



CARE LEAVERS' EMOTIONAL WELLBEING PROJECT

What we found out

& what we
should do
about it

A zine of findings and responses from care
leavers and those working in the sector

CARE LEAVER'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING PROJECT

Why did we do this project?

We carried out this project to find out more about what is available to support care leavers in England with their emotional wellbeing (how well people can process

their emotions and get through life's challenges and changes).

We know that local authorities (LAs) have a responsibility to provide care leavers between 18 and 25 with support, like making sure everyone has a Personal Adviser (PA).

However, there isn't any specific guidance from the government that says what emotional wellbeing support looks like. This makes it likely that LAs will be doing different things based on what they think is best and what they have the resources for.

We wanted to speak to a few LAs across England to understand what they do, and get examples of the kinds of support that can be put in place. We also wanted to know what can make it more or less difficult to access and use this support.

With a better idea about what good practice might be, and what could be improved, we can make recommendations to both LAs and the government about what should be put in place to best help care leavers.

local
authorities = LA

personal
adviser = PA

care leaver = any adult
who has spent time in
care



an ongoing battle for support

This zine was put together following a creative workshop, facilitated by Lu Williams, with care-experienced young people. Using a range of materials, we worked with the young people to create the images and art in the zine in response to our report. The zine depicts their thoughts and feelings on our research and recommendations, and what it could mean for those with lived experience of care. The images displayed throughout the zine were predominantly created by the young people and express their thoughts and reflections on the topic.



Zines are self-published, often handmade, mini magazines. They come from a long history of self-publishing, political pamphleting and fanzines. Today's zines are a way for people to publish their own voices and the voices of their community and write themselves into history.

At the end of this zine, there is a mini zine tutorial, where you can make an 8-page zine from one sheet of A3 or A4 paper. We hope you use this tutorial to kickstart making your own zine, reflecting on our findings.

NOT

LIKE

Tracy

Was you ever asked
if your experience
was like Tracy beaker?

What is the Funniest
Question that you
have been asked about
your care experience?

What is your favourite
part of being care
experienced?

What did we do?

★ We worked with five different LAs across the country (Liverpool, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Stockport, Surrey and Worcestershire) and carried out qualitative interviews with staff and care leavers in those areas.

★ In interviews, we asked people what support for emotional wellbeing was available in their area, what makes it difficult or easy for care leavers to access and take part in support, and what kind of support might be missing.

★ We did 37 interviews with staff, and nine with care leavers.

★ We analysed the data using "thematic analysis", where you look for patterns and agreements or disagreements in what people have said in interviews to understand people's overall experience across different areas.

★ When we finished analysing the data, we held a workshop with researchers, LA staff, care leavers and staff in relevant charities to discuss our findings.

★ We talked about whether the findings matched their experience, and they helped us think about recommendations that we should make based on our findings.

GOOD
MENTAL
HEALTH
IS
CARE

What Did We Find?

We've heard it all
before !!

