

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

Annual Report – 22/23



Victoria & Liss represent YPBMF at the Cross Ministerial Board for Care Leavers – Feb 23. Pictured here with Claire Coutinho, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

“We are immensely grateful for your attendance at the Care Leavers Ministerial Board last month. Your contribution made an enormous difference to enabling the Ministers and officials attending from across government to understand the grave challenges that care leavers experience and the solutions that are well within reach.”

Rt Hon Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education

Rt Hon Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

About the Forum

Our Vision

The aim of the forum is to work together to share good practice and improve services and support for care experienced young people.

Our Activities

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) has a large and active membership of 130 Local Authority leaving care teams. The Young Person's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF) is at the heart of the forum, with the voices of care experienced young people shaping the direction of the forum and integral to the forum's events and work. Our activities are focussed around three areas:

- 1) **Membership** – We hold regular specialist peer learning and development events for Leaving Care managers and Practitioners and a number of role-specific online networks. The membership website offers access to regular policy and practice updates; peer enquiry forms and leaving care resources.
- 2) **National Influence** - Influencing Leaving Care policy and practice through close working relationships with government departments, HMPPS, Ofsted, and other leaving care organisations.
- 3) **Young People's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF)** – Care experienced young people within the YPBMF play a key role in all events, policy work and in shaping the direction and priorities of the forum.

NLCBF and Catch 22

The Forum is run by the charity Catch 22 and predominantly funded through membership fees from Local Authorities. The Forum has a steering group of 9 Local Authority representatives who work closely with the staff team at Catch22 to shape the development of the Forum.

“The ability to network with key practitioners and get an idea of what may be coming down the road is vital.”

Leaving Care Manager, Annual Survey Nov 22

Impact of NLCBF 2022-23

Membership:

- Membership of forum maintained at 130 members or 85% of English Local Authorities.
- Events delivered on themes of: Place & Purpose, Challenging Stigma & Accessibility; Interdependence.
- Online networks: Education, Employment & Training Network in partnership with Care Leaver Covenant & Participation Network.
- Members website: Post event video and audio resources now available & increased access to 40 logins/local authority.
- Local Offer Development Day workshop delivered.
- Pathway Planning workshop delivered.
- Series of Student Finance events for professionals & young people.
- Transitional Safeguarding workshops with NWG.
- Learning from Peer Learning Programme shared on: Increasing employment opportunities for young people with care experience.
- Peer Learning Programme on Relational Practice launched with 12 local authorities and 4 third sector organisations.
- Shared latest research and partnered with Coram Voice on three videos on Brightspots Research, linked to event themes.



Impact of NLCBF 2022-23

(Continued)

Membership

- Supported team managers and leaders through 1-1 'Discuss it with Darren' sessions with NLCBF Practice Lead.
- Actively engaged with leaving care regional forums and chaired London forum – to share updates and gather insights.
- PA Induction training piloted with North-East local authorities
- Full Review of event venues to ensure continued sustainability of the Forum, in consultation with forum members.
- First Annual Members survey launched.
- Co-produced NLCBF Strategy 2023-26 with YPBMF,

National Influence

- Hosted Speakers at Events from DfE, Care Review, HMPPS, Ofsted, Care Leavers Covenant etc.
- Care Review & Government's Response – Part of DfE's Stakeholder group and responded to 'Stable Homes Built on Love' consultation.
- Ofsted – Fed into shape the development of the separate judgement for care leavers.
- HMPPS – Member of National Care Experienced People Forum
- Unregulated Accommodation: Responded to consultation.
- Mental Health – Regular meetings with NHS England and Improvement's Children and Young People's Mental Health Team.
- UASC – Met with DfE lead for UASC to discuss issues & solutions.
- Higher Education – Workshop delivered at NNECL conference & members of Care Leavers & Estranged students in HE group.
- International Influence – Supporting development of equivalent network in Germany & workshop delivered in Finland.
- Alliance for Children in Care & Care Leavers – Chairing mental health subgroup & leaving care week subgroup.
- Coproduced external facing website with YPBMF.

“Being a member has given the leaving care team real stability over the years. It can be quite a powerful tool to use when having to quote legislation, guidance & utilise materials & evidence from the events.” Leaving Care Participation Manager, Membership Survey, Nov 22

Young Person's Benchmarking Forum 22 - 23

It's been another busy year for Young Person's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF) with our Sessional Team and YPBMF Champions working hard to ensure that care experienced voices were heard on the key issues:

- **Hosting Virtual events** - YPBMF have run a host of virtual events using Hopin covering a range of topics including Stigma & Accessibility; Education, Employment & Training; Accommodation, Neurodiversity; Care Leavers Hubs and Interdependence. Care experienced young people have had central roles at our practitioner events running panels, delivering speeches and performances.
- **Sharing experiences of the Cost of Living Crisis** – Exploring the views and experiences of care leavers with regards to the cost of living and the support provided by local authorities and government that has helped or could help –This has been included in our reports.
- **Cross Ministerial Board for Care Leavers** – Our YPBMF Rep Victoria and YPBMF Champions were invited to speak at a board meeting involving all government departments chaired by the Education Minister (Gillian Keegan) and Children's Minister (Claire Coutinho) They spoke about the Cost of Living findings, support around health, mental health and employability.



