks at the policy framework supporting care leavers, the gaps and service failures and how we can create a sharper focus on improving the employment and skills outcomes of young people.

Care leavers face significant challenges throughout their lives and the care leavers we interviewed are no exception to this. These are real people, with real problems. Between them they have slept on the streets, experimented with drugs, stolen, failed exams, skipped school, dropped out of university, looked after siblings, been stuck on benefits and experienced teenage pregnancy. They want and deserve better opportunities, and their stories and suggestions for the future are included throughout this report.

The achievements and opportunities of young people leaving care remain dramatically lower than their peers. The latest figures released from the Department for Education show that their

opportunities have dipped further. Statistics also reveal that care leavers are over-represented amongst indicators of social exclusion and poverty including crime, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol use and homelessness.

- The number of care leavers aged 19, not in education, training or employment has increased by 5% since 2009 and by 26% since 2006.
- A third (33%) of looked after children aged 19 are not in education, training or employment.
- In March 2010 the proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training ranged from 34% to 87% across local authorities in England.
- 54% of young people in care felt that councils are doing poorly or very poorly at helping them prepare to get good jobs in the future.
- Only 12% of children in care achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs, including maths and English, compared to 53% of all children.



We would recommend that the Coalition Government consider the following:

Improve Work Experience: Further steps need to be taken to provide worthwhile opportunities for care leavers to access work experience placements. In conjunction, the benefits of work experience must be communicated effectively to care leavers and they must receive the support required to obtain and benefit from these opportunities.

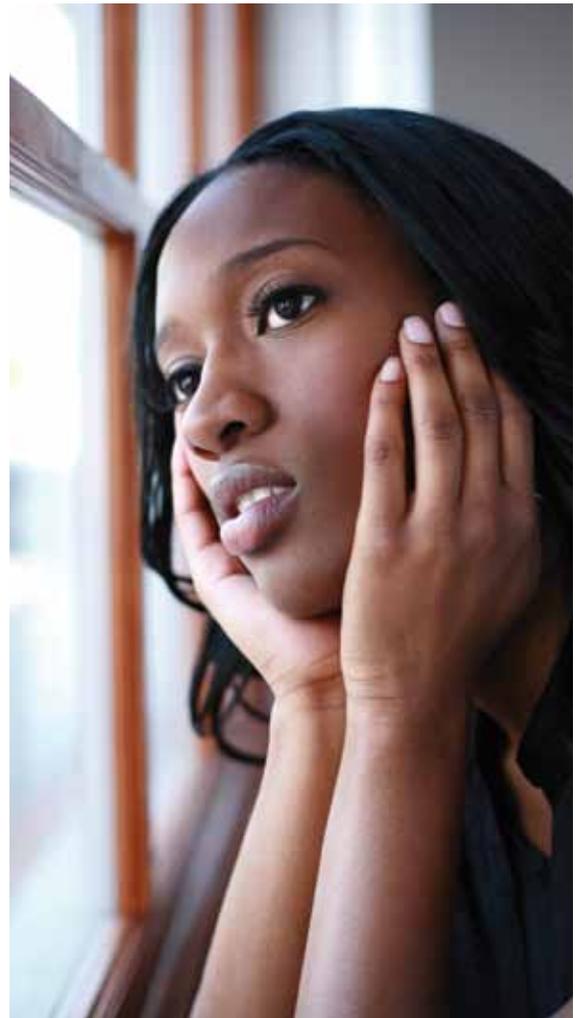
Appoint Specialist Employment & Skills Advisers:

All care leavers should have access to professional employment and skills support. Less pressure should be placed on non-specialised services to offer this support. The provisions offered by the Work Programme should be accessible for care leavers, regardless of benefit status.

Provide Early Intervention: A young person in care should have the option to access support from an Employment and Skills Adviser from the age of 15. An adviser should be formally allocated to each young person six months before they are legally able to leave full time education. This Adviser should be sourced from the young person's local Work Programme provider and should support the young person for a number of years.

Reform Funding: The funding approach of the Work Programme should be applied to the provision of support given to care leavers. The use of payment by results and using benefit savings to fund new services will allow the government to increase support for care leavers without incurring significant new expense.

Deliver Long Term Support: Support for care leavers should be extended to mirror increased sustainability targets in the Work Programme. Employment and Skills Advisers should be targeted to supply adequate in-work support to help care leavers retain and progress in employment.



The Case for Change: why are care leavers disadvantaged?

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In his first major interview after being appointed as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith MP said, “The purpose of my life here is to improve the quality of life of the worst off in society....What I have come to do is look root and branch at how we deliver welfare which is aimed at groups at the bottom end of society who need help and support.”¹

Eight months on from that statement radical developments are already underway within the welfare system, most notably the move towards the creation of a universal benefit and the introduction of the Work Programme. But will care leavers, undoubtedly one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, benefit from the reform? Iain Duncan Smith’s commitment to social justice should bring hope to care leavers struggling to succeed in the labour market, but they are in danger of being sidelined as larger groups take priority in wider reform.



This section of the report draws on a review of existing literature and research regarding the impact of being in care on the life opportunities of young people. It will examine the barriers to employment faced by this group and the various reasons why care leavers face social exclusion.

Key Research

Care leavers are over-represented in many statistics, including the prison population, teenage pregnancy, mental health issues, depression, expulsion, drug misuse, homelessness and leaving school without qualifications. Care leavers who fall into these traps are the most disadvantaged in the labour market with low skills, lack of job readiness and active job seeking, and inadequate information on suitable employment.²

A significant step change in employment support is desperately needed. Various programmes and approaches have been trialled and they have failed to produce outcomes for care leavers which reflect a parity between looked after children and their peers. The number of looked after children increased between 2009 - 2010 so this is a not shrinking problem. Solutions need to be found, and quickly.

¹ Nicholas Watt and Patrick Wintour (May 2010) Iain Duncan Smith: I will tackle root causes of poverty in *The Guardian*

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) *Employment and Training Schemes for homeless young people*



Employment

Evidence shows that young people leaving care tend to be disadvantaged when trying to find employment for the following reasons: low skills, poor education, health issues and little knowledge of employability skills and the labour market. Unemployment comes at a high social cost and is “associated with social exclusion, poverty, poor health, homelessness, crime, isolation and loss of skills and motivation.”³

Children in local authority care are much more likely than their peers to not be in education, employment or training (NEET)⁴. At age 19, 33% of care leavers are NEET compared to 15% of the general population.^{5,6} There is also evidence that many care leavers enter and stay in low-skilled work or are dependent on benefits. The National Care Advisory Service expressed concern over the effects of the recession and the number of care leavers not in education, training or employment increasing in 2008 - 2009.⁷ These fears have been realised, as care leavers not in education, employment or training have increased by 5% since 2009 and by 26% since 2006.⁸

Fewer than 40% of children in care in London are in education or employment at 19, compared to 86% of all 19 year olds.⁹ Youth unemployment also has a detrimental effect on future jobs and future earnings. Youth unemployment imposes a wage scar upon individuals, in the magnitude of 12% to 15% at age 42¹⁰, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty faced by care leavers and their families.