Researchers

Care
Leavers

Professionals

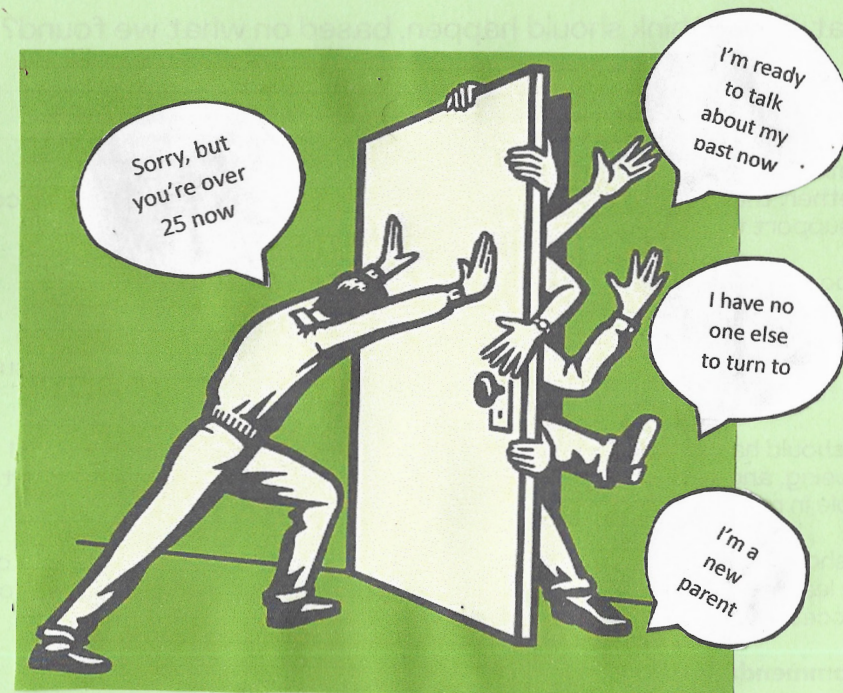
Policy
makers



Wellbeing needs

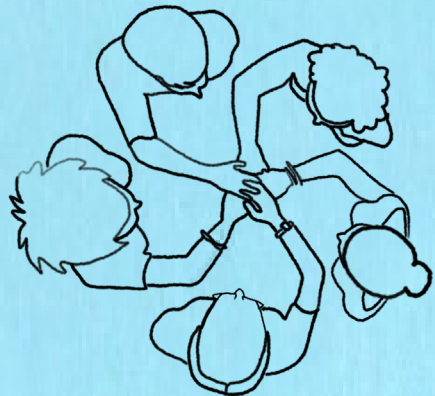
- ✿ Adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and isolation and loneliness, were felt to be the most common things that affected care leavers' emotional wellbeing.
- ✿ PAs often had to prioritise helping care leavers with their basic needs, like housing and money, and didn't always have enough time to help with emotional wellbeing.
- ✿ Some care leavers use drugs and self-harm to cope with low emotional wellbeing.

LEAVING BEHIND A
FOSTER CARER DOES
NOT EQUAL LEAVING
BEHIND EMOTIONAL NEEDS



“local authorities should have lists of all of the emotional wellbeing services available to care leavers in their area”

RELATIONSHIPS



MULTIPLE SUPPORTS
WORKING TOGETHER

Relationships

- Staff in LAs often felt that they were trying to fill the role of a parent for care leavers. This was difficult because they had limits to their time and their job role.
- PAs were key to helping care leavers access and use support services, so it was really important that they were trusted by care leavers.
- Care leavers had the challenge of building relationships with lots of different staff who they came into contact with. This could be difficult and might make accessing new services off-putting.

Transitions

- The transition from being under 18 to over 18 comes with a lot of practical change, and this can impact negatively on emotional wellbeing.
- Care leavers aren't always ready for emotional wellbeing support at the time that it's offered by the LA. For example, sometimes care leavers want as much independence as possible in their first few years of adulthood.
- Moving from health and social care services for children to adult health and social care services can be very difficult, and can lead to gaps in support at 18 when services change.
- Some LAs do have services that are designed to help the transition between child and adult services, but they often aren't suited to care leavers with lots of needs.

TRANSITIONS

LOST - NOT READY
TOO MUCH TO
HANDLE

OVER
WHELMED



TOO MUCH TO HANDLE

GETTING SUPPORT Challenges and Help

- ✿ Adult health and social care services don't have enough staff or funding, so waiting lists are very long, and it's difficult to get accepted into services.
- ✿ Services that focused on care leavers rather than general services were seen to be more flexible and easier for LA staff to work with.
- ✿ Services can be quite inflexible, so sometimes care leavers get discharged when they still need support.
- ✿ It was felt helpful for staff to treat young people as individuals and support them based on their own needs and experiences, as not all support worked well for everybody.
- ✿ Staff don't always have enough training to know how to help care leavers with their emotional wellbeing.
- ✿ Care leavers can find it difficult getting to appointments in services, and often don't know what's available to them.
- ✿ It was helpful if PAs could provide practical support and transport to help care leavers get to appointments, and if they could help care leavers understand how services worked.
- ✿ Care leavers sometimes felt that being a care leaver was stigmatising, and so didn't have confidence that they could get help.

CHALLENGES AND GETTING SUPPORT

- UNFLEXIBLE SERVICES
- NOT SUITABLE

RECOMMENDATIONS:
PAs SHOULD HAVE
A SMALLER
CASE LOAD

Equality, diversity and inclusion

- ✿ Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children were believed to face different practical challenges to other care leavers when they turned 18. There could be language barriers, and difficulties around making asylum claims.
- ✿ Staff in LAs and healthcare services sometimes didn't have much knowledge about diversity. This could lead to care leavers feeling dismissed, or not getting the right help.