Young Person's Benchmarking Forum 22 -23 (Continued..)

““Yeah it helped with confidence and also opened up to embracing care experience, public speaking, community, building knowledge about range of different areas”

YPBMF Champion, March 2023

- **Ofsted** – NLCBF Care Experienced sessional workers have worked with Ofsted and leaving care charities such as Become, Coram Voice, NYAS and Care Leavers Association to co-design a series of consultation events around the regulation of Supported Accommodation for 16-17 years olds.
- **Care Experienced Apprenticeship Network** – We launched a network for care experienced young people who have completed an apprenticeship, are currently completing an apprenticeship or thinking about starting an apprenticeship. We held 4 meetings across the year and over 30 apprentices joined us.
- **Care X Apprentice Network Key Messages shared** - [shared 5 key messages](#) from the Care X Apprenticeship Network with Minster Coutinho at an Apprenticeship Roundtable
- **YPBMF Chats & Resources** – YPBMF has co-produced resources including worksheets and video examples for practitioners and young people. The “Letter to You” resource and series of videos is a great example of a way to open a conversation about future aspirations or fears.

“Being a champion has honestly changed my life. Meeting other care experienced young people who all want to come together to make a difference has been amazing. When I did my first event, I felt like I had absolutely no confidence at all. I now feel so confident to speak in front of other people; which has also helped me in my current role with Leaving Care.”

YPBMF Champion, March 2023

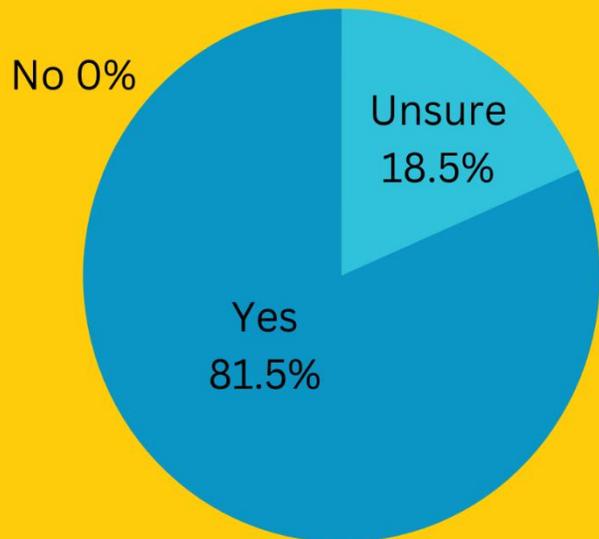
NLCBF In Numbers 2022-23

96% rate
NLCBF events
Good/Very Good

1874 people attended
NLCBF events, a 49% increase
on the previous year

100% members
would recommend
membership to other
Local Authorities

Has NLCBF membership
impacted practice in your LA
in a positive way?



67 local
authorities
attended NLCBF
Managers events
(average over three
events)

32% increase in LAs
supporting young people to
engage with YPBMF Events

1st recruitment of a
YPBMF Steering Group
Representative in
NLCBF's History

“We have used NLCBF resources to standardise & improve payments to young people and have incorporated many ideas into our practice supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people.” Leaving Care Manager, Annual Survey, Nov 2022

Partnerships, Challenges & Opportunities

Partnerships

- The Forum continues to work closely with government departments, Ofsted, HMPPS, Research in Practice and leaving care organisations across the sector.
- This year, we developed strong links with the Children's Commissioner's Office and now meet with their team regularly.
- The Forum are active members of the Children In Care and Care Leavers Alliance and are well connected with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's leaving care learning programme.

Challenges

- Sustained increase in pressures on Local Authorities – particularly around impact of cost of living crisis; increase in UASC young people; pressure on local authority finances & recruitment & retention issues.
- Financial sustainability of NLCBF – Despite increasing the membership fee for the first time in over ten years, significant inflation has put pressure on the forum's finances and we continue to work with the NLCBF Steering Group to find creative ways to maintain the value of the forum for members.
- Capacity of team – NLCBF has the potential to influence policy more widely but this is limited by the capacity of the team.