With underemployment also increasing, particularly amongst young people, there is a risk that ‘wage scars’ and a lack of training opportunities will become more common amongst this group.¹¹ Similarly, there is a danger that with less full time and permanent job opportunities, care leavers, who are often dependent on a complicated welfare system, will not have the adequate incentives to find work and leave benefits.

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- 3 Dixon J (2006) *Pathways to Work Experience: helping care leavers into employment*
 - 4 DCSF (April 2010) *Young people not in education, employment or training* (8th Report)
 - 5 Rachel Williams (Feb 2010) Record numbers not in education, work or training in *The Guardian*
 - 6 DfE (October 2010) Statistical First Release: Children looked after in England year ending 31 March 2010
 - 7 NCAS (2009) *Care Matters Stock Take*
 - 8 DfE (October 2010) Statistical First Release: Children looked after in England year ending 31 March 2010
 - 9 Voluntary & Community Sector (2010) *United We Stand Manifesto*
 - 10 Gregg and Tominey (2004) *The Wage Scar from Youth Unemployment*. The University of Bristol
 - 11 IPPR (May 2010) *New analysis reveals record numbers unable to find full time work*

Case Study:

Makeda, 20 years old, Middlesex

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Makeda has been in care for the past four years - she entered a shared house after being granted asylum in the UK. Makeda went straight to college where she studied English, IT and Travel & Tourism but dropped out as she was struggling to cope with the death of a close friend.

Makeda found her own voluntary work to improve her CV but she has found huge difficulties finding permanent work because she does not have a passport. Makeda has a document from the Home Office stating her right to work in the UK, but this is often rejected by employers.

Makeda has received some support from Jobcentre Plus and her social and key worker but she is still struggling to find a permanent job. She is also worried about turning 21 as she has been told she will lose the support of her key worker and social worker.

How does Makeda think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Employers should be encouraged to recognise Home Office documents that prove a person's right to work in the UK.
- There should be more work experience and work trials available to care leavers, and from a younger age.
- Care leavers should be given contacts and mentors in the professional world to help them find a way into the labour market.

“Everywhere you go you have to know someone to be given a chance. The most important thing when finding a job is to know someone.”



It is not just the actual system that can have negative effects on care leavers, but also the way the care system is seen by outsiders. The negative perceptions of the care system and the associated stigma makes it difficult for these young people to feel like a valued member of society and encourages care leavers to fear being judged, bullied or treated differently. For instance, a study of 362 children from care homes and foster placements found that almost half of these young people were worried about other people knowing their background, especially employers. These young people also felt that employers knowing their circumstances would affect their chances of getting a job.¹²

Education

Education is not always given sufficient priority with low levels of educational support and knowledge amongst carers and social workers. As a result, children are leaving care with a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills¹³ and are around four times more likely to be expelled. Shockingly, only 26% of looked after children achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs not including English and Maths compared to 75%¹⁴ of all children. 7% of care leavers now continue to higher education, this represents a rise of 120 young people between 2006 and 2010.¹⁵

Further education participation is increasing amongst care leavers, however, sustaining this participation is proving to be extremely difficult. There is evidence of high drop out rates and this poses a major challenge to support services.¹⁶ Here, the education of the care leaver depends on the stability of their accommodation, personal issues, health and finances and problems with any of these can end their participation in education.

The educational failure of children in care is an issue which has a huge number of contributing factors and the education system cannot be held solely responsible. However, it is important that young people have a second chance to go back into education or training at a later stage.

Skills

Increasing competition within the labour market gives employers the opportunity to demand better candidates to fill their vacancies. This includes choosing candidates with more skills. In our “False Starts”¹⁷ report we found that Employment Advisers believed a lack of basic skills to be one of the top three barriers to employment faced by young people.

Young care leavers often lack the skills and self-esteem necessary to impress employers and as a result can find themselves trapped in long term unemployment. Interestingly, the young people we spoke to felt that they would have benefitted from more work focused training at school and college.



¹² Morgan, R (Aug 2009) *Care and Prejudice*

¹³ BBC (2009) *Care Children need pushy parent*

¹⁴ DfE (2010) *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2010*

¹⁵ DfE (2010) *Children looked after in England: Statistical First Release*

¹⁶ Dixon, Wade, Byford, Weatherly and Lee (2004) *Young people leaving care: a study of outcomes and costs*

¹⁷ Reed in Partnership (2009) *False Starts: Restoring hope, dignity and opportunity to young people*

Homelessness

Homelessness is endemic amongst care leavers; 40% of care leavers experience homelessness within the first six months of leaving local authority care.¹⁸ Around a third of people living on the streets have a background in care.¹⁹ Homelessness, or instability in housing, can have catastrophic effects on other parts of a young person's life and achievements.

Housing is vital to the stability of daily life and can affect other areas such as health, mental well-being, educational attainment, income, occupation and aspirations. Looked after children leave home significantly earlier than their peers and this is combined with a shortage of affordable housing. Housing is a critical element in the transition out of care and acts a major barrier to employment for care leavers.²⁰

Drugs and Alcohol

Another catalyst to social exclusion is drug and alcohol use. Almost a third of young people misuse drugs and alcohol within a year of leaving care.²¹ One study found that over half of the individuals with a history of care had used cannabis in the past month, with 15% having used ecstasy and 10% having used cocaine.²²

Additionally, 10% reported that they had previously used heroin or crack cocaine.²³ Drug use can be both a symptom and a cause of social exclusion and has far reaching effects, especially for vulnerable groups such as care leavers who often struggle with depression, health issues, crime and homelessness. More specialist services are needed and the intervention needs to form part of a holistic plan addressing employment and training as well as drug issues.²⁴



