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Moving on from Care: The Need for, and Purpose of, Mentoring and Coaching Relationships with Supportive Adults

An Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

This document provides a short overview of the available literature surrounding adult-child mentoring and coaching relationships within the context of young people moving on from local-authority care. Whilst coaching and mentoring may be seen as distinct approaches, the literature around coaching is highly limited and the inclusion of the broader concept of mentoring ensures that relevant material has been identified. Set within the Scottish system, but drawing upon literature from an array of countries, the focus is on understanding the transitions of looked-after young people and exploring the role that mentoring relationships can play in these transitions. Written as part of an evaluation of Quarriers Coaching for Life service, the literature presented in this bibliography is selective. This enables an overview of the need for mentoring, the impact of mentoring, and the characteristics that young people desire and value in adult mentors. We have given preference to sources with a UK focus. However, it should be noted that substantial research from the United States of America is largely applicable to the Scottish context; for example, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters initiatives have been highly influential (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). For the purposes of this report, 'mentoring' is used as a blanket term to refer to all paid and unpaid adults who are routinely involved in the lives of young people for the purposes of support, guidance, and care.

We relied upon the expertise across CELCIS to select literature for this bibliography. Preference was given to material published after 2010, where interest in mentoring and coaching relationships began to increase in popularity, with some prominent literature before this time also included. We selected sources through a synthesis of other reports and a limited narrative review of emerging literature. In analysing the sources, three main themes naturally emerged. Using these themes, literature is presented under the following topics:

- The need for mentoring relationships between supportive adults and young people who have moved on from care, with a focus on whether mentoring improves expected outcomes for young people;
- An account of the characteristics and qualities that young people look for in their adult mentors. We hope that literature from this section can be drawn upon to improve mentoring practice, as well as the support and recruitment of mentors, and;
- The underpinning policy context, specifically as it relates to Scotland and, in some cases, the wider UK.

As this is an annotated bibliography, and not a full literature review, sources will be presented as follows:

- The author, year and title of each publication will be given, with the full reference available in the section titled 'References' at the end of this bibliography;
- The abstract or introductory information for each reference, copied verbatim from the original document;
- Each source will be accompanied by a short section titled 'Highlights', containing our interpretation of the main points from each paper, and;
- A short 'Our view' paragraph will be included, detailing the reason that we think each piece of literature is helpful in understanding mentoring and coaching relationships.

Additionally, each section will contain a short paragraph introducing the content and purpose of the papers discussed, with the final section of this report summarising the main arguments from the literature. We hope that by summarising the available literature, readers will be able identify and select sources most relevant to their work for further reading.

Following this Introduction, you will find a table which lists all of the sources used in this document and the theme that each source relates to, before the main content of the document begins.

Literature

Theme	Reference
The need for adult mentoring relationships with young care leavers	• Adley and Jupp Kina (2017) Getting Behind the Closed Door of Care Leavers: Understanding the Role of Emotional Support for Young People Leaving Care • Avery (2011) The Potential Contribution of Mentor Programs to Relational Permanency for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care • Collins, Spencer, and Ward (2010) Supporting Youth in the Transition from Foster Care: Formal and Informal Connections • Coyle and Pinkerton (2012) Leaving Care: The Need to Make Connections • DuBois et al. (2002) Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review • Johnson, Pryce, and Martinovich (2011) The Role of Therapeutic Mentoring in Enhancing Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care • Marion, Paulsen, and Goyette (2017) Relationships Matter: Understanding the Role and Impact of Social Networks at the Edge of Transition to Adulthood from Care • Spencer, Collins, Ward, and Smashnaya (2010) Mentoring for Young People Leaving Foster Care: Promise and Potential Pitfalls • Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink (2016) Natural Mentoring Among Older Youth in and Aging Out of Foster Care: A Systematic Review
The characteristics of effective mentors and mentoring relationships	• Colvin and Ashman (2010) Roles, Risks, and Benefits of Peer Mentoring Relationships in Higher Education • Gaskell (2010) 'If the Social Worker had Called at Least it Would Show they Cared'. Young Care leavers' Perspectives on the Importance of Care • Greeson and Bowen (2008) 'She Holds my Hand' The Experiences of Foster Youth with their Natural Mentors • Greeson, Thompson, Ali, and Wenger (2015) It's Good to Know that you got Somebody that's not Going Anywhere: Attitudes and Beliefs of Older Youth in Foster Care about Child Welfare-based Natural Mentoring • Höjer and Sjöblom (2014) Voices of 65 Young People Leaving Care in Sweden: 'There is so Much I Need to Know!' • Li and Julian (2012) Developmental Relationships as the Active Ingredient: A Unifying Working Hypothesis of "What Works" Across Intervention Settings • Lerpiniere, Welch, Young, Sadler, and Fitzpatrick (2015) Overseen but often Overlooked: Children and Young People 'Looked After at Home' in Scotland – Report 2: Identifying Needs and Outcomes • Sulimani-Aidan (2017) 'She was like a Mother and a Father to me': Searching for the Ideal Mentor for Youth in Care

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- Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, and Painter (2007) In Their Own Words: Challenges Facing Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Theme	Reference
The policy context	• Barnardo's (2014) Someone to Care: Experiences of Leaving Care • The Care Inquiry (2013) Making not Breaking: Building Relationships for our Most Vulnerable Children • HM Government (2016) Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence • Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2008) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland • Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2009) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland: One Year on – Is Life Any Sweeter? • Scottish Executive (2004) Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland: Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities • Scottish Government (2013) Staying Put Scotland: Providing Care Leavers with Connectedness and Belonging

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Part 1: The Need for Adult Mentoring Relationships with Young Care Leavers

The aim of this section is to outline the role that coaching and mentoring relationships can play for young people moving on from care, and to consider how the needs of care-leavers can be met by adult mentors. This is important for organisations which provide mentoring services, as evidence-based practice continues to be at the forefront of policy and implementation guidance. Following the examination of these relationships as important for care-leavers, this report will evaluate the characteristics of successful coaching or mentoring relationships in an attempt to inform future practice and recruitment processes. Finally, the policy context which situates mentoring relationships for care-leavers will also be addressed.

