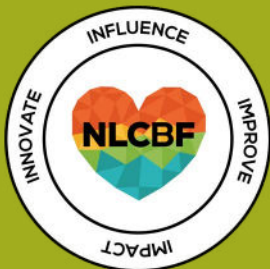


IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SUPPORT AFTER 21 & 25 YEARS OF AGE

Capturing the views of 200+ care
experienced individuals from around
the UK.

September 2024



25

Contents

Foreword by YPBMF Legend.....	2
Who took part?.....	3
What age does support reduce or finish?.....	6
Staying in touch.....	6-7
Asking for help.....	8
Experience of support post 21.....	9-10
Experience of support post 25.....	11-12
What are we asking for locally and nationally?.....	13
Examples of best practice & Top Tips.....	14-15
Thanks & Contacts.....	19



Foreword by Reece (YPBMF Legend)

Post 21 & 25 support is important to me because I'm approaching 25 and have been in the social system for 20 years. I rely on the care from my leaving care team, these people are my rock, they know everything about me. I know the financial support is going to end soon but it's so much more than just financial. I turn 25 soon and my PA and leaving care team have all reassured me that they aren't washing their hands of me, and this gives me a sense of security. Not everyone has that, but everyone should have that. It should be mandatory.

Every young person should leave care with two loving relationships, and one of those should be from your leaving care team. If you don't have this you can become isolated, and struggle with your mental health. If people feel lonely, they can be drawn to drugs or alcohol just to have people around them. Through our lives we've had to act strong, especially living independently and we don't always want to be seen as weak. Even though we act strong, we're often fragile because of the trauma we've experienced.

As you read this report ask yourself, would this be good enough for my own child? Because I don't think most people would kick their child out at 21 or even 25. Remember that we are human, and a lot of us have experienced trauma.