18 Coombes (October 2004) Falling through the cracks in *The Guardian*

19 Dixon, J. (2008) *Young People Leaving Care : Health Wellbeing and Outcomes*

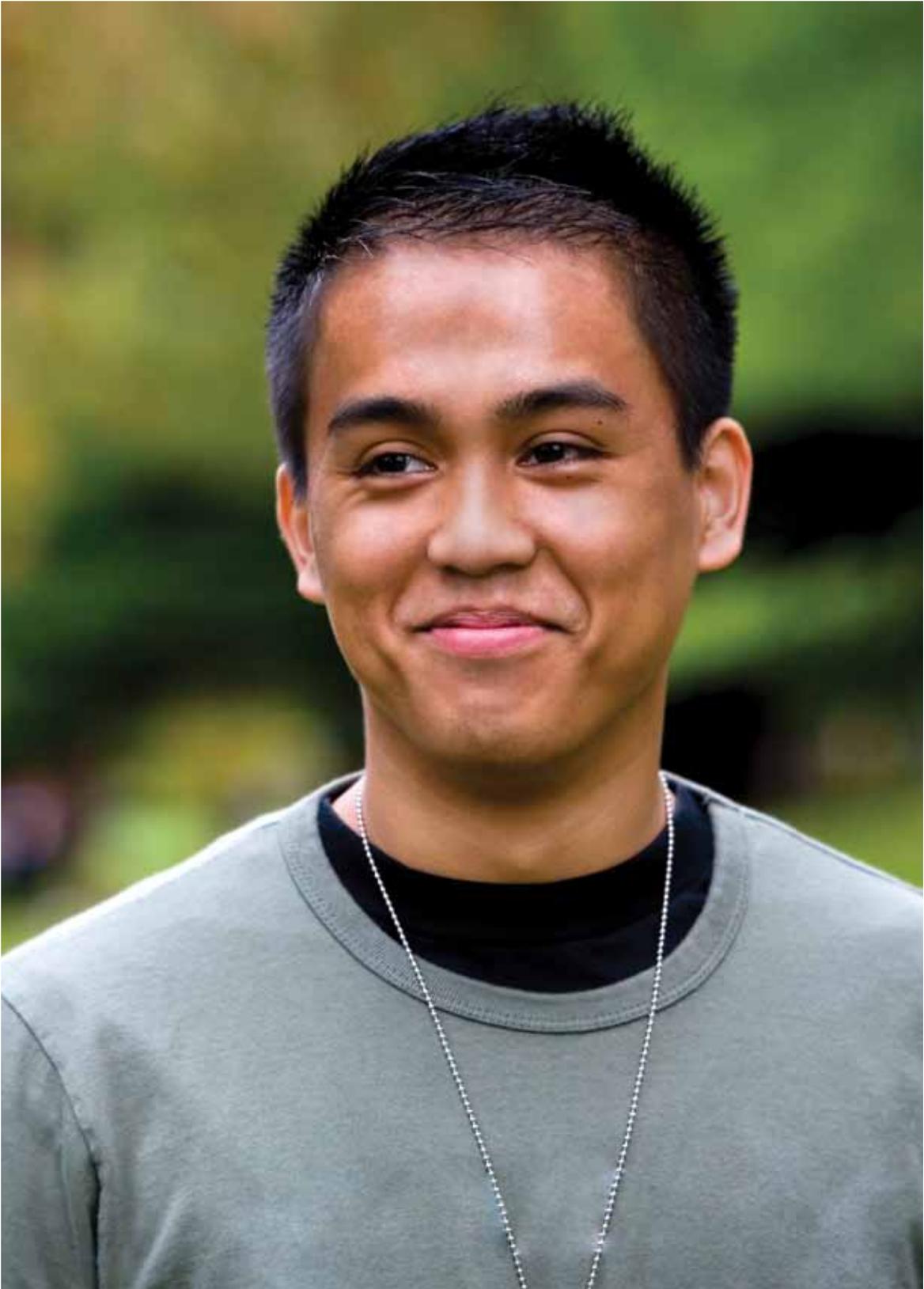
20 Wade, J. and Dixon, J. (2006) *Making a home, finding a job: investigating early housing and employment outcomes for young people leaving care*

21 Dixon, J. (2008) *Young People Leaving Care : Health Wellbeing and Outcomes*

22 ibid

23 Ward J, Henderson Z and Pearson G (2003) *Home Office Report: One problem among many: drug use among care leavers in transition to independent living*

24 ibid



Case Study:

Katie, 19 years old, Oxfordshire

Katie first went into care when she was 15 - she had problems at home and decided to run away. She became homeless for a while and turned to drugs and crime, to fit in with the crowd.

Katie had a part time retail job for three months before she went into care, but the stress and pressure she was under meant she stopped turning up for her shifts. She hadn't been to school for two years but after finding a private foster carer she decided to go back to school to take her GCSEs. In six months she managed to catch up on enough work to gain six GCSEs grades A* - C. She also gained a lot of advice from her school about what career path she might like to take.

After school, she decided to move on to sixth form but had to leave soon after as she became ill, which turned out to be a symptom of her pregnancy.

“I did some work experience in a nursing home, I enjoyed it and it was useful as it helped me work out what I wanted to do.”

She feels she has adequate support from the Jobcentre, her Connexions adviser and her key worker. Katie is now living in a mother and baby shelter and has been on benefits since she was 16. She is looking to find a job that is flexible enough to allow her to look after her 19 month old daughter.

How does Katie think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Flexible training options should be given to care leavers who are unable to finish a training course or qualification.
- Careers advice in schools should be available to everyone.



Teenage Parenthood

Children who have been in care are almost two and a half times more likely to become teenage parents, compared with those brought up with both natural parents.²⁵ One study found almost half of the young women leaving care were mothers within 18-24 months.²⁶ Further overrepresentation in vulnerable groups leaves care leavers open to more disadvantage and in need of further tailoring in the support that is required to ensure these individuals are not lost in NEET statistics.

Custody

Children in care represent less than 1% of all children yet almost 40% of people in custody under 21 were in care as children.²⁷ 27% of the adult prison population and half of all those in custody under 25 were in the care system.²⁸

Custodial sentences create further barriers to employment as employers often wish to see full five year work experience histories, and many jobs require an individual to have a clear criminal record. Individuals also then face yet another difficult transition, this time from custody to society.

Health

One of the major barriers to employment faced by care leavers is health, including a lack of emotional well-being, multiple mental health issues and a deficiency in mental health support.

Around 55% of care leavers suffer, or have suffered from depression²⁹ and many lack confidence and self-esteem. Mental health issues and depression can be a huge barrier to employment due to their symptoms and the frequent need for long term and intensive support.

Furthermore, 10-20% of looked after children are disabled³⁰, their disability may have been the reason for their move into care but it may also act as a barrier to employment and may also contribute to low wages.

There are currently 1.3 million disabled people in the UK who want to work, 23% of disabled people have no qualifications compared to 9% of non-disabled people and the average gross hourly pay for disabled employees is £11.08 compared to £12.30 for non-disabled employees.³¹ This is further evidence of the need for flexible and tailored support for care leavers seeking employment or training.



²⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Teenage Pregnancy London*

²⁶ Biehal, Clayden, Stein and Wade (1995) *Moving On. Young People and Leaving Care Schemes London*, HMSO

²⁷ Voluntary & Community Sector (2010) *United We Stand Manifesto*

²⁸ Dawn Howley (31st March 2010) Spending early on children in care will save in the long term in *The Guardian*

²⁹ Centre for Social Justice (2008) *Breakthrough Britain: Couldn't Care Less*

³⁰ National Care Advisory Service (2009) *Introduction to Leaving Care*

³¹ Shaw Trust (2009) *Disability and Employment Statistics*

Knowledge of the welfare system

Care leavers also struggle with housing and benefits and often fare badly because of their lack of knowledge about the welfare system and what they are entitled to. Many believe they would lose all benefit entitlement and would be worse off financially if they started a job. A large group also suffer from low self-confidence and low motivation³² and need more effective advice on the benefits of working and the financial support available at various income levels.