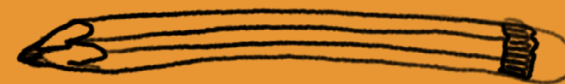
RECOMMENDATIONS

RESEARCH
MORE
RESEARCH
ON
minorities



POLICY

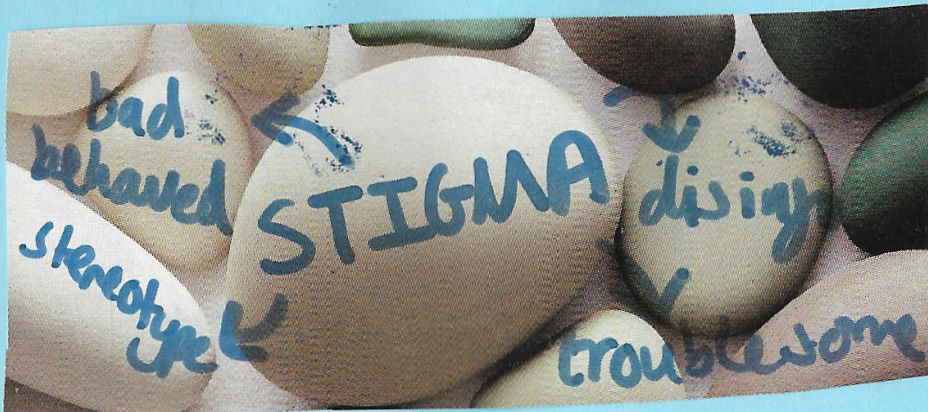
- MINIMUM STANDARDS OF SUPPORT



didn't always have enough time to help with emotional wellbeing.



Care leavers feeling dismissed, or not getting the right help.

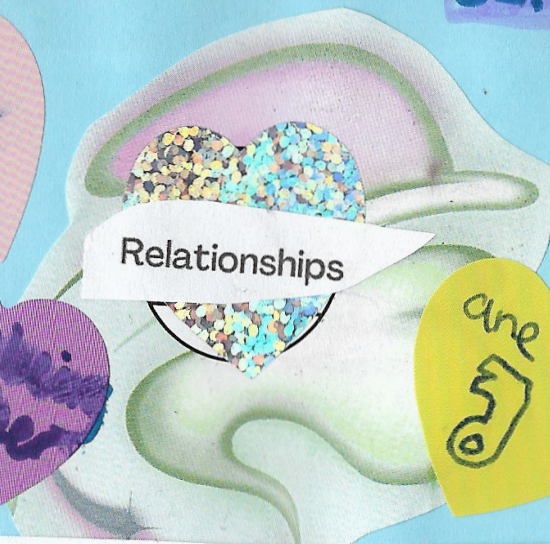
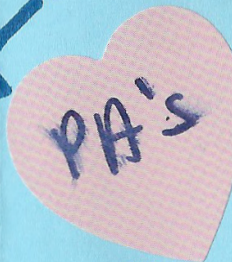


Care leavers sometimes felt that being a care leaver was stigmatising, and so didn't have confidence that they could get help.

Staff in LAs often felt that they were trying to fill the role of a parent for care leavers. This was difficult because they had limits to their time and their job role.

CHILD

WOULD YOU TREAT UR LIKE THIS ?



PAs were key to helping care leavers access and use support services, so it was really important that they were trusted by care leavers.

Adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and isolation and loneliness were felt to be the most common things that affected care leavers' emotional wellbeing.

What do we think should happen, based on what we found?

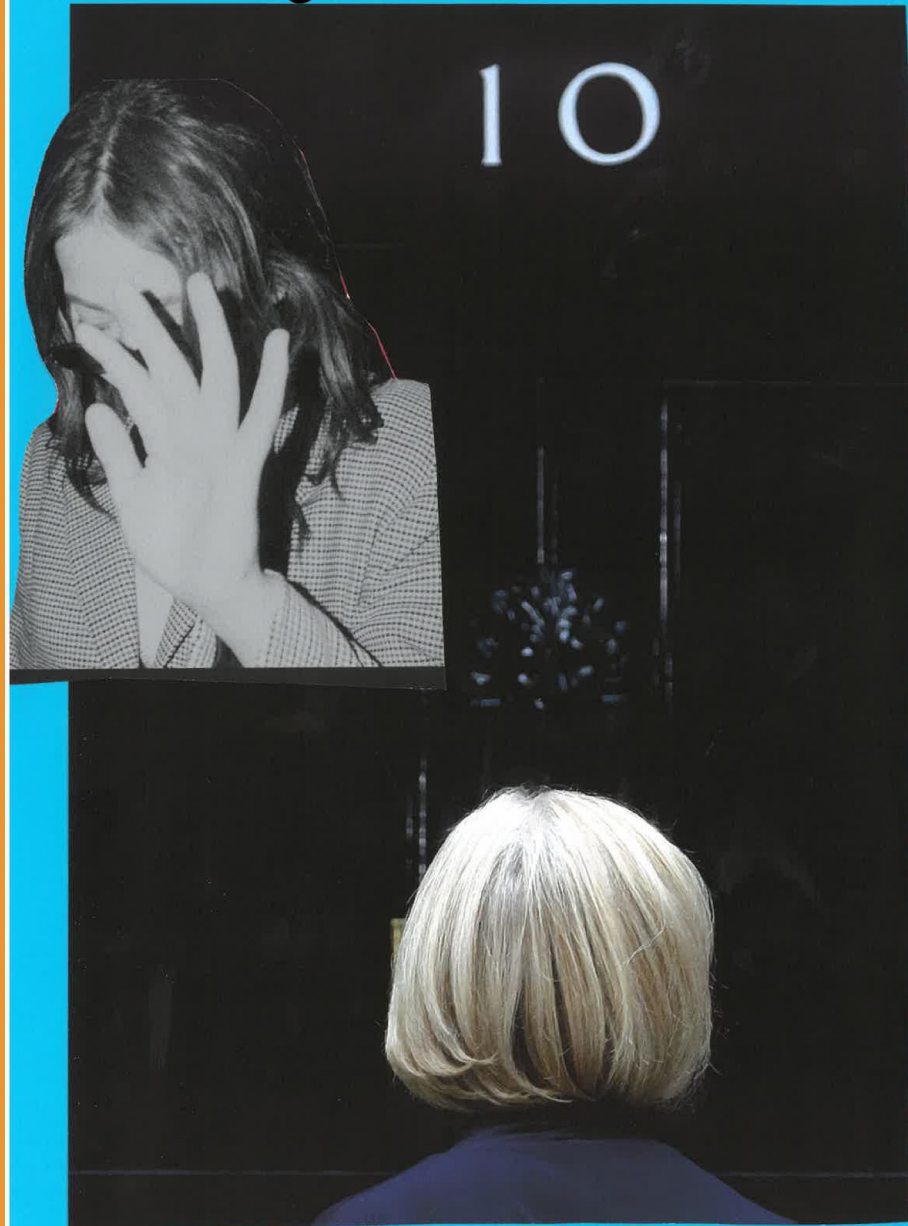
Recommendations to improve the way services work:

- LAs, the NHS and charities who support care leavers should try to work together better to avoid gaps in support and to make sure that all together, they are providing services that mean care leavers have choices for support that can meet all of their needs
- Support services should focus on helping care leavers have good, supportive relationships and not feel lonely
- PAs should have fewer care leavers to work with at one time, to make sure they have enough time to help everyone.
- PAs should have more training in how to help people with their emotional wellbeing, and training on how to understand the specific challenges that people in minorities might face.
- LAs should have lists of all of the emotional wellbeing services available to care leavers in their area, and keep these lists up-to-date. These lists should be accessible to anyone.

Recommendations for research:

- **Any support services that help care leavers with their emotional wellbeing should collect data to help them understand if they're having a positive impact.**
- **More research should be carried out to better understand how being in a minority group might impact on care leavers' emotional wellbeing.**

Policy must change!



Why aren't these findings surprising?

Recommendations for policy:

- ★ We should treat care leavers receiving support for basic needs (like money and housing) separately to their emotional wellbeing needs, so that both are prioritised.
- ★ There should be minimum standards for what emotional wellbeing help is provided by each LA.
- ★ Care leavers should be prioritised for general services like therapy and mentoring, and these services should be flexible.
- ★ LAs should collect data about their care leavers' emotional wellbeing to help them understand what help they should provide.
- ★ An independent organisation should make sure that LAs publish detailed and up-to-date lists of the support services that they have in their area.

WE ALL NEED SAFETY, CONNECTION AND HEALTHCARE

Especially
Especially
care leavers
who have
gone through
trauma



Especially
care leavers
who are
isolated
and lonely

Especially any ~~care leavers~~ have the need
Yet at present, care leavers are facing
barriers to accessing emotional support.

Symptoms include nightmares, chronic rewriting and crippling self-doubt.



breaking down



Image credit: Porter

Advocate for yourself!

DON'T MISS DEADLINES

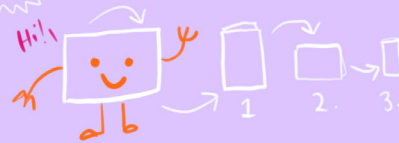
15 SECONDS



THE 4TH WALL
CREATING THE IDEAL

Make A Zine

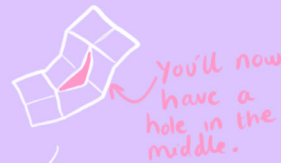
1. Fold an A4 or A3 paper in half, 3 times.



2. Unfold your paper 2 times.



3. Open your paper all the way.



4. Fold the paper in half, longways




and pinch each end.

5. Push your ends together.



6. Gather your pages up and fold in half.





This zine was created in collaboration with care-experienced people, researchers, and practitioners, as a response to our research project which explored what support is available for care leavers for their wellbeing.

You can read more about our findings here:
www.bit.ly/CLEWstudy

We'd like to thank all the young people and practitioners who took part in our research interviews for sharing their experiences, as well as those who took part in our creative workshop to make this zine possible. We'd also like to thank the peer researchers at the McPin Foundation who worked with us to produce the report, as well as the Department for Education for funding the research project.