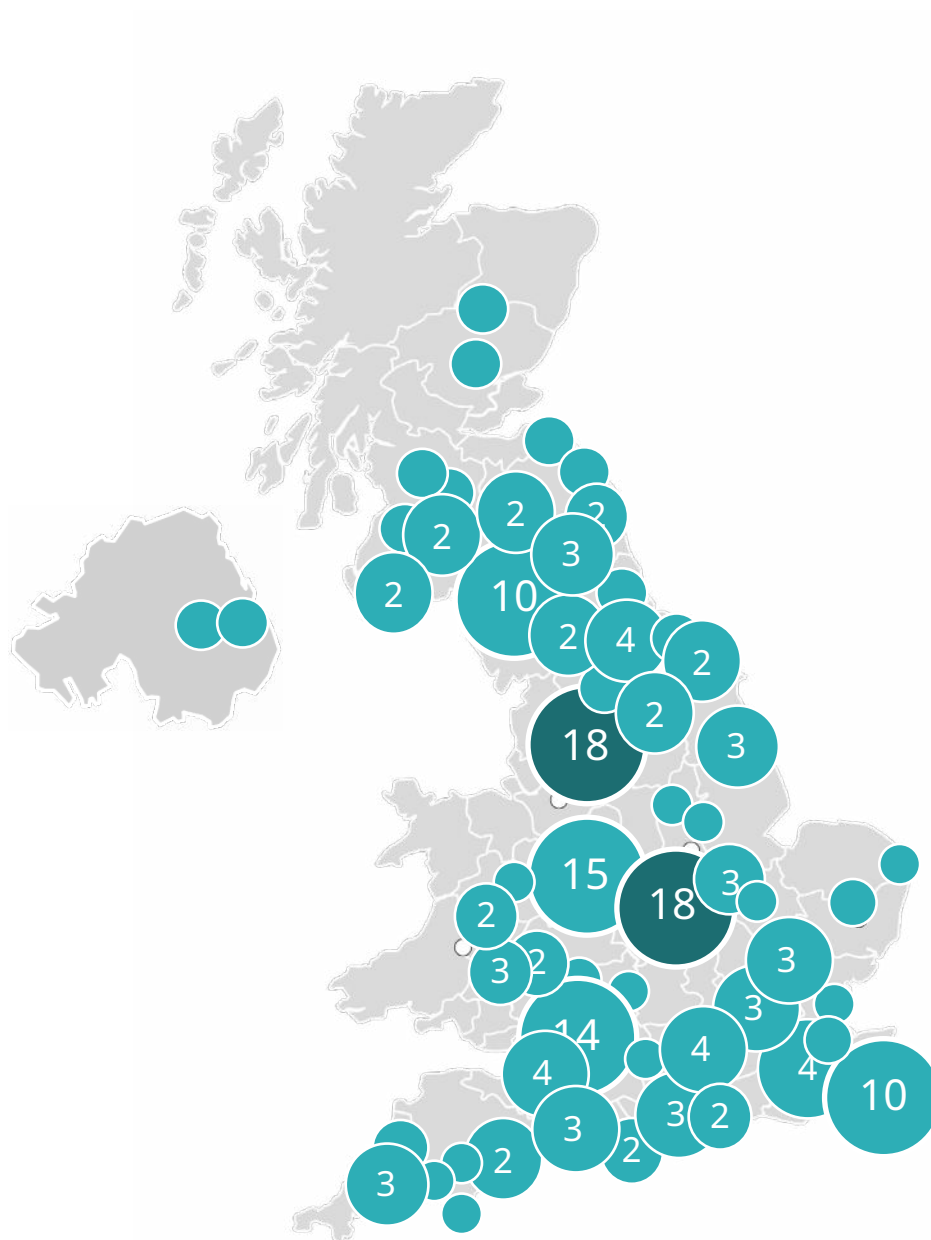


Who took part?

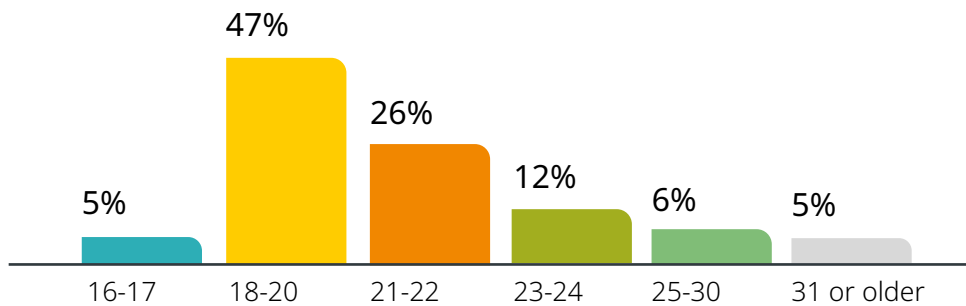
In June 2024, over 200 care experienced young people and young adults from around the UK took part in our "In Their Own Words Survey". The survey was co-produced with the Young People's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF) and contained questions on 5 key themes, chosen as priority areas by care experienced young people.

Location:

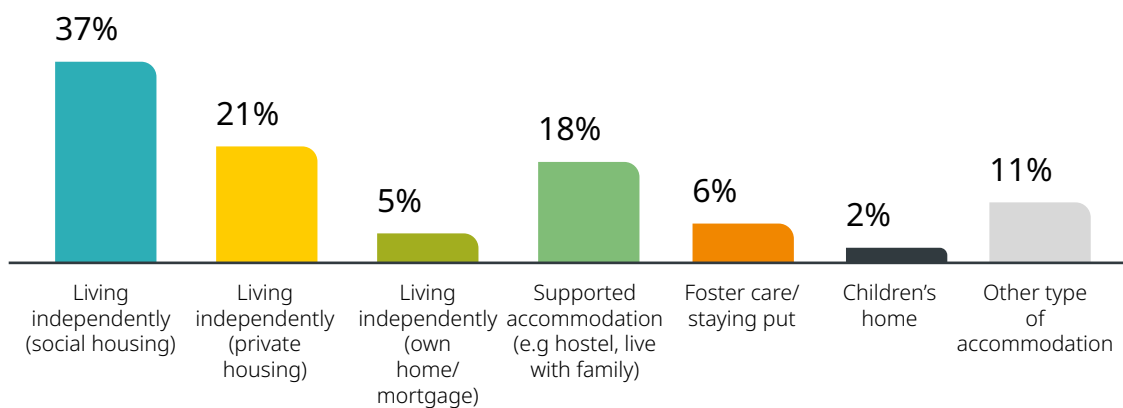
Pin on the map where you live



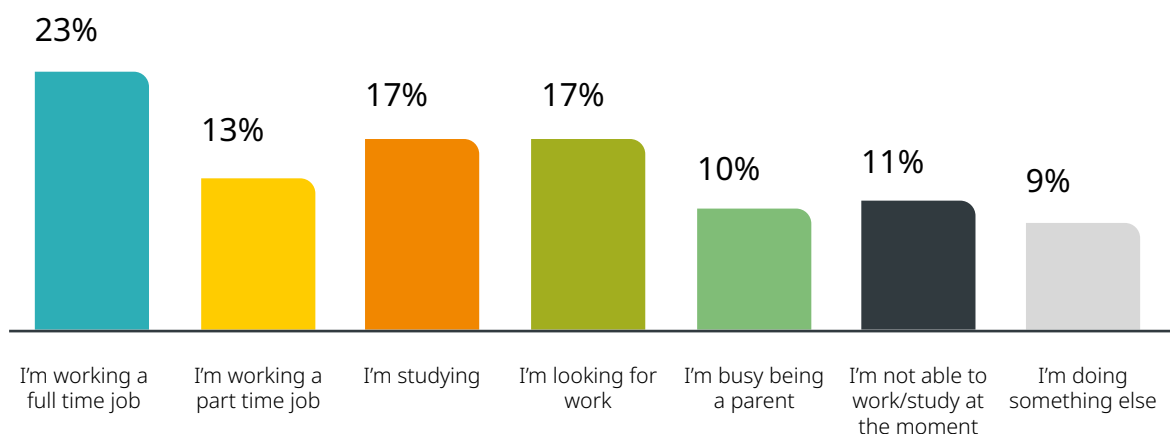
How old are the participants?



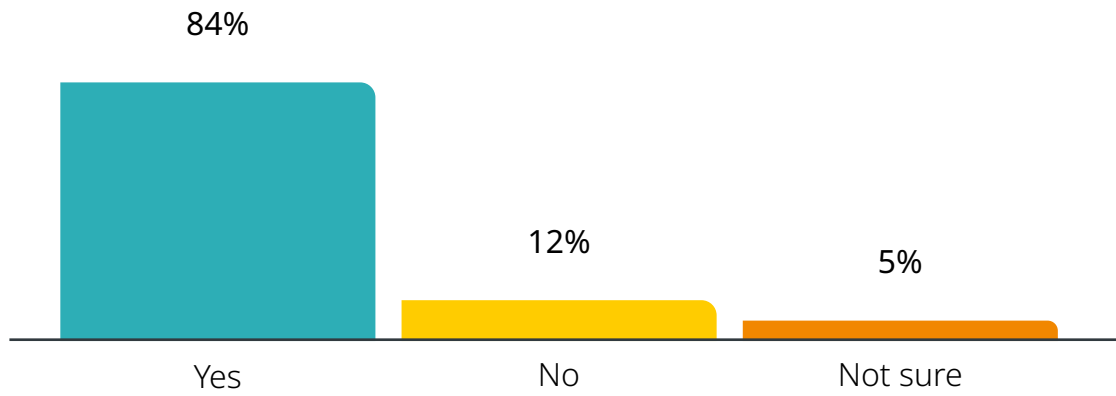
Where are participants living?



What's the main thing participants are doing right now?



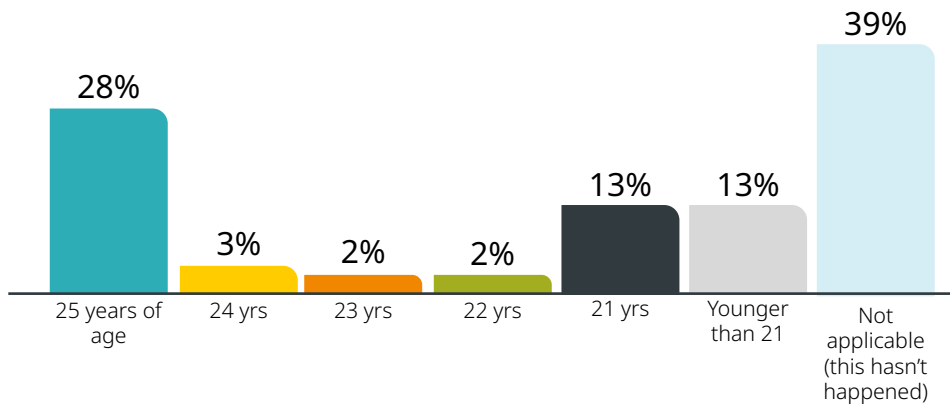
Do participants have a Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker or support from your Local Authority?