Below is a list of the literature included in this section, presented in alphabetical order:

- Adley and Jupp Kina (2017) Getting Behind the Closed Door of Care Leavers: Understanding the Role of Emotional Support for Young People Leaving Care
- Avery (2011) The Potential Contribution of Mentor Programs to Relational Permanency for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
- Collins et al. (2010) Supporting Youth in the Transition from Foster Care: Formal and Informal Connections
- Coyle and Pinkerton (2012) Leaving Care: The Need to Make Connections
- DuBois et al. (2002) Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review
- Johnson et al. (2011) The Role of Therapeutic Mentoring in Enhancing Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care
- Marion et al. (2017) Relationships Matter: Understanding the Role and Impact of Social Networks at the Edge of Transition to Adulthood from Care
- Spencer et al. (2010) Mentoring for Young People Leaving Foster Care: Promise and Potential Pitfalls
- Thompson et al. (2016) Natural Mentoring Among Older Youth in and Aging Out of Foster Care: A Systematic Review

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Adley and Jupp Kina (2017) Getting Behind the Closed Door of Care Leavers: Understanding the Role of Emotional Support for Young People Leaving Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

There have been significant changes in the legislative frameworks and guidance that surround social work practice with young people leaving the care system over the recent years. However, care leavers continue to face a range of challenges, achieve poor outcomes and research has consistently highlighted the insufficient attention paid to sources of emotional support. This paper provides empirical data from a small number of care leavers reflecting on their experiences of transitioning to independence. The findings provide further evidence of the lack of attention paid to emotional support by professionals and highlight the impact that this had on the young people's experiences. The young people identify their changing perceptions and needs as their experiences post-care change, the complex reasons for why they may have rejected offers of support and make key recommendations for practice. This paper provides valuable insight into the process of leaving the care system from the perspective of care leavers themselves and raises key questions that challenge the structure of the current support systems, the nature of the professional relationship with young people in care and the priorities of current policy initiatives.

Highlights

In examining the role of emotional support for young people leaving care, this paper addresses some of the shortfalls associated with the care system. The authors examine the support that young people receive when they move on from care, through the lens of care leavers themselves. The main arguments revolve around the need for professionals to better understand the role of support for care leavers, and to do more to provide information and advice on the support that is available. There is a suggestion that care leavers often feel unable or unwilling to accept support, and professionals need to do more to explore these issues.

Our view

Ultimately, this paper provides the views of young people who are living independently, highlighting powerful statements that demonstrate the need for adults who perform a 'mentoring' role in the transition from care to independence. These statements justify the work of mentoring services and situate the need for mentoring within the wider context of life challenges and supportive relationships.

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Avery (2011) The Potential Contribution of Mentor Programs to Relational Permanency for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

This article summarizes published research regarding the effectiveness of mentor programs in general, and for youth in foster care specifically, as a basis for evidence-based practice in child welfare. It examines the pros and cons of mentor programs and characteristics of programs that are more or less effective for achieving specific social goals. The author explores the opportunity cost of investments in transitional mentor programs versus efforts to find permanent parents for youth aging out of care, and concludes with practice and policy implications of these findings.

Highlights

Avery (2011) investigates the role that mentoring programmes play in providing relational permanency to young people leaving foster care. Despite taking an American focus and ending with recommendations that do not quite fit the British context, the article presented here suggests some interesting points of note where mentoring is concerned. The author argues that mentoring type relationships can help to achieve positive outcomes for young people leaving foster care. She advocates for relational commitments from adults in order for young people to move into independence, highlighting that such relational commitments will, at times, need to come from adults who are not parents.

Our view

The essence of the paper is that young people leaving care who have a mentor, fare better than those who do not. The article puts forward a number of arguments that support this line of thought and the author helpfully draws together existing literature in this area. It is arguments such as these which demonstrate the service gaps which young people currently face when on the precipice of leaving care, and the need for supportive relationships with informed adults.

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Collins et al. (2010) Supporting Youth in the Transition from Foster Care: Formal and Informal Connections

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Social support is needed by everyone, but particularly by vulnerable populations at times of transition. This study utilizes data collected from 96 former foster youth regarding supports they received during the transition from care. The report addresses three questions: (1) What types of supportive relationships did the sample report? (2) What are the characteristics of supportive relationships? (3) What is the relationship of social support to outcomes? Based on the analysis, the authors draw implications for intervention and research.

Highlights

This paper gives some insight into the role of mentors and their utility for young people leaving care. In examining the transitional process from foster care to independence, the authors highlight the need to understand better the role of mentors. Collins et al. (2010) appreciate the unique role of paid professional mentors and targeted interventions, but suggest that funding needs to be aligned with the services required. They demonstrate that mentors play an important role in the lives of young people, and that young people themselves recognise this role. The authors argue that mentors can decrease the likelihood of homelessness and incarceration, and can increase the likelihood of gaining educational qualifications. Additionally, the article gives consideration to the role of familial mentors, with the points presented in the paper suggesting that mentoring organisations need to do more to incorporate familial mentors into their work. Ultimately, the suggestion is that mentoring type relationships play a positive role in the lives of young people, a role that needs further understanding, but which should be encouraged.

Our view

This paper is an important piece documenting the views of young people who have moved on from foster care. Although the focus on foster care leavers alone can be quite restrictive, their first-hand accounts of types of relationships they have found to be supportive and the outcomes they have experienced as a result of those supportive relationships is extremely important. All adults in professions associated with mentoring or supporting young people moving on from care would benefit from reading their experiences.

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Coyle and Pinkerton (2012) Leaving Care: The Need to Make Connections

Introductory Information – Verbatim from text

For too many years the phrase ''after care, an after thought'' summed up the lack of attention given to preparing young people in care for adult life and to the development of leaving-care and aftercare services. That stance has changed in the United Kingdom, however, and indeed has shifted positively and dramatically over the last decade. In 2010 when the British social policy ''think tank'' Demos published its report on children in state care it highlighted three factors that made for positive experiences of care and best outcomes for looked-after children (Hannon et al., 2010, p. 9). Two of the factors were ''stability during care'' and ''early intervention and minimum delay''. The third was ''supported transitions to independence''. To illustrate best practice in that third area, the Demos report drew attention to what was being done in Northern Ireland (Hannon et al., 2010, pp. 213-219). We agree that ''supported transitions'' should be regarded as fundamental to the success of any out-of-home care system – although we see that as requiring appropriate forms of ''interdependence'' not ''independence''. We also agree that the advances that have been made in Northern Ireland to improving the leaving-care experience deserve recognition.

Highlights

This article provides an overview of the special issue of Child Care in Practice while outlining a number of important points regarding the services for young people in, and leaving, local authority care in Northern Ireland. In presenting an overview of each article in the Issue, the authors highlight the need for emotional connections between young people and the adults that care for them. They argue that moving on from care is as much about providing practical and financial support as it is forming and maintaining emotional bonds. Drawing on the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the paper ultimately highlights "the need for planned and properly managed preparation for leaving and supported aftercare" (p. 297).

Our View

Coyle and Pinkerton (2012) demonstrate the need for mentoring and coaching relationships for young people moving on from care. They draw upon a number of papers to highlight how practical and financial support is simply not enough. The assertion is that without emotional connections, young people leaving care are not effectively catered for when moving to independence. Therefore, mentoring and coaching relationships should strive to be both practical and emotional: mentors need to 'make connections' with their mentees in order to effectively fulfil their role in supporting vulnerable young adults.