Lack of investment

A report into social mobility, *Unleashing Aspiration*, states “What parents and families do, and the social circumstances they do it in, have perhaps the greatest influence on a child’s fortune in life.”³³ For looked after children, many local authorities and governments have under-invested, or even neglected to invest, in their needs. Recent research by Demos into the different funding options of care leavers demonstrates that limiting investment in the short term may create larger costs to the state in the future.³⁴

Demos found that investment in a looked after child’s education, accommodation and well-being to create better life chances and better chances of gaining sustainable employment costs the state less than the cost of unemployment, underemployment and welfare dependency. In fact, the research found that investing in the care leaver would cost £90,000 less over a period of 14 years. Early investment also creates the best outcome for the person leaving care. Higher investment should be made in greater stability whilst of care and a commitment made to mental health issues, educational attainment and employability.³⁵

Conclusion

The Coalition Government has been quick to criticise the failings of the previous government over missed child poverty targets and rising levels of youth unemployment. Care leavers are heavily affected by these failures and are in need of further, more intensive, support. One of the issues for the new government is how it can drive the performance and improvement of local authorities given that many of the targets faced by local government have been abolished.

Providing the necessary opportunities and support for care leavers is not simple, and requires long term commitment and the ability to follow through on policy and legislation. As our case studies of care leavers show, there are still those without enough support, unaware of the options that should be presented to them. This inequality desperately needs to be addressed alongside continuous additions and improvements to the support currently available.



³² Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) *Employment and training schemes for homeless young people*

³³ Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009) *Unleashing Aspiration*

³⁴ Hannon C, Wood C and Bazalgette (2010) *In Loco Parentis*

³⁵ Hannon C, Wood C and Bazalgette (2010) *In Loco Parentis*

Case Study:

Sampson, 24 years old, London

Sampson entered care at nine years old. He grew up in a children's home where his temper and emotional problems prevented him from creating lasting relationships or succeeding in education. Sampson spent no more than three months in school at any one time and failed to achieve any qualifications.

Sampson then completed work experience placements, had careers advice, and even went back to college to sit his GCSEs. However, he was still learning to deal with his anger and many of these opportunities ended prematurely.

A work experience placement in a youth centre eventually led to a work trial for Sampson as a youth worker, but he was forced to give up half way through as an impending burglary trial (of which he was found not guilty) forced him to leave the job.

Sampson has received help from school, social workers, personal advisers, Connexions, The Prince's Trust, Jobcentre Plus and has even completed work experience at Scotland Yard. However, six years on from his first claim for unemployment benefit, Sampson is still looking for a permanent job.

How does Sampson think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Emotional support should be given to care leavers looking to enter the labour market.
- Care leavers need to have positive role models who have been through the care system.
- Care leavers need more access to supported work experience placements.

“ My work experience placements have done me a lot of good, if it wasn't for them I still would not have decided where I want to be. ”



What has been done for care leavers?

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This section explores the current legislation and policy that has been established to support care leavers. It specifically focuses on how far the policy developments surrounding care leavers' transition from care to independence have improved outcomes.

Legislation

Supporting care leavers into sustainable employment should be an important element of the government's agenda. It must build on legislative and policy changes which have been made to support this group. The Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000, provides the general legal framework for policy. The legislation placed new obligations on local authorities to support care leavers more fully in education, training and employment.³⁶ The Act sought to ensure that:

- Each young person leaving care should have a Personal Adviser to coordinate support and assistance with particular emphasis on education, training and employment.
- A care leaver may receive support aged 18 to 21 and past 21 if set out by their Pathways Plan.
- Local authorities may assign grants to care leavers connected to their education or training.
- Young care leavers should have a secure 'base' from which to start, in order to improve their employment, education and training prospects.

Personal Advisers, Pathways Plans and grants were certainly positive additions to the legal rights of young people leaving care. The reforms were intended to create stability and opportunity through education and employment and help improve outcomes for young people.

However, a big limitation of the legislation was the fact that it failed to move the distribution of support away from age restrictions. In traditional families, parents will assess a young person's capacity to cope on their own and their needs, rather than basing entitlement on age.³⁷ Care leavers are in need of this flexibility but have not been granted the option through policy or legislation. This is one of the reasons why the legislative framework has failed to have a significant impact on outcomes.

Policy

Current policy and initiatives such as Right2BCared4, From Care2Work, education grants, and Care Matters look at improving employment outcomes alongside addressing key problems such as accommodation, access to healthcare, financial and personal support. Local authorities and central government also placed a greater emphasis on the role of the Personal Adviser, who acts as a lead professional for care leavers.³⁸

³⁶ Office of Public Section Information (2000) *Children Leaving Care Act (2000)*

³⁷ National Care Advisory Service (2010) *What could make the difference?*

³⁸ Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force (2009) *Realising young potential: supporting care leavers into education, employment and training*



Personal Advisers are employees of local authorities and form part of the leaving care team. They are responsible for creating a Pathways Plan with a young person in care before their 16th birthday, which should address how their education, training and employment needs can be met. They are also responsible for supporting these young people with their health and housing.

Central to the Pathway Planning ethos is to support young care leavers into sustainable and meaningful employment, with prospects, as opposed to “dead end jobs.”³⁹ Combined with financial incentives to encourage young people to take up employment or training, these measures are designed to improve employment opportunities for young people leaving the care system.

Research by The Centre for Social Justice has shown that “care leavers who have received training, preparation and support while leaving care have a much more successful transition than those who did not.”⁴⁰

More recently, efforts to improve outcomes for young care leavers have been addressed by the Care Matters - The Time for Change agenda. The 2007 White Paper, which led to the Children and

Young Persons Act 2008, identified that although some progress had been made, the gap between the outcomes of young care leavers and other young people remained a cause for concern.⁴¹ The report stated that 30% of care leavers aged 19 were not in education, employment or training, and made a number of pledges to tackle this problem.⁴² Some key points were:

- Building on the 2000 Act, the agenda emphasised the role of the local authority as ‘corporate parent’, ensuring the provision of services to young care leavers.
- Extending provision set out in previous policies, for example the entitlement of a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25.
- Further emphasising multi agency collaboration - public, private and voluntary sector.
- Highlighting the potential role of large businesses to provide training, apprenticeships, placements and other routes to employment.

³⁹ Rainer (2004) *Policy Briefing: The education, training and employment of young people leaving care*

⁴⁰ Centre for Social Justice (2008) *Breakthrough Britain: Couldn't Care Less*

⁴¹ Learning Skills Council (2009) *Supporting Care Leavers in Accessing Employment and Skills Training*

⁴² DCSF (2007) *Care Matters - The Time for Change White Paper*

Case Study:

James, 19 years old, West Midlands

James was in care for four years between the ages of 13 and 17 as a result of domestic abuse.