Opportunities

- Care Review Implementation - This is a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' to transform Children's social care & opportunities to influence the implementation plans will continue.
- Ofsted Separate judgement – This was launched in January 23 and is bringing a welcome focus to leaving care services.
- Funding opportunities – We are exploring potential charitable funding opportunities to increase the impact of the forum.
- Our new external website gives us the chance to increase the reach of the key messages from YPBMF and the work of the forum.

“The theme of interdependence was woven nicely through the event & it has certainly increased my understanding and ability to apply this way of thinking to my practice.” Leaving Care Practitioner, Feb 23.

Future Plans 2023 -24

Membership

- Grow and sustain membership, working closely with members to ensure the Forum's meets Local Authority needs.
- Deliver high quality hybrid events on themes: A Fair Offer for All; Supporting Young People with specific Needs: Place, Purpose & Community.
- Support local authorities through policy changes, including Supported Accommodation changes, Borders & Immigration Bill.
- Facilitate Peer Learning Programme on Relational Practice and share learning.
- Develop PA induction materials on members' website

National Influence

- Continue to work closely with government departments, Ofsted, Children's Commissioner & leaving care organisations.
- Influence Care Review Implementation and Unregulated Accommodation regulations consultation.
- Continue to work closely with HMPPS
- Amplify the voices and key messages of care experienced young people through our website, social media & podcasting.

YPBMF

- YPBMF on the Road - We will be going out to local authorities to talk about the forum & how people can get involved
- Continue to put on events that are designed & delivered by care experienced young people & aim to make them bigger & better with great engagement opportunities both in person and online.
- Exploring ways to change our Champions (volunteering model) to create a longer term community where ongoing conversations can take place for care experienced individuals beyond the age of 25.

Sustainability

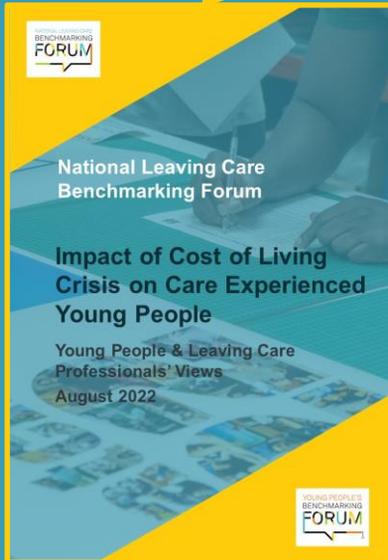
- Explore charitable funding opportunities, particularly around increasing capacity around housing, UASC and mental health policy work.
- Continue to review event venues and ensure value for money
- Develop and promote training offer

Cost of Living Work

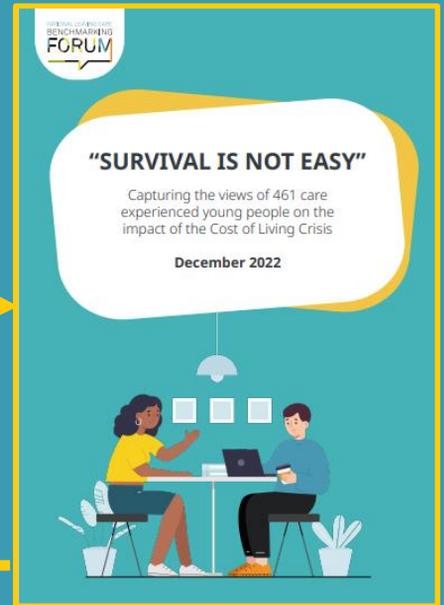


May 22 - Consulted with care experienced young people at the Bristol YPBMF Event on the impact so far and ideas of what would make a difference

June & July 22 – Consulted with leaving care professionals at NLCBF events



Aug 22 – Released the first report and shared across local authorities, government and the leaving care sector.



Dec 22 – Released the 2nd report with the views of 461 care experienced young people, gathered from YPBMF and partner organisations. Shared widely, including at the Cross Ministerial Board for Care Leavers.

Impact So Far...

69% of local authorities have secured ringfenced money for care experienced young people from the Household Support Fund

“The first report helped in conversations and we got £200k ringfenced which is having a real impact” Leaving Care Manager

“Thanks for sharing the report, which will be really helpful in our discussions across Government.” Rob MacPherson, Care Leaver Policy Team, DfE

“The Chair would like to thank you for bringing the NLCBF’s report on the cost of living to his attention.” Education Select Committee

“Mr Stride has asked me to pass on his appreciation - bringing his attention the findings of the Survival Isn’t Easy report.” Secretary of State, DWP

Thank you to our YPBMF Champions, the NLCBF Steering group and Stakeholder Group who have given their time to support the forum this year.

Thank you to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for funding two Peer Learning Programmes

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

Email: nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk
Website: www.leavingcare.org



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