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DuBois et al. (2002) Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review

Abstract – Verbatim from text

We used meta-analysis to review 55 evaluations of the effects of mentoring programs on youth. Overall, findings provide evidence of only a modest or small benefit of program participation for the average youth. Program effects are enhanced significantly, however, when greater numbers of both theory-based and empirically based "best practices" are utilized and when strong relationships are formed between mentors and youth. Youth from backgrounds of environmental risk and disadvantage appear most likely to benefit from participation in mentoring programs. Outcomes for youth at-risk due to personal vulnerabilities have varied substantially in relation to program characteristics, with a noteworthy potential evident for poorly implemented programs to actually have an adverse effect on such youth. Recommendations include greater adherence to guidelines for the design and implementation of effective mentoring programs as well as more in-depth assessment of relationship and contextual factors in the evaluation of programs.

Highlights

DuBois et al. (2002) take a statistical approach to analysing the effect that mentoring relationships have on young people leaving care. In doing so, they report that mentoring relationships have an overall average positive effect on young people's outcomes. They suggest that 'no single feature or characteristic of programs was indicated to be responsible for the positive trends in outcomes' (p. 187).

Our view

There is an indication in this piece that multiple aspects of mentoring programmes, from having an adult to spend time with, receiving emotional support, and knowing a responsible adult who can provide practical support, are necessary for mentoring or coaching services to succeed. Consequently, coaches and mentoring services should seek to provide a broad range of support to young people entering independence.

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Johnson et al. (2011) The Role of Therapeutic Mentoring in Enhancing Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Effective service interventions greatly enhance the well-being of foster youth. A study of 262 foster youth examined one such intervention, therapeutic mentoring. Results showed that mentored youth improved significantly in the areas of family and social functioning, school behavior, and recreational activities, as well as in the reduction of expressed symptoms of traumatic stress. Study results suggest that therapeutic mentoring shows promise for enhancing treatment interventions.

Highlights

This paper draws attention to the benefits of mentoring for young people who are currently in foster care. Johnson et al. (2011) demonstrate the usefulness of mentoring and the potential positive impacts that mentoring can have on young people moving on from care. The authors argue that mentoring has a positive impact on educational attainment, employment prospects, and psychosocial wellbeing. Additionally, they suggest that young people who are mentored for longer will experience increased positive effects than those who receive limited mentoring, again emphasising the importance of relational permanence.

Our view

The literature presented here demonstrates the need for mentors or coaches for young people with experiences of care, and the importance of the work that supportive adults do. The main arguments in the paper highlight that mentoring relationships with young people can prepare young people for independent living, with those relationships which last longer providing the best outcomes for young people. For adults directly working with young people, the research presented by Johnson et al. (2011) will be influential in informing practice.

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Marion et al. (2017) Relationships Matter: Understanding the Role and Impact of Social Networks at the Edge of Transition to Adulthood from Care

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

Several factors have recently contributed to a growing recognition that the transition to adulthood is an important and often stressful turning point in life. Transition is a multidimensional concept characterized by "change of stage, from one situation to another, from one period to another or from one status or role to another" (Gherghel and Saint-Jacques 2013, p. 18). The transition from youth to adulthood is characterized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, possibilities, and the feeling of being in between (Arnett 2006, 2007). It is also an age of increased independence and decreased parental support (Sulimani-Aidan 2015). Furthermore, it is a period characterized by the need for support and guidance from supportive adults (Paulsen and Berg 2016). Today, for most youth, traditional transition markers (for instance, completing an educational degree, finding employment and attaining financial independence, forming a family and moving to an independent dwelling) occur later than for previous generations (Bidart 2006; Furlong 2009; Molgat 2012). There has been a shift away from youth transition to adulthood being understood as a linear process directed towards conventional goals to an acknowledgement of the de-standardization of the transition process, which involves nonlinear and fragmented movements between dependence and independence, and individualized trajectories (Bidart 2006; Bynner 2005; Furlong et al. 2006; Molgat 2012; Rogers 2011). However, transition to adulthood appears to be different and more challenging for youths under state care and in out-of-home care facilities at the time of the transition, regardless of different countries' legislative contexts (Courtney and Dworsky 2006; Mendes et al. 2014; Stein 2008; Stein et al. 2011; Stott 2013).

Highlights

Overall, the indication from this paper is that young people leaving care rely on their social networks for a number of supportive issues. Where professional and formal support is provided, it should work alongside informal support. The suggestion is that professional support, such as mentoring relationships, is just as important as informal support. The conclusion is that more should be done to preserve the young person's relationship with their youth worker, as this can assist with young people's professional success. The authors highlight the need for improved consideration of each young person's social network and the role of this network in helping them move on from care.

Our view

Ultimately, although quite a wordy document, this is an interesting piece that highlights the issues young people face and some of the things that mentors and coaches should consider when working with young people. Taking the time to read the authors arguments in-depth will provide an interesting insight into the experiences of young people about to embark on independent living.

Spencer et al. (2010) Mentoring for Young People Leaving Foster Care: Promise and Potential Pitfalls

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Mentoring for youths transitioning out of the foster care system has been growing in popularity as mentoring programs have enjoyed unprecedented growth in recent years. However, the existing empirical literature on the conditions associated with more effective youth mentoring relationships and the potential for harm in their absence should give us pause, as meeting these conditions may be especially challenging when working with transitioning youths. Using the social work professional lens to examine the potential and challenges of mentoring approaches for foster care youths, the authors review the literature on the effectiveness of youth mentoring programs and on the psychosocial outcomes and needs of youths leaving foster care. They offer a set of considerations for maximizing the potential benefits of mentoring for transitioning youths. The authors suggest that although mentoring may serve as an important component of a larger complement of services for transitioning youths, an individual-level intervention such as this does not eliminate the need for more systemic action to meet the many needs of these vulnerable youths.

Highlights

As the title of this paper suggests, Spencer et al. (2010) seek to understand the benefits and potential downsides of adult mentoring type relationships for young people moving on from care. They argue that when mentoring is done well, it could help to meet some of the critical needs of young people transitioning out of foster care. Nonetheless, they indicate that many young people moving on from care have complex needs and heightened vulnerabilities, meaning that mentoring services should proceed with caution. Services need to protect young people from further rejection and disappointment, and so should only engage in adult mentoring or coaching relationships when these relationships are freely available and able to endure over time. Consequently, individual coaches and mentoring services need to be committed to providing support to young people entering independence, and they should make accommodations to do so for as long as is required.

Our view

The arguments presented by Spencer et al. (2010) demonstrate the positive impact that mentoring relationships have for young people on the precipice of leaving care. However, they also caution against embarking on mentoring relationships which will be short-lived. As such, there are indications that mentoring services need to be prepared to offer on-going care for as long as is necessary, rather than time-limited interventions.