For two years, James was taken out of mainstream school because of behavioural problems and sent to a specialised school where he found himself constantly re-learning material. He returned to mainstream school but found it difficult to concentrate on his studies. He struggled to revise in the care home setting where chores were prioritised over studies. James passed only one GCSE.

James was unhappy in care and ran away from the care home to return to live with his mum. He started a college course, but a lack of financial support forced him to drop out. At 18 James was told he couldn't have any more financial support from the council unless he was in education so he started an ICT course. The course was too simple, James got bored and he dropped out again.

James is currently looking for work and more experience within IT. He is also waiting to become eligible for unemployment benefits after quitting his course in June.

How does James think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Advice should be given to young people immediately after they receive their GCSE exam results.
- There should be more paid work experience placements for care leavers who are less likely to be able to afford and commit to the opportunities.

- Care leavers should be given more boundaries with financial support, more intensive support and more choices on their route to employment.
- Flexible training should be available for care leavers who have extra responsibilities and employability skills should be a priority.

“ Work experience was useful because I was given boundaries and it built my confidence. ”



Further to the Care Matters agenda, the previous government released another White Paper in 2009 - *New Opportunities*.⁴³ *New Opportunities* addressed the lack of employment opportunities for care leavers more specifically and set out the plans for *From Care2Work*. This is an employment initiative which aims to provide 'life-changing' employment opportunities for young care leavers⁴⁴ and now has more than 3500 opportunities in place or planned.⁴⁵

From Care2Work is run by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) who are tasked with working with national employers and local authorities to create opportunities for work experience and mentoring for care leavers. This includes access to work experience, internships and permanent roles. One of the key aims identified through the scheme is to overcome barriers to work through extended periods of work experience, training and support.

The opportunity to gain work experience is crucial for young people. Reed in Partnership research, published in October 2010, found that 90% of 18-24 year olds believe work experience

is important to gain whilst looking for permanent employment. Furthermore, 68% of young people believe their biggest barrier to finding employment is a lack of experience, which has risen by 16% since 2009.⁴⁶ This has prompted the belief that there is a growing need for work experience placements for young people and gives strength to the *From Care2Work* initiative.

Furthermore, as part of the recommendations outlined in the 2009 *New Opportunities* White Paper, NCAS now works with the National Apprenticeship Service to provide the offer of an apprenticeship place to all 'suitably qualified' care leavers from September 2009. The previous government aimed to make this a legal entitlement by 2013.⁴⁷

One of the broadest challenges in terms of widening access to apprenticeships is the need to assist young people in gaining the skills they need to successfully complete the apprenticeship. There is currently a high drop out rate in apprenticeships and this is likely to be significant for young people in, or leaving, the care system.



⁴³ HM Government (2009) *New Opportunities white paper*

⁴⁴ DSCF (July 2009) *Children's Secretary: New national programme to help care leavers into employment*

⁴⁵ Tim Loughton (2010) *Annual Leaving Care Conference Speech*

⁴⁶ Reed in Partnership (2010) *Learning from Experience? Young people and unemployment*

⁴⁷ Learning Skills Council (2009) *Supporting Care Leavers in Accessing Employment and Skills Training*

Case Study:

Megan, 22 years old, West Yorkshire

Megan went into foster care when she was three years old as her mum was too ill to care for her. Megan achieved nine GCSEs before moving onto college to gain three A-Levels. Whilst she was in school Megan felt there was a lack of advice surrounding careers. The only work experience she did was arranged by the school without consultation. She says, "I think it would have been good to experience something I actually wanted to do."

Megan went on to university to study social work but the course didn't suit her and she dropped out. Once she left university all the support from the Care Leavers team stopped and Megan started claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Megan found that she was only expected to turn up to the Jobcentre to sign on and was given no support from Jobcentre Plus advisers for the first six months of her claim.

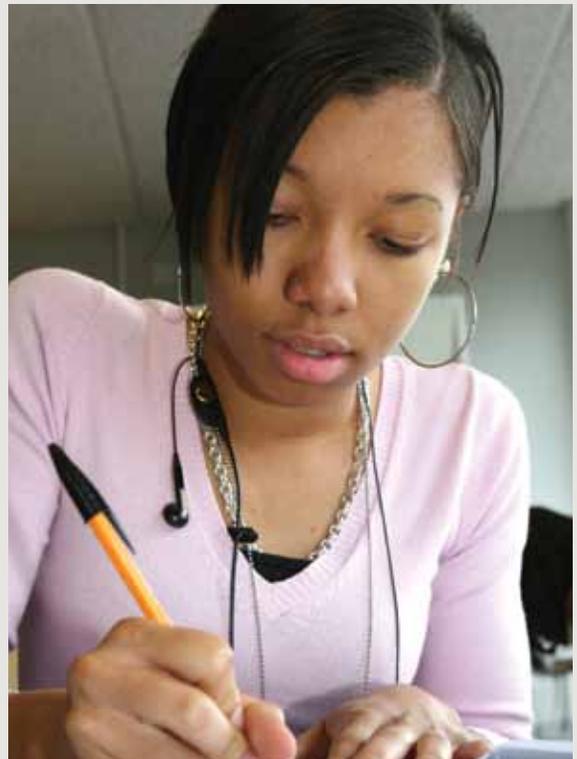
Megan identifies that the part time work she completed whilst studying has helped her to decide what she would like to do. She has now decided that she would like to go into nursing, but she still believes there is a lot more that could be done for care leavers.

How does Megan think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- The Jobcentre should support young people from day one of their unemployment claim.
- Young people in care should have access to work experience throughout school and college.

- Care leavers should have access to intensive careers advice and support when they are making education choices.
- Careers advice should be linked with more general guidance and mental health support.

“If you’ve got someone pushing you in the right direction it’s a good thing. Often young people in care don’t have that.”



Benefits System: issues for care leavers

Many care leavers are expected to live independently as soon as they turn 18, and those who continue living with former foster carers are often expected to claim housing benefit to part fund their care.⁴⁸ Care leavers often have limited qualifications and the low paid and short term employment most accessible to them doesn't necessarily make them better off.^{49 50}

In education, care leavers are more likely to fall behind, and have to top-up qualifications at a later date. They are able to access income support and housing benefit until the age of 21 if they are in education, but only if they begin a course before they turn 19.⁵¹ Evidence shows that care leavers are less likely to make use of education or training options in their immediate post care years.⁵²

This is because many young people are preoccupied with resolving housing and other financial issues. For many care leavers the stability needed to commit to a full time course is not realistic until much later in their lives. One of the real issues is the need for more flexibility so that young people who have been in the care system have the opportunity to re-access training with a suitable level of financial support.

