

# Commentary on the two linked papers “A comparison of state support” and “Supporting young people from care to adulthood”

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## 1 | KEY POINTS FROM TRANSITIONS TO INDEPENDENCE

As identified by Mike Stein, Jan Storø, Yvonne Sjöblom, and Ingrid Höjer in their papers for this special edition, young people leaving state care for independence are among the most vulnerable in today's society. Across both articles, it is identified that young people leaving care have relatively lower opportunities in education, training, and employment and have to navigate difficulties from a young age and throughout their adult life.

When making the transition to independence, young people are also faced with multiple other milestones. For many, the process of entering into adulthood comes with overlapping responsibilities, such as finding a home, starting education/a career or a new family, which often occur simultaneously. Many young people in the UK express extreme resilience under these circumstances; however, others can struggle to establish a place within the adult world.

Support for young people during this time differs depending on the young person's circumstances; for many, this support will come from professionals such as social workers or personal advisors; however, many receive support from previous foster carers. This support for young people is crucial to ensure those leaving care are supported and ready for their journey to independence.

## 2 | PERSONAL JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

My own personal transition to independence started at 16 years old. This is no longer common in the UK; however, there are still some young people leaving care at this age. Making the transition at such a

As part of this Guest Edition, care experienced young people have been invited to reflect on each of the papers. This commentary on the two linked papers “A comparison of state support” and “Supporting young people from care to adulthood” is by Jade Ward, researcher at University of York.

young age meant my transition was somewhat rushed, and in many areas, I was unprepared.

At 16, I had just finished my formal education with lower grades than many of my peers. Whilst others my age were continuing their education at college, I was unable to do so, due to my grades and the responsibilities of running a home, which required me to work. Like many other young people who leave care, my first few years of independence were a struggle, not only in regards to managing a home and work but also my mental health.

According to research, young people leaving care are four times more likely to have a mental health disorder, five times less likely to achieve five good GCSEs, eight times more likely to be excluded from school, and less likely to go to a university (Department for Education and Skills, 2007). These poor outcomes reflect the challenges facing those leaving care and the support, which young people will need if they are to overcome them.

With support from my previous foster carer alongside support from the local leaving care team, my transition settled when I was around 19 years old. This support allowed me to find my place in the society and continue my training, which, in turn, allowed me to attend university and complete my degree at age 25. Many young people, myself included, have the ability to “bounce back” and show extreme resilience in difficult circumstances; however, support from others is crucial to ensuring that young people are able to identify that resilience within themselves.

Department for Education and Skills (2007) Care Matters: Time for Change. HM Government Cm 7137 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-matters-time-for-change>

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