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Thompson et al. (2016) Natural Mentoring Among Older Youth in and Aging Out of Foster Care: A Systematic Review

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Due to their histories of caregiver maltreatment, living instability, and potential attachment challenges associated with out-of-home care, older foster youth represent a particularly vulnerable group of adolescents at increased risk for a number of poor well-being outcomes. However, research supports the notion that a relationship with a competent, caring adult, such as a mentor, may serve protectively for vulnerable youth, and a nascent yet growing body of literature suggests that naturally occurring mentoring relationships from within youth's social networks are associated with improved outcomes among young people in foster care during adolescence and the transition to adulthood. This systematic review is the first to comprehensively identify, synthesize, and summarize what we currently know from nearly a decade of theories, concepts, and research findings pertaining to natural mentoring among adolescent youth in foster care. A bibliographic search of seven databases and personal outreach to mentoring researchers and practitioners through a national listserv yielded 38 English-language documents from academic sources and the gray literature pertaining to natural mentoring among older foster youth. We identified quantitative studies that have been conducted to test the theories and hypotheses that have emerged from the qualitative studies of natural mentoring among youth in foster care. Together, this literature suggests that natural mentoring is a promising practice for youth in foster care. Based on our findings from the systematic review, we make practice recommendations to encourage the facilitation of natural mentoring within child welfare contexts and outline an agenda for future research that more rigorously investigates natural mentoring among older youth in foster care.

Highlights

As a systematic review, this paper gives a good overview of current debates and perspectives around 'natural mentoring' and its usefulness in providing support for young people moving on from foster placements. Although coaches and mentors may not always be 'natural' mentors, the indication is that support from a non-parental adult is important in providing young people with the information and guidance that they need in order to achieve 'positive outcomes' as adults.

Our view

The paper leaves the reader with some interesting thoughts regarding the impact and role of mentors, as well as the characteristics of an effective coach or mentor. Additionally, the list of Findings (see Tables 1 and 2) provides a useful overview of additional literature in this area, and demonstrates the growing awareness of the impact that mentoring and coaching can have on young people. As a vessel which provides the reader with access to information from even more sources, we recommend reading this paper and the literature it makes reference to.

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Part 2: The Characteristics of Effective Mentors and Mentoring Relationships

In the section above, the need for relationships between adults and young people moving on from care has been established. This literature provides much of the groundwork for mentoring or coaching services which seek to demonstrate the need for young people to engage with a supportive adult and the usefulness of services which seek to provide these relationships for young people. However, it is also important to consider the characteristics of successful mentoring and coaching relationships. In addressing this area of work, preference is given to literature that engages directly with care-experienced young people and staff members who provide mentoring or coaching support to young people. We hope that these perspectives will provide coaches and mentors with additional practice-based information and an underpinning rationale for their services.

The following literature is included in this section:

- Colvin and Ashman (2010) Roles, Risks, and Benefits of Peer Mentoring Relationships in Higher Education
- Gaskell (2010) 'If the Social Worker had Called at Least it Would Show they Cared'. Young Care leavers' Perspectives on the Importance of Care
- Greeson and Bowen (2008) 'She Holds my Hand' The Experiences of Foster Youth with their Natural Mentors
- Greeson et al. (2015) It's Good to Know that you got Somebody that's not Going Anywhere: Attitudes and Beliefs of Older Youth in Foster Care about Child Welfare-based Natural Mentoring
- Höjer and Sjöblom (2014) Voices of 65 Young People Leaving Care in Sweden: 'There is so Much I Need to Know!'
- Li and Julian (2012) Developmental Relationships as the Active Ingredient: A Unifying Working Hypothesis of "What Works" Across Intervention Settings
- Lerpiniere et al. (2015) Overseen but often Overlooked: Children and Young People 'Looked After at Home' in Scotland – Report 2: Identifying Needs and Outcomes
- Sulimani-Aidan (2017) 'She was like a Mother and a Father to me': Searching for the Ideal Mentor for Youth in Care
- Scannapieco et al. (2007) In Their Own Words: Challenges Facing Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Colvin and Ashman (2010) Roles, Risks, and Benefits of Peer Mentoring Relationships in Higher Education

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Successful peer mentoring in university settings is the result of relationships among students, mentors, and instructors. Findings from this study indicate that even in programs where training is ongoing and established, assumptions cannot be made about the understanding of the roles, risks, and benefits involved in such relationships. This study demonstrates that students, instructors, and mentors all have different perspectives about a mentor's role and how that role should be enacted. Connecting link, peer leader, learning coach, student advocate, and trusted friend were identified as predominant roles enacted by mentors. Also described are risks and benefits for being or having a peer mentor.

Highlights

This article draws upon peer mentoring relationships for young adults in education to examine the roles, risks and benefits of mentors and coaches. Colvin and Ashman (2010) discuss the roles that mentors had in a western university of the United States of America, with a programme which focused on helping students and training peer mentors in academic classes. They identified five roles of mentors (including a 'connecting link' and trusted friend), benefits ranging from individual gains to improvements in the whole campus, and risks and challenges which included infrequent use of mentors and unfamiliarity with the process and relationship. With these findings in mind, mentors and coaches would benefit from: considering how they can make their roles more clear and useful; ensuring that they regularly connect with the young people they mentor, and; making the time to be a trusted friend or advocate to the young people they support.

Our view

Although the focus here is on education and peer mentors, rather than care settings or young people moving on from care and adult mentors, the arguments made by Colvin and Ashman (2010) are largely relevant for adults who take on a mentoring or coaching role with young people. The authors suggest that being clear about the roles and responsibilities of mentors is an important aspect in successful mentoring relationships. With this in mind, we believe that the paper presented here provides an interesting overview of mentoring, including the benefits and risks of mentoring, which would be useful for mentors and coaches to consider.

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Gaskell (2010) 'If the Social Worker had Called at Least it Would Show they Cared'. Young Care leavers' Perspectives on the Importance of Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Young people leaving local authority care are frequently discussed in terms of being socially excluded and having 'poor life outcomes'. In terms of educational achievement, employment and involvement in the criminal justice system, those with an experience of the care system fare the worst. Within the context of these poor outcomes, the Government Green Paper 'Care Matters' has emerged. However, the Green Paper's outcomes framework for looked after children's well-being risks simplifying the complex nature of children's experiences and needs. It is children's experiences of care, both before entering the care system and whilst growing up within the care system that shapes their well-being and their life outcomes. The basis of improving children's outcomes should include listening to and understanding what children need from the care system. This knowledge helps to develop an understanding of how failings within the care system are experienced by children in care and how these experiences are subsequently translated into negative outcomes for young care leavers. Drawing upon qualitative, empirical data, this study aims to explore young care leavers' experiences of care. Through this, the extent to which feelings of care shape self esteem and a sense of self will be explored. Finally, this study will outline themes of trust and stability in the provision of care services and how these can shape positive outcomes for care leavers.

Highlights

The potential of this paper to influence the work of mentors and coaches is limited, as the focus of Gaskell's work is not mentoring, specifically. However, the author highlights a number of issues, wants, and desires of young people transitioning from care to adulthood. She argues that young people want to be heard, included, and trusted in decision making processes, but they also want to be cared for and listened to by the adults around them.