Additionally, "pay scales for young adults are often structured to reflect the norm of remaining within the family home and receiving parental support until their early twenties."⁵³ This means that young people without parental support are often unable to sustain independent living.

Postcode Lottery: a variation of opportunities

The likelihood of a former care leaver continuing to education, employment or training varies dramatically according to local authority. In 2010, the proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training ranged from 34% to 87% across local authorities in England.⁵⁴ This huge variation in results represents the dramatic difference in funding and quality of support open to young people leaving care. Research has shown that 54% of young people in care felt that local authorities are doing poorly or very poorly at helping them prepare to get good jobs in the future.⁵⁵

In addition, the 'What Makes The Difference' survey showed that almost half of care leavers had not received any written information about grants, services and support available to them from their local authority and 38% said they had just been "left to get on with it".⁵⁶

The government has signalled a greater focus on promoting social mobility. Both this and the localisation agenda sound positive, but the practicalities of doing both are far more complex and challenging. For care leavers and those responsible for providing services to care leavers there is the danger of further confusion in a system where eligibility and services are already difficult to understand. Furthermore, there is a strong case to open up many existing services to care leavers, regardless of their age or if they claim a benefit.

⁴⁸ National Care Advisory Service (2010) *What could make the difference?*

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ Ofsted (July 2009) *Support for care leavers report*

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² Dixon J (2006) *Pathways to Work Experience: helping care leavers into employment*

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ DfE (2010) *Looked After Children in England*

⁵⁵ Ofsted (2009) *Children's message to the Minister: a report of children's contributions to the 2009 Ministerial stocktake of care*

⁵⁶ WMTD & Rainer (2008) *Making the Difference*, Putting the Care back into corporate parenting

Moving Forward: Providing integrated support for care leavers

The Coalition Government has a real opportunity to trial a new approach to improving the employment outcomes of young people leaving care. From our own experience in the employment and skills sector, we know that integrated employment and skills support can provide people with the opportunity to secure employment and then achieve pay and career progression.

The early sections of this report looked at the range of factors that impact on the life chances of people leaving the care system. It is imperative that a real focus on ensuring adequate accommodation and access to funding is provided. However, employment is a key building block in helping people progress and avoid falling into a life of poverty.

Reed in Partnership has worked in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK and in the past 12 years has helped over 110,000 people move into employment. We believe that more can be done to provide the integrated and focused employment and skills support needed by young people leaving the care system.

In the section below, we provide our perspective on what can be done to improve the outcomes of young people in the care system and how this new support can be integrated with reforms already being developed by the Coalition Government.

Identifying the key challenges

The previous chapters identified the need to improve the life chances of young people leaving the care system. The need for further action is required not just from the angle of fairness but in strict financial terms, sustained and effective intervention will result in long term financial benefits for the government. Based on our research, the four key challenges we believe must be tackled are:

1. The need for joined up government

The previous government put a lot of effort into ensuring a cross-departmental focus on supporting young people leaving the care system. However, it is clear that there is a great deal of progress to be made. We believe that a greater focus on how the Department for Education, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions can combine efforts around education, employment and skills is required.

2. Work experience and role models

Without positive role models and family support structures, young people can be left on benefits without the support required to move into sustainable employment. We believe that we need to move to a system in which the employment and skills needs of young people are fully met and realised.

Role models for those in the care system could give substantial encouragement for young people to build their aspirations. A role model who has experienced the care system and succeeded in creating a stable life for themselves is far more likely to resonate positively with young people in care. We believe that greater focus on this intervention could have a real impact.



3. Lack of professional employment and skills support

Based on our research, many young people receive support from a range of external sources. This information can be inconsistent and lack the professional understanding of employment and skills issues. While a holistic approach needs to be taken, there is a danger of placing too much pressure on non-specialised services to supply employment advice and support. We believe that a professional focus on employment and skills support is required and will ensure better results are achieved.

4. Lack of integrated and long term support

Many young people who leave care simply disappear into the system. This can mean moving through various programmes that do not appear to be adequately responding to the needs of the specific customer group. Given the fact that the young people have been in the care of the state for a number of years, we believe that there is a social obligation on both national and local government to provide integrated and long term support.

The sections that follow set out our core recommendations for how we can overcome the four challenges we have identified above.



Work experience and internships

Many people leaving the care system do not have access to work and career networks. This results in a lack of relevant work experience or knowledge about the world of work. Given the realities of the labour market in terms of the much greater competition for new jobs, the lack of experience can result in young people finding it more difficult to find employment.

Work experience is especially important for care leavers as they often miss out on alternative ways of experiencing a work environment. Children growing up in traditional households will often experience their parent's place of work, or will learn about it through conversation. They may have the option of gaining a part time job and benefit from their parent's contacts to ease their transition into the labour market. In contrast, young people in care are often unable to commit to part time jobs because of conflicting priorities and don't benefit from the experiences and networks of their parents.

We know from our research that many young people are reluctant to undertake unpaid work experience as they fail to see the longer-term benefits that can result.⁵⁷ This can apply particularly to young people who lack confidence or knowledge about what work experience might involve. This can be exacerbated for young people in the care system who often lack the family support networks that provide advice to help challenge expectations and assumptions. Furthermore, the financial costs of travelling to a work experience placement and associated costs, like appropriate clothing, are out of reach for many care leavers.

One of the positive suggestions made by the Centre for Social Justice in their most recent care leavers report⁵⁸ surrounds the idea that local authorities should use their resources to provide work experience placements within their organisation or with suppliers and partners.

We would argue that the government needs to go further and build an alliance of private sector companies who are prepared to offer suitable opportunities. There is already some good practice with "FromCare2Work" and companies offering specific opportunities but more needs to be done to provide a more integrated and choice based system for young people.

Importance of role models

The majority of children who remain in care do so as a result of abuse or neglect⁵⁹. Before leaving care their behaviour is often learned from an abusive or irresponsible parent who is unable to care for themselves and their children. It is hugely important that their aspirations and ideas of their future are not set on those of their parents.

To counteract these perceptions of adult life it is crucial to provide children in care with positive role models who have themselves experienced local authority care. It is also important that these role models form part of an early intervention scheme to enable children in care to create aspirations and ambitions for their own futures.

⁵⁷ Reed in Partnership (October 2010) *Learning from experience: young people and unemployment*

⁵⁸ Centre for Social Justice (2008) *Breakthrough Britain: Couldn't Care Less*

⁵⁹ DCSF (2010) *Children in Care*



Case Study:

Ella, 19 years old, London

Ella moved into foster care following a breakdown in her relationship with her father when she was 15 years old. Ella wasn't comfortable in another family's home and for the past three years has been moving between hostels and shared houses.

Being American, Ella found it difficult to fit in with the other children at school and her attendance was poor. She failed all of her GCSEs.



Ella received advice from her social worker which helped her to decide that she would like to work as a care assistant with the long term goal of becoming a midwife. At Jobcentre Plus Ella found that her wish to enter the healthcare industry was overlooked because she had no qualifications and she was pushed towards Future Jobs Fund positions.

