



**INFORMING
FUTURES**

1625 Independent People

USING ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT) IN OUR WORK WITH CARE LEAVERS - THE REBOOT WEST PROGRAMME

www.informingfutures.co.uk

This resource is part of the Informing Futures toolkit, a free online resource for practitioners seeking to understand and support care and custody experienced young people.

For more information or queries on any of the topics covered in this toolkit, or to find out about training and consultancy we can offer please contact enquiries@1625ip.co.uk

This resource was funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and is offered free for information, educational and professional development purposes. You may not sell this work, nor may it be used as supporting content for any commercial product or service. All copies of this work must clearly display the original copyright notice and Informing Futures website address. Any on-line reproduction must also provide a link to the Informing Futures website.

Copyright© 2020. Informing Futures is a 1625 Independent People project. 1625 Independent People is a charity and a registered society (Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, reg: 23964R exempt from registration with the Charity Commission). Registered office: Kingsley Hall, 59 Old Market Street, Bristol, BS2 0ER.

Evidence of need for the Future 4 Me approach

Evidence was collated from a wide range of sources to demonstrate the need for a new approach to working with care and custody leavers, and to identify what specialisms would be most effective in working with this cohort. Please note that the information below was collected in 2016, ahead of the second phase of the Future 4 Me programme.

Why care and custody leavers?

The significant challenges facing young people leaving care and custody are well documented, with a number of recent reviews and strategies which highlight this:

- The review by Lord Laming, commissioned by the Prison Reform Trust, into the significant over-representation of care leavers in the custody population.
- The Government Review, by Charlie Taylor, into the youth justice system.
- Keep on Caring – Supporting young people from care to independence, the Government strategy for supporting care leavers from 2016.

The Laming Review identifies that a third of boys in young offender institutions spent time in care. The figure in the West of England is even higher (50%). Over the past 10 years the proportion of young women in custody who have been in care has increased from 40 to 61%. The Laming Review clearly identifies the need for examples of good practice to be highlighted, developed and shared nationally. This was apparent when, after submitting evidence to the review, Future 4 Me was invited to a national conference as an example of Best Practice, following the launch of the review findings.

'Beyond Youth Custody' research and consultation with the DCLG commissioned national 'Youth Homelessness Adviser' have highlighted the need for strong and effective practice models to help influence and drive practice nationally.

The need 1625IP have identified is for positive practice models to help drive changes in the youth justice and care system and to enable the voluntary sector to play a role in meeting their needs reflecting the strengths this sector brings.

We have also identified that the same approaches and benefits that Future 4 Me brings for care and custody leavers can be extended to other cohorts of young people who have experienced similar difficulties, including trauma and disrupted attachments, for example those struggling to achieve stability in supported housing and wider youth services.

Why a relationship based approach?

The role of relationships, the value of psychologically informed approaches and the need for effective mental health support to be brought to the relationships that young people have, has been a strength in Future 4 Me that has been highlighted through our external evaluation, research and consultations.

BYC Research has highlighted that relationships lie at the heart of successful engagement, and that high quality trusted relationships are crucial to enhance motivation and positive choices, sustain engagement and build resilience to negative influences (BYC, 2015).

Positive relationships established with project staff provide a shift in young people's identity that enables them to engage positively with the wider community (Beyond Youth Custody, Effective Resettlement of Young People, 2015).

The importance of positive personal relationships, and support to manage relationships, as well as practical and welfare issues, is especially critical to effective resettlement of young women (Beyond Youth Custody, 2014)

For care leavers research points consistently to the quality of relationships with 'key' workers as the main factor in determining whether support works or fails (*Effective Interventions and Services for Young People on the Edge of Care: A Rapid Research Review*, IPC, July 2015; The Care Inquiry 2013).

Why Resettlement?

According to the Who Cares Trust, 30% of those who are homeless had been in care at some point in their lives.