Our view

When this article was produced (2010), it provided an indication that something is 'missing' from care and leaving care practices. Nonetheless, what is apparent is the argument that care leavers face a number of issues for various reasons, and that the views of young people about to leave and/or who have just left care need to be taken into consideration when tackling these issues. As such, the views expressed here provide support for promoting adult-and-young person mentoring relationships.

Greeson and Bowen (2008) 'She Holds my Hand' The Experiences of Foster Youth with their Natural Mentors

Abstract – Verbatim from text

The vulnerability and adversity that youth frequently experience following aging out of foster care are well-documented. However, much less is known about the positive experiences and healthy relationships that may buffer these youth from the negative outcomes following emancipation. Utilizing a strengths perspective, this exploratory study gathered qualitative data about the experiences of older foster youth with their natural mentors. Although other at-risk and marginalized groups are represented in the natural mentoring literature, representation of female foster youth of color is scarce. Seven female foster youth of color were individually interviewed using a semi-structured protocol. Data were analyzed using the grounded theory approach. Key themes identified included: (1) relationship characteristics that matter, (2) support I receive, (3) how I've changed, (4) thoughts on my future, and (5) what I think about foster care. Implications for practice are discussed.

Highlights

The study reported here focuses on the role of natural mentoring for young women of colour in foster care settings. Although the focus of this bibliography is primarily on mentoring and coaching care leavers, the views presented here suggest a number of characteristics of mentors that can be applied to the work of relevant mentoring services. The main arguments suggest that mentors should be trustworthy and caring, and provide both practical and emotional support to young people.

Our view

There is an acknowledgment in this paper that natural mentors differ from professional mentors, however, the authors accept that both types of relationships can be significant for young people transitioning out of care settings. Coaches and mentors could consider their role in the lives of young people and reflect on their practice, incorporating some of the suggestions outlined here in their daily work.

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Greeson et al. (2015) It's Good to Know that you got Somebody that's not Going Anywhere: Attitudes and Beliefs of Older Youth in Foster Care about Child Welfare-based Natural Mentoring

Abstract – Verbatim from text

This exploratory study is the first to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of older adolescents in foster care toward the implementation of a child welfare-based natural mentoring intervention designed to promote enduring, growth-fostering relationships between youth at risk of emancipation and caring, supportive nonparental adults from within the youth's existing social network. Six focus groups were conducted with 17 older youth in foster care attending a specialized charter high school for young people in out-of-home care in a large, urban city in the Northeast United States. Focus group data were transcribed and analyzed using a conventional content analysis approach. The following significant themes emerged related to natural mentoring for older foster youth emancipating from care: (1) need for permanent relationships with caring adults, (2) youth conceptions of natural mentoring, (3) unique challenges related to natural mentoring for youth in foster care, (4) role of a natural mentoring intervention in child welfare, and (5) challenges for implementing a child welfare-based natural mentoring intervention. Overall, our findings suggest that these young people are cautiously optimistic about the potential of a child welfare-based natural mentoring intervention to promote their social and emotional wellbeing. Future studies are needed to better understand the experiences of older foster youth with an actual natural mentoring intervention, including challenges, opportunities, and outcomes.

Highlights

This article does a good job of summarising the views of young people who engage with natural mentoring relationships. As stated previously, although natural mentoring does not reflect all coaching and mentoring situations, the characteristics of effective mentors and the needs of the young people discussed in the paper are very insightful for services seeking to support young people moving to independence.

Our view

We believe that incorporating the findings of this article into practice helps recognise the perspectives of young people and could benefit young people, staff members, and mentoring services. Readers are, therefore, encouraged to engage with the work of Greeson et al. (2015) and consider its influence on their everyday practice.

Höjer and Sjöblom (2014) Voices of 65 Young People Leaving Care in Sweden: 'There is so Much I Need to Know!'

Abstract – Verbatim from text

The purpose of this study is to examine young care leavers' experiences of supportive and nonsupportive factors after leaving care. Telephone interviews were conducted with 65 young people, between 18 and 26 years old, who had left care in Sweden within the previous 3 months to 3 years. The care-leaving process was in many cases described by the young people as badly planned and compressed. Some interviewees received support from the formal network (social services, foster carers, residential homes, contact persons) for housing (37) and financial matters (36), but few received support from the formal network concerning employment (14) and education (11). Emotional support was mainly provided by partners and friends. Altogether, the results suggest that access to support is a helpful factor for young people leaving care, but also that many of our interviewees had no such access, from neither formal nor informal networks.

Highlights

This paper offers insights into what it is like to be a young person leaving care and demonstrates an understanding of what young people report needing when they leave care. The article provides ample opportunity for coaching and mentoring services to reflect on their practice and consider how they can meet the demands of young people leaving care. The paper highlights that young people want emotional, financial, and practical support, which they may be receiving from other places, but which should be offered from all places. There is also an indication that administrative processes can impede the access that young have to support, and services should consider the role of administrative processes in their daily work.

Our view

Overall, the work of Höjer and Sjöblom is interesting, and highlights the issues care leavers face while offering some advice for overcoming these issues. Although the research takes a Swedish perspective, many of the points raised relate to Scottish practice. Ultimately, taking the time to peruse the perspective of care leavers internationally often raises many similarities in experience. The research presented in this paper is no exception.

Li and Julian (2012) Developmental Relationships as the Active Ingredient: A Unifying Working Hypothesis of "What Works" Across Intervention Settings

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Developmental relationships are characterized by reciprocal human interactions that embody an enduring emotional attachment, progressively more complex patterns of joint activity, and a balance of power that gradually shifts from the developed person in favor of the developing person. We propose the working hypothesis that developmental relationships constitute the active ingredient of effective interventions serving at-risk children and youth across settings. In the absence of developmental relationships, other intervention elements yield diminished or minimal returns. Scaled-up programs and policies serving children and youth often fall short of their potential impact when their designs or implementation drift towards manipulating other ―inactive‖ ingredients (e.g., incentive, accountability, curricula) instead of directly promoting developmental relationships. Using empirical studies as case examples, we demonstrate that the presence or absence of developmental relationships distinguishes effective and ineffective interventions for diverse populations across developmental settings. We conclude that developmental relationships are the foundational metric with which to judge the quality and forecast the impact of interventions for at-risk children and youth. It is both critical and possible to give foremost considerations to whether our program, practice, and policy decisions promote or hinder developmental relationships amongst those who are served and those who serve.