What age does support reduce or finish?

26% had their support withdrawn or reduced at 21 years or younger.

At what age were you told that your local authority, were no longer supporting you or reducing your support?

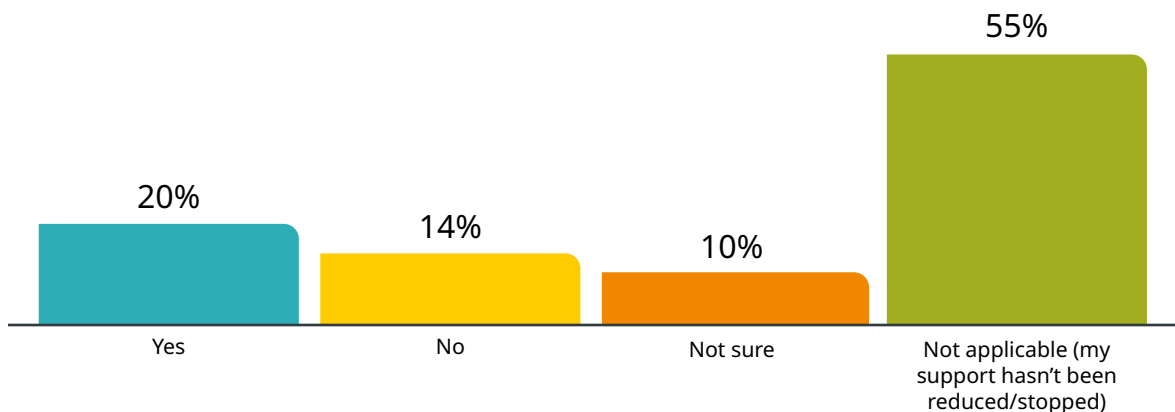


Almost a third said support was withdrawn or reduced at 25 and a similar number were 21 or younger.

Staying in touch

Some leaving care teams continue to stay in touch after support ends or is reduced.

If your support has been reduced or you no longer receive support from your PA/leaving care team, do they continue to stay in touch?



Phone calls, emails, or texts and WhatsApp messages are the most common methods used to stay in touch after support is withdrawn.

If they do keep in contact, how do they do it? e.g. cards, letters, emails, calls



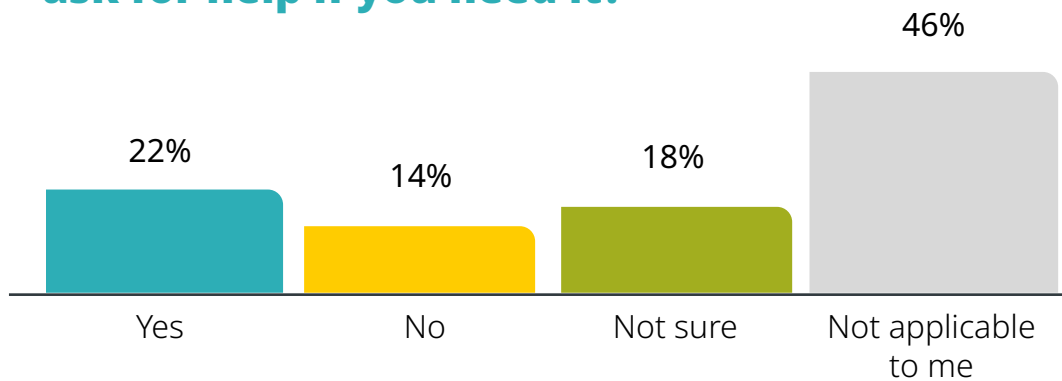
Every care experienced individual has different communication needs and preferences so it's important to have a variety of methods available. The first step for any local authority should be asking care experienced individuals in their area what works best for them. While some prefer digital communications others benefit from face-to-face conversations where professionals can maintain contact and get a better understanding of their needs. For example, care experienced individuals mentioned a wide range of ways that they'd like to find out about opportunities and activities.

Find out more in [In Their Own Words: Communities of Support report.](#)

Asking for help

After support is withdrawn **14%** do not know how to go back to the leaving care service and ask for help.

If you no longer get support from you PA/ leaving care team do you