She was approached by an external company who had a scheme for young people. They helped Ella with all kinds of employability skills and to gain work experience in the industry she was interested in. Ella did so well at her work experience that she is now working for a similar organisation which cares for elderly people.

How does Ella think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Young people in care should have more support with job applications and learning how to transfer life skills to employment from an early age.
- Young people should be sent to specialist agencies outside of the Jobcentre to get support.
- Care leavers should be given mentors in the industry they wish to work in.

“I found it really hard to complete applications. You should be able to get help whenever you want.”

The Work Programme: providing a new way forward

The Coalition Government has a radical plan to overhaul the existing system of welfare to work and the level of support provided to people who are out of work. The proposed reforms offer a new way by which young people leaving the care system could be provided with professional, integrated and long term employment and skills support. In the following section, we outline some of the key elements of the Work Programme and then move on to look at how this new structure of support can be used to support young people leaving the care system.

Instead of a myriad of programmes aimed at supporting customer groups based on the type of benefit they claim, Great Britain in Spring 2011 will move to having one Work Programme capable of meeting the needs of all customer groups. On a local level, this will mean that every part of England, Wales and Scotland will

have providers working across large geographic areas providing employment and skills support to customers with a variety of needs.

For care leavers, sustaining work can be as difficult as finding it to begin with.⁶⁰ A key element of the Work Programme is the intention of the government to increase the sustainability targets for providers. This means that a successful outcome will no longer be based on the individual staying in work for 13 or 26 weeks, but instead looking at sustainability measures of up to two years for different customer groups.

An increase in sustainability targets offers a real opportunity for providers to work with customers on developing routes into employment and then providing the individual customer with a pay and career progression model to help them stay and advance in employment.

The Work Awareness Programme: A Case Study

Reed in Partnership has undertaken a work awareness pilot with 15-16 year olds at West London Academy. The programme aimed to offer knowledge, skills and advice to students who were considered to be at risk of disengaging from their studies.

The Work Awareness Programme focused on practical elements of finding employment such as writing CVs, completing job applications and finding part time work. Staff at West London Academy found that this approach encouraged those students at risk of disengagement to focus on how their studies and choices would impact on their future careers.

Young people in disadvantaged areas of the UK are particularly at risk of disengaging from the education system. In these areas, there are often high levels of unemployment and social exclusion. More needs to be done to provide early intervention and support in these areas to ensure young people are given the tools they need to succeed, whatever they choose to do post-16.

⁶⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) *Employment and training schemes for homeless young people*

Funding additional support

The funding of the new Work Programme also presents a radical departure from previous policy. It is expected that the programme will be funded from the so called AME/DEL switch.

Instead of the Work Programme being funded by departmental expenditure (DEL) in the way that programmes such as Flexible New Deal currently are, providers will be asked to invest in helping people into work with a payment by results funding model. In this model providers will receive payment only after the government has realised benefit savings from the annual managed expenditure (AME) budget. The AME/DEL switch provides a way for the government to radically tackle worklessness without significant new spending.

This new approach to funding provides a way to look at how additional support for young people leaving the care system can be provided. Through the development of the Work Programme, we have the opportunity to build a real programme of intervention to provide long term support to young people. One of the consistent problems identified with young people leaving the care system is the lack of focused and integrated employment and skills support. The next section details how the core structure being developed for the Work Programme can be used to improve the life chances of young people leaving the care system.

Utilising the Work Programme - a professional employment and skills service

Currently young people receive employment and skills support from a range of sources. This may be careers teachers in school, help from Connexions, social workers, etc. The previous government rightly sought to integrate services for care leavers, however, this has at times led to young people not receiving tailored and professional support.

While a holistic approach needs to be taken for their well-being, there is a danger of placing too much pressure on non-specialised services to supply employment advice and support. For instance, a social worker does not usually possess enough knowledge to understand the recruitment market, or “routes in” for someone who is likely to have a low skill level.

We believe that services for care leavers need to be connected, but at the same time rely on people with expertise. The government already has specialist employment and skills providers focused on supporting the hardest to help, and should open up the choice to access this provision to care leavers.



Case Study:

Helen, 19 years old, London

Helen was neglected as a child, her mum was addicted to crack cocaine and Helen became responsible for looking after her little brother. Helen became homeless at 16 and shortly moved into care.

At school Helen found it difficult to access support such as counselling because of peer pressure. She left school before sitting any exams. She said, "I left school before I could do my GCSEs, because I started smoking cannabis that's all I did for then".

Until the age of 17 Helen received no careers advice, she said: "For a long while I didn't know what I wanted to do". After a conversation with her key worker, she finally decided she would like to become a support worker for young people in care.

Helen has since started lots of courses in youth work, but she's never completed them because of stress and conflicting responsibilities. She did find work experience enjoyable and useful but difficult to commit to.

Helen has had support from a number of different sources, such as her key worker, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and educational support workers. Although at times the assistance has been useful for Helen, she felt the quality has been extremely varied.

How does Helen think support services for care leavers could be improved?

- Conversations about work should start much earlier, when a person is 13 or 14.

- Children in care should have advice and training from someone outside of school - support that's confidential, unmarked and that peers won't notice.
- Successful people with a background in care should go into schools, care homes and hostels to show kids in care that they can do the same.

“I reckon you need someone who's had a bad start and have made something of their life because the kids can see they were just like me and they've changed their whole life around - I want to do that for myself.”





What would the new approach look like?

Based on our experience of working with young people and the long term unemployed, it is critical that we look at early intervention strategies. Rather than wait for the young people to move through the employment system based on the length of unemployment and then go through onto the Work Programme, we believe the government should look at trialling an approach that seeks to provide young people in care with support from the age of 15 regardless of whether they are in education or training.

We have identified some of the core elements of how the new Work Programme can be aligned with the needs of young people leaving the care system below. The outline is not intended to be a detailed programme specification but rather present some initial ideas on how we can trial a new way of improving the life chances of young people leaving the care system.

Entry to the programme

We would recommend young people in the care system are allocated an Employment and Skills Adviser, at the age of 15, through their local Work Programme provider. The expectation should be that the Employment and Skills Adviser will work with the young person over a number of years to support their employment and skills needs.

The initial focus should be on helping the young person consider their options for staying in full time education or training. Employment and Skills Advisers will be able to assist with this by talking through the realities of the local labour market, the type of jobs currently on offer and the longer-term benefits that result from having qualifications.

At the same time, additional support could be provided in the form of helping young people secure suitable work experience placements or helping them develop their CVs and interview techniques when applying for part time jobs. Both of these positive interventions will provide the young person with more knowledge and experience of how to navigate the job market and provide longer-term benefits.