Highlights

Li and Julian (2012) present an interesting argument for developmental relationships across various intervention settings, such as institutional out-of-home placements, education, and leaving care support. They argue that traditional interventions focus on 'evidence-based' practice and 'system building' approaches. In doing so, these interventions attend to practical support and services, such as tackling poverty, criminal activity and unemployment. However, Li and Julian (2012) suggest taking an alternative developmental relationships approach, whereby relationships, in the form of emotional connections and interactions, form the basis of interventions. They use four case studies: one of orphanages; one of school classrooms; one of home visiting programmes, and; one of mentoring services. In these case studies, they argue that the lack of developmental relationships was detrimental to young people, and the presence of developmental relationships was beneficial to young people.

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Our view

We feel that this paper is a useful overview of the need for relationships as well as practical support. Given the benefits of developmental relationships, mentors and coaches should seek to incorporate them into everyday mentoring practices in order for young people moving to independence to gain the most from the services that they access. In presenting their arguments, Li and Julian (2012) passionately advocate for the unique relationships between young people and adults, whilst highlighting how natural these relationships can be. Their discussion demonstrates how 'missing' relationships, such as the kind that young people in care settings might not experience, can be detrimental to young people. If mentors and coaches address these 'missing' relationships and take a developmental relationships approach to their work, young people would surely benefit.

Lerpiniere et al. (2015) Overseen but often Overlooked: Children and Young People 'Looked After at Home' in Scotland – Report 2: Identifying Needs and Outcomes

Abstract – Verbatim from text

More than 5,000 children and young people are looked after at home in Scotland; this represents around a third of all looked after children. Children and young people looked after at home are subject to a compulsory supervision order, but without a requirement to be placed in a particular setting (such as kinship care, foster care, residential care, etc). This type of legal supervision order is unique to the Scottish system of child legislation, children who are supervised in this way are 'looked after' by a local authority whilst still living at home with a parent or relevant person. Home supervision has been used since the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, a period of more than forty years. Despite this long history and extensive use, little is known about home supervision or the experiences of the children who are subject to this intervention. This study seeks to begin to remedy this situation. The study covers considerable ground, and so, a decision was taken to report the findings in three separate reports:

• Report 1 in this series reports the findings of a literature review undertaken to identify what research has been conducted into the unique needs, outcomes and experiences of children and young people looked after at home.

• This document is Report 2; it focuses on what we learned about the needs and outcomes of children and young people on home supervision and compares this to what was found in the literature review. This report also provides the background to the study and describes the methods used in the primary research.

• Report 3 in the series explores what we learned about the current provision of services to this group of children and young people looked after at home and considers how these relate to findings in the previous two reports.

Highlights

As the second of three reports in a series focused on looked after children and young people at home in Scotland, the research documented by Lerpiniere et al. (2015) focuses on gaining the views of service providers, young people, and their families. Section 4 of the report is of particular interest, as it documents the views of children and young people. Among the main arguments, the report highlights that: positive relationships with workers better enable the young people to benefit from the services offered; the absence of positive relationships can have a negative impact on engagement with services; flexible, relaxed and more informal approaches to service delivery made it easier to build trusting and respectful relationships; being ready to offer support when it is needed is something young people desire from services, and; young people needed to be consulted when deciding who they would work with.

Our view

For mentoring and coaching relationships, Overseen but often Overlooked – Report 2 provides an interesting insight into the unique challenges associated with being looked after at home in Scotland. The views of young people in the report demonstrate their desire to be included in decision-making processes and consulted when determining their needs. Although not specifically about mentoring, they report highlights how mentors and coaches can better consider the needs of young people in their everyday work and accommodate their suggestions in practice.

Scannapieco et al. (2007) In Their Own Words: Challenges Facing Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Since 1999 there has been a renewed effort addressing the challenges youth face exiting foster care in adolescence, yet outcomes for most youth are still indicating heartbreaking results and it is still not clear what more is needed. Presented is a study addressing what is needed for successful transition. Three major themes emerged; youth focused practice, need for collaboration and better communication with youth, and unmet needs and permanent connections.

Highlights

This article does a good job of outlining some of the roles and responsibilities of workers supporting young people transitioning out of care. The authors highlight the need for 'caseworkers' to respond to young people with youth focused practice, collaboration and/or better communication, and permanent connections. The article contains a number of suggestions that could aid coaches and mentoring services who seek to support young people. These suggestions consist of: including young people in decision-making; facilitating relationship building and maintenance, and; communicating better with young people and those around them. In taking these suggestions into account, coaches and mentors could improve on current practice or better understand the rationale behind the services they deliver.

Our view

Taking the time to read this paper would benefit anyone who works as a mentor or supportive adult, or who designs and oversees mentoring programmes with young people moving on from care. The views presented highlight the difficulties that young people face when they prepare to leave their care placements, whilst giving suggestions on how to overcome these difficulties.

Sulimani-Aidan (2017) 'She was like a Mother and a Father to me': Searching for the Ideal Mentor for Youth in Care

Abstract – Verbatim from text

Recent studies of youth in out-of-home placements have indicated that a successful mentoring relationship in care is associated with better emotional, educational and behavioural outcomes in adulthood. The goal of this exploratory qualitative study is to describe the profile of a staff member who is able to establish a meaningful relationship with youth in care through the perspectives of 20 young adults aged 21–26 who left care in Israel. Findings revealed that the staff member who formed meaningful relationships with youth was the staff member who was available to the youth and familiar with their personal backgrounds, who was able to see them as positive and trustworthy and to provide guidance and support from a non-judgmental approach. One of the study's conclusions is that staff members who were able to transform their connection with the youth into mentoring relationships were those who were able to make the youth feel as if they were the staff member's own children, and as a result feel cared for deeply and loved. The discussion addresses the barriers in forming a mentoring relationship with a formal professional and the ways to utilize these mentoring relationship components more effectively within the care system.

Highlights

This paper is a good exploration of the qualities that young people think mentors need. The paper highlights many qualities that coaches and mentors should possess if they wish to develop the most positive mentoring relationships with the young people they support. With the views of young people clearly highlighted, the author does well to argue for more supportive relationships with mentoring adults and to demonstrate the reasons that young people require these.

Our view

Despite focusing on staff members in out-of-home group care, the qualities discussed are just as applicable to mentors that support all young people who have moved on from care. It is important to note that some of the qualities, such as staff member background, are not easily applied to daily work and recruitment techniques. However, the main arguments made can provide valuable insights for mentors and mentoring services looking to make the most of their roles in the lives of young people.

Part 3: The Policy Context

In exploring the use and impact of mentoring and coaching with young people moving on from care, one must also consider the policy context in which this mentoring occurs. More specifically, there is a need to examine policy guidance that encourages support for young people moving on from care. With the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, support for care experienced young people was extended to 26 years old, with provisions put in place to allow young people to remain in their existing care placements until 21 years old. The impact of this provision requires local authorities to continue providing aftercare services to children and young people once they move on from their care setting. As such, arguments can be made that legislative support for mentoring services in Scotland is increasing. Aside from the 2014 Act, local authorities have access to a wealth of information and guidance regarding the support of care-experienced young people. We present some key pieces of that information and guidance here, setting the scene for discussions on the need for mentoring and the characteristics of effective mentors.