Regionally the proportion of care leavers identified as being at risk of homelessness and/or unsuitable accommodation is alarmingly high, varying between 17% in North Somerset and 25% in Bristol. Care leavers need stability - a quarter of 16 and 17 year olds leaving care have already experienced five or more placements during their time in care.

National research, and the Bristol New Belongings survey of care leavers, highlights that young people highly value having choice about where they will live - and to succeed must be involved in decisions that will affect them. A secure housing base is also critical to young people progressing in other areas of life, such as education, employment or training (EET), improved mental health, relationships and building of social networks.

BYC research and consultation with Future 4 Me by the DCLG commissioned National Homelessness Adviser highlights that accommodation planning and access to suitable accommodation remains a huge challenge regionally and nationally for young people leaving custody. In Sept 2016 HM **Inspectorate of Probation found that nationally one in three homeless 16 and 17 year olds who were working with youth offending teams had been placed in unsafe or unsuitable accommodation.**

Why Mental health?

The prevalence of trauma amongst young people leaving custody is very high, with 91% experiencing abuse and/or significant loss, 35% experiencing the “double trauma” of both abuse and loss (BYC, 2014). Over a third of girls in custody disclose self-harm, and over two thirds have psychiatric problems (BYC, 2014);

60% of children who have been in care have experienced abuse or neglect, 63% have a mental health problem (Children’s Society, 2015). Care leavers are between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood (Department of Health, Preventing Suicide, Cross Government Strategy to Save Lives, 2012). 40% suffered violence at home (Arnull & Eagle, 2009).

One third of young people leaving YOI also have problems with drug or alcohol use (Prison Reform Trust, 2010), often but not always overlapping with mental health needs (dual diagnosis), and drug use amongst care leavers is high, especially for those who find transition to independent living difficult.

The National Mental Health Development Unit (2010) highlights that behavioural problems caused by childhood trauma and abuse can make it difficult to achieve a successful transition, maintain accommodation, healthy relationships or sustain education or employment.

Trauma Recovery Model

Whilst the cohort of custody leavers has been decreasing, it is also one of increasing vulnerability and complexity. The need for psychologically informed approaches has been recognised in the Taylor Review, and the YJB has been successfully piloting the Trauma Recovery Model in Wales in the statutory sector (YOTs and more recently in secure estate)

Future 4 Me worked closely with the YJB Advisor with a view to implementing the model as part of the Future 4 Me project. The aim was to pilot the approach in the voluntary sector, but working across the “team around the young person” (i.e. involving all sectors), and to this end we commissioned a workshop in 2016 that brought together the voluntary sector, YOTs., leaving care services and YOI staff. Across all sectors and local authority areas (6 in total) regions there was unanimous enthusiasm for the need to take this work forwards, and The result of this was a 9 month, 7 case pilot of the Trauma Recovery Model with care leavers from 4 local authority areas.

Why Education and Work?

Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU, 2010) research into educational pathways of Bristol care leavers found the key to keeping doors open to be trusting relationships. One third of the care leavers could not identify anyone in their lives who had encouraged them with their education. TCRU found that critical for improving outcomes of care leavers is the need to create a sense of worth and belonging, opportunities for trusting relationships with adults, to push and motivate, to offer reliability and stability, to create a sense of community and, in the words of young people, to “be there”.

Watts, Johnsen & Sosenko (2015) Youth Homelessness in the UK: A review for The Ovo Foundation found that access to sustained employment was key in enabling young people to move on from homelessness.

Levels of exclusion of care leavers from employment and education are alarmingly high both regionally and nationally. For example, in Bristol 45% of Bristol care leavers (whom the LA were in touch with) were NEET in January 2016. Only 14% obtained five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and Mathematics (Ofsted, 2014). Nationally 18% of young people in foster care and just 3% of those in residential care achieve 5 GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths - compared to 58% of their peers.

Nationally 45% of care leavers aged between 19 and 21 years old were not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 13% of 18 year olds in the general population. (DofE, 2016)