Intervention model

The level of contact between the young person and their Employment and Skills Adviser will clearly depend on the approach being taken by the individual person and their level of need. Whilst there should be a flexible approach in

terms of the level of contact, we believe that some minimum expectations should be established. An illustration of the type and nature of support for different customer groups is provided below.

Customer type	Suggested frequency	Nature of support provided
Age of 15 onwards	As required by young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General careers advice and labour market discussions. • Assistance with work experience as requested. • Discuss education and training options.
Six months before leaving education	Initial interview with expectation of at least a quarterly meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss benefits of staying in full time education or training. • Provide information on the local labour market and the type of vacancies available. • Employment support with finding work experience or part time work. • Discuss ongoing employment and skills needs.
Young person in full time education or training	At least a quarterly meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on the local labour market and the type of vacancies available. • Employment support with finding work experience or part time work. • Support ongoing employment and skills needs. • Provide early employment and skills support when the young person reaches the end of their course.
Young person not in education, training or employment	At least a monthly meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide focused employment and skills support to help the young person identify possible opportunities. • Access to motivation and confidence building courses and training packages. • Support the young person into suitable paid employment. • Provide in-work support and help identify and build longer-term pay and career progression.
Young person on benefits	At least fortnightly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people get access to Work Programme provider at the immediate point of starting a claim.
Young person enters employment	At least a quarterly meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide in-work support and help identify and build longer-term pay and career progression. • Access to quick careers advice and assistance over the phone when needed. • Provide assistance with mentoring the young person to help them overcome any employment barriers.

Benefits of long term support

One of the problems with the existing employment and skills support structure is the involvement of different individuals as the young person moves from age 16 to 24. The use of the Work Programme at varying levels of frequency between the ages of 15 and 24, and beyond, would give young people the focused and professional employment and skills advice that they need.

The Work Programme will be delivered by a whole range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations with supply chains providing support with training needs, occupational health, assistance with managing money, etc. Access to the Work Programme will provide young people leaving the care system with a mechanism by which they could receive the right amount of support and challenge to help them find and retain in full time work.

One of the key elements of the Work Programme is the focus on moving sustainability targets to up to two years for the hardest to help. This change provides the opportunity of supporting young people who have left the care system into employment and then ensuring that they can be provided with in-work support to help them retain and progress in employment.

Outcome and cost model

With the constraints on public finance, any new programmes within the employment and skills sector have to show both value for money and the ability to produce longer-term savings for the government. With so many young people leaving the care system falling into long term unemployment and prison, action to tackle and break this cycle could produce some significant savings for government.

Many employment and skills providers are used to working in a very target driven environment. We believe that a move towards a more outcome-based approach to support young people leaving the care system could help to drive service improvements and lead to better life chances for young people.

Within the programme outline identified above, we believe that there are a number of 'soft' targets which could help drive performance. These include elements such as helping the young person to stay in education and training; helping arrange work experience; providing support with applications for part time work such as CVs, application forms and interview preparation; and access to training courses and work focused qualifications. All of these issues would help to provide firm foundations to allow the young person to find work and develop a career.



There is already a significant resource spent on young people leaving the care system through national and local government. Whilst there are constraints on public sector funding, we believe that closer co-operation between the key government bodies and a more focused approach to employment and skills provision would realise cost savings. This could be used to fund the elements of the support programme in terms of the 'soft targets' and the advice and guidance element of the programme.

Within the core welfare to work element of the Work Programme, providers will face demanding targets in terms of helping people into employment and sustaining them for set periods of time. For young care leavers who are out of work, we believe that they could go into the same differentiated payment model and as one of the priority groups, benefit from

the long term sustainability measures thereby ensuring continued in-work support. There may also be the option of the government looking at the AME/DEL funding model for the job outcome and sustainability element of the programme.

The model identified above, by building on the core elements of the new Work Programme, would provide young care leavers with access to professional and long term support. By helping young people prepare for the world of work and giving them the skills to enter and progress in employment, we could help to break some of the pernicious cycles of unemployment and poverty which lead to problems such as homelessness and criminal behaviour.



Conclusion

Care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. They are at high risk of social exclusion, poverty and worklessness. The Coalition Government has set out radical plans for welfare and social reform, but the benefits for care leavers are yet to be outlined.

It is equally important that the Government's plans for the Big Society and decentralisation of power don't result in less, rather than more people taking responsibility for vulnerable groups such as care leavers. Local authority budgets have been cut in the spending review, but there needs to be assurance that the protection of care leavers and their opportunities will be safeguarded.

The time to act is now. Government, both central and local, has a duty to replicate the support of a traditional family and must go further to offer the support care leavers need. As a nation we are heading quickly into unprecedented welfare reforms and it is imperative that care leavers are not left further behind.

This report set out to explore the barriers to work care leavers face, the implications of a new welfare to work agenda and to produce recommendations that will improve services for these young people. We have identified four key challenges for the new government and have set out recommendations to develop these areas.

The core recommendations include:

- The Coalition Government should look at the impact that changes to the benefit and welfare system will have on young care leavers

- There is a need to tackle the deficit and control spending, placing the onus on government departments to work together to improve outcomes and ensure value for money.
- Young care leavers need dedicated and professional employment and skills support. This could be achieved by integrating support into the Work Programme to ensure young care leavers benefit from long term support with a focus on improving outcomes.
- Local authorities should do more to look at promoting positive role models to young people in care. This could be one way of helping raise ambition and self-esteem.
- Government and local authorities should look at ensuring young care leavers have access to work experience and the financial support they need to successfully undertake this type of intervention.

The care leavers we spoke to weren't content with current provisions and were certainly not content with a life on benefits. These young people want the opportunity to gain sustainable employment, to remove themselves from the poverty trap and bridge the inequality gap that has so far removed employment from their grasp. Our recommendations, if implemented, would decrease this gap and provide vital opportunities for care leavers.

About Reed in Partnership

Reed in Partnership exists to change people's lives for the better

We have an unrivalled experience of working with employers drawing on over 50 years of the Reed family of businesses' recruitment experience. By understanding the needs of employers we create tailored recruitment and retention solutions that successfully move people into the labour market. We have worked with over 200,000 businesses ranging from local companies to large multi-national corporations.

As a people-led business, we know that everyone's situation is different. That's why our programmes create individually tailored routes into employment. We break down barriers to work by giving people the skills, confidence and knowledge they need to find lasting employment; using the most creative and innovative methods in our sector.

Our approach consistently delivers excellent results. So far we've helped over 110,000 people move from welfare into employment and assisted many more people gain the skills they need to enter and progress within the labour market.

Above all, we're summed up in one word and that's partnership. In co-operation with Jobcentre Plus, specialist agencies and local partners we find lasting solutions that change lives and local communities.



From Care to Independence: Improving employment outcomes for care leavers

Reed in Partnership Limited
31 Amelia Street, London, SE17 3PY
T: 020 7708 6000
E: rhodri.thomas@reed.co.uk
www.reedinpartnership.co.uk