The literature included in this section is as follows:

- Barnardo's (2014) Someone to Care: Experiences of Leaving Care
- The Care Inquiry (2013) Making not Breaking: Building Relationships for our Most Vulnerable Children
- HM Government (2016) Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence
- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2008) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland
- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2009) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland: One Year on – Is Life Any Sweeter?
- Scottish Executive (2004) Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland: Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities
- Scottish Government (2013) Staying Put Scotland: Providing Care Leavers with Connectedness and Belonging

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Barnardo's (2014) Someone to Care: Experiences of Leaving Care

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

'You need some supporters' said Nicola, a 20 year old care leaver moving into her own home in an unfamiliar area of Liverpool. Although her parents and other adults in her life had let her down, her tenancy support worker was a steadfast presence, providing reliable care that went well beyond the practicalities of the housing issues that were his remit. To her he was '*like my daddy, mummy, uncle and cousin*'.

We have hopeful expectations for our own children, which children leaving care often have to live without. Without suitable parental support, these young people risk having a difficult transition into adult life.

This report, based on research with care leavers, contrasts the emotional circumstances they experience with the expectations we have for our own children, and looks at some of the ways in which Barnardo's is supporting care leavers.

Throughout our research, we found support workers who went the extra mile to offer stressed, and sometimes unpredictable, young people a listening ear, a reliable presence and constant encouragement in the same way parents support their own youngsters.

Highlights

Someone to Care uses the voices of young people to advocate for further support, care, and guidance once a young person moves on from care. The document illustrates the need for at least one supportive adult to continue engaging with each young person as they move on to independence. Someone to Care argues that while great strides have been made to encourage young people to remain in their care setting for longer, sometimes this is not possible. Where this is the case, the paper suggests that services should be provided to support young people through both practical and emotional difficulties that can occur when moving on from care.

Our view

Drawing on the work of Barnardo's, Someone to Care demonstrates how support workers – or coaches or mentors – can provide emotional and practical support to young people who 'often lack the family support that most teenagers take for granted' (p. 2). With testimonials from young people which highlight the need for this support, this document is a useful piece of literature that displays the need for committed approaches.

The Care Inquiry (2013) Making not Breaking: Building Relationships for our Most Vulnerable Children

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

The Care Inquiry set out to investigate how best to provide stable and permanent homes for vulnerable children in England who – as a temporary or permanent measure – cannot live with their parents. We wanted to explore all the options that have a role to play in this: return home, kinship care, adoption, foster care, special guardianship and residential care.

Inquiry activities included several sessions with a broad range of participants with direct experience of care or the work of the care system. We also ran a consultation exercise with young people, facilitated a review of the research evidence by an academic group, responded to queries and submissions, and used social media to encourage a wide interest in the issues we were discussing.

Our main conclusion – from all that we heard and learnt – is that 'permanence' for children means 'security, stability, love and a strong sense of identity and belonging'. This is not connected to legal status, and one route to permanence is not necessarily better than any other: each option is the right one for some children and young people. Adoption, although right for some children, will only ever provide permanence for a small number of children in care.

Highlights

Making not Breaking sets out the purpose and findings of the Care Inquiry, detailing the work that had been undertaken and the implication for future policy and practice. One of the main findings of the report highlight the need for a more flexible approach to providing care for young people who cannot live with their parents, either temporarily or permanently. With a view to encouraging and achieving permanence, *Making not Breaking* argues that permanence involves achieving security, stability, love and a strong sense of identity and belonging (see above). These visions of permanence include providing care leavers with continued support and ensuring that relationships are at the heart of this support.

Our view

As stated in the report "continuity of relationships is essential in helping children to construct their identity and to develop a strong sense of belonging" (p. 9). Consequently, although *Making not Breaking* focuses more on permanence and providing appropriate care for young people whilst they are looked-after, many of the findings and recommendations also apply to those young people moving on from care. As such, the document is well situated to aid the work of Quarriers.

HM Government (2016) Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

The government is passionate about improving the lives and life chances of care leavers. Young people leaving care constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, and both government and wider society have a moral obligation to give them the support they need as they make the transition to adulthood and independent living.

There has been much good work done over the past few years to improve that support, including the actions set out in the first cross-government care leaver strategy published in 2013, and the introduction of the Staying Put duty in 2014, which is already helping many care leavers to continue living with their former foster carers beyond age 18.

However, outcomes for care leavers remain much worse than for their counterparts in the general population and the quality of leaving care services provided by local authorities remains variable. The care leaver cohort is also changing, as more children enter care at age 16 and over, and with more unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) entering the care system. These changes present new challenges for service providers.

This document sets out a vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society.

Highlights

Although taking a wider UK approach, rather than Scotland specific, this document sets out a number of guidelines for corporate parents to follow when young people move on from care. These include expanding entitlements to age 25, somewhat in-line with Scotland, and providing stability so that care leavers feel safe and secure. In recognising the pressure that current children's social services face, the document outlines the opportunities for, and roles of, more diverse children's social care organisations while developing new ways to support care leavers. The main goals of Keep on Caring are to improve outcomes for young people leaving care and to make corporate parenting everyone's responsibility.

Our view

With particular relevance to this bibliography, the document recognises that some young people are already receiving great aftercare support from their Personal Adviser, who performs a role similar to that of mentors, and a commitment to extending that support. Overall, Keep on Caring indicates a need to provide care leavers with ongoing support, whilst acknowledging that provision of this support can be achieved in a variety of ways by a range of provider types.

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Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2008) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

This report shows that many young people in Scotland are leaving care aged 16 or 17, when they are not ready to face the challenges this presents. Problems include getting into rent arrears, becoming involved with drugs/alcohol, difficulties with neighbours, threat of eviction which sometimes leads to homelessness, and difficulties sustaining education.

This report involved desk research as well as:

A review of information from all 32 local authorities about their policies and material about leaving care;

Interviews and focus groups in 13 local authority areas. (These involved a total of 85 people: 54 young people and 31 workers. Half of the young people were still in care and half had left care); and

More extensive work in two areas (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Highland), involving meetings with representatives of those authorities.

Highlights

Sweet 16? argues that looked after young people enter independent living earlier than their peers in the general population, due to a strong culture which normalises 16 as being the age to leave care. These young people have additional needs for support and guidance, based on their age and documented lack of preparedness. The research presented in *Sweet 16?* highlights the conflicting need for support and independence, alongside a system which needs to be more prepared to continue looking after young people after 16 years of age.

Our view

Although there is no specific mention of coaching or mentoring for young people in the document, there is a clear argument for continued provision of services for young people living independently, or on the precipice of doing so. Given the testimonials from young people and staff members who took part in the research, it seems likely that the support needed could be provided by coaching or mentoring services. This support could help to curb the issues identified in the introduction to *Sweet 16?* (see above).

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2009) Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland: One Year on – Is Life Any Sweeter?

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

On 25 March 2008, I laid before the Scottish Parliament a report called Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland. It was debated on 25 June 2008. MSPs from all parties spoke in favour of the report; it was an encouraging sign of genuine interest and concern. The Scottish Government has responded positively to most of the report's recommendations, which are attached as an appendix to this paper, together with a short summary of the full report.

Agencies too have welcomed the report and I have heard how it has been used: to change local policies; to train workers, using the case studies in the report; to challenge funding cuts; and to advocate for individual young people. However, I wanted to get a clearer picture of whether things had changed. In our busy world, when there are so many pressing issues, compassion and concern do not always translate into effective action. That is why I am publishing this follow-up report one year on, informed by a survey of local authorities.

This report concludes that there has been some progress in addressing the recommendations of *Sweet 16?,* but there is still much to be done. Almost half of the local authorities say there is no expectation that young people should leave care at 16, and others report initiatives to change the culture. Nevertheless, Who Cares? Scotland have told me that, of 18 workers from different local authority areas, 11 said they had noticed no change in practice. Their discussions with social workers showed that they were aware of the *Sweet 16*? report but lack of resources was a barrier to implementing its recommendations.

Highlights

As a follow-up to Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland, this document tracks the progress made by local authorities in attempting to lower the number of 16 year olds moving on from care and to provide continued support to young people who have moved on. The most relevant point in the report highlights the difficult constraints that local authorities face when a young person wishes to return to a placement after moving on post-16. Where a return to placement is unavailable, and other support is difficult to manage, as the paper highlights is often the case, mentoring and similar services can mitigate the negative effects of moving on from care prematurely.

Our view

The work presented in *Is Life Any Sweeter?* validates the role of external mentoring services for young people moving on from care. Where Sweet 16? was able to shine a light on the services that young people needed and the difficulties associated with leaving care before one is ready, *Is Life Any Sweeter?* demonstrates the need for local authorities to work with wider organisations to provide ongoing support to young people, as local authorities themselves struggle to meet the demands on services.

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Scottish Executive (2004) Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland: Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities

Introductory information – Verbatim from text

PRINCIPLES

Throughcare and aftercare

1.1 Local authorities have a duty to prepare young people for ceasing to be looked after ("throughcare") and to provide advice, guidance and assistance for young people who have ceased to be looked after over school age ("aftercare"). This guidance and the Regulations at Annex A are intended to help local authorities to provide these services for young people who are or were previously looked after. It supersedes chapter seven on throughcare and aftercare of Volume 2 – Children Looked After by Local Authorities – of the guidance on the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

1.2 There are around 11,000 children and young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland, of whom about 1,500 are over 15 years old. About 1,200 young people aged 16 or over cease to be looked after each year. These young people need planning and support to make a successful transition from being looked after to independent adult living.

Highlights

As legislative guidance, this paper outlines in detail the duties placed on social care services and local authorities to provide ongoing aftercare support to young people ceasing to be looked after. This support takes the form of advice, guidance and assistance. As stated earlier, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 extended this support to age 26. Although this change is not reflected in the document, given its publication in 2004, Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland demonstrates a need to re-evaluate what is offered to young care leavers and to ensure that all young people moving on from care are granted the same opportunities to gain support as their non-looked-after peers.

Our view

The function and use of the Pathway Plan is a key message of the paper, outlining the need to work with young people on issues such as their: hopes for the future; emotional state; family relationships; general health; future plans for study, training or work, and; knowledge of rights and entitlements. As a service that provides ongoing support to care leavers, coaches or mentors that work with young people to address these issues could be a valuable way to provide this support.

Scottish Government (2013) Staying Put Scotland: Providing Care Leavers with Connectedness and Belonging

Introductory information – Verbatim from text 1.

1. There is a pressing need to narrow the "outcomes" gap between care leavers and their non-looked after peers, and one important way in which we can do that is by providing care leavers with a supportive environment for as long as they need it. The aim of this Practice Guidance is to assist local authorities and their corporate parenting partners in their development and implementation of strategies which enable care leavers to remain in secure, stable care placements (foster or residential) until such time as they are ready to move on. Strategies which emphasise young people's entitlement to support into adulthood, and which offer them the option to return to care placements, if and when they encounter difficulties.

2. This guidance does not dictate specific practice. Instead it details the principles that must underpin an effective "Staying Put Scotland" approach, and presents a range of useful practice examples. Taken as whole, this guidance has been developed to encourage and assist organisations to change the culture in which we try to meet the needs of looked after young people and care leavers. For while not all young people will want to remain in their care placements once their supervision order comes to an end, some will, and local authorities should be able to accommodate that request. Moreover, while it is young people with the most complex needs that are perhaps the least likely to choose to stay, they are also the group most likely to benefit from the Staying Put Scotland approach. This is not, therefore, just about making placements available. It is about working with young people to identify choices which will benefit them in the long-term.

Highlights

Although the main focus of this document is to outline the need for young people to remain in care settings for as long as it necessary, or until the age of 26, there are a number of important points that help to situate support provided by coaches or mentors coaches or mentors. The paper outlines some of the issues faced by care leavers, and encourages those services which provide care, throughcare and aftercare, and additional support to care leavers, to consider these issues in their work with young people. Additionally, the guidance highlights the need for local authorities and other organisations to work together to improve outcomes for young people leaving, or on the precipice of leaving, care.

Our view

The guidance presented in this document addresses the need for relationship-based practice, continuity of care and support, and for adults in the care sector to do for young people what one would want to do for their own children. In the context of coaching and mentoring, Staying Put Scotland demonstrates the real needs of care leavers who do not have the family support that other young people moving to independence would typically have.

Conclusions

The adult mentoring and coaching role for young people transitioning out of care is a complex one. There are strong research indications that mentoring and coaching relationships with supportive adults aid young people in their transition from being looked-after to independent adulthood. This literature suggests that a suitable relationship with at least one supportive adult can help young people to build stronger social networks, enhance their educational and workplace achievements, and encourage them to seek out appropriate support when necessary. Discussions surrounding the need for mentoring relationships are supported by literature which highlights the characteristics that both young people and staff members believe successful coaches and mentoring relationships should have. These characteristics have been well-documented in recent years, as a direct result of the increasing interest in leaving-care outcomes. One repeated feature of these texts is their emphasis on the need to carefully build enduring relationships that provide an element of relational permanence. Finally, there is a significant policy context for coaching and mentoring services, which guide those organisations and local authorities responsible for supporting young people in their move from care to adulthood. The policy context addressed here is specific to Scotland and the wider UK, but reflects an international agenda given the global interest in supporting young people with care experiences. We hope that bringing together this literature discussing the impact and need for mentoring, the characteristics of successful mentoring relationships, and the policy context will support the work of coaches and mentors, as well as wider organisations that support young people moving on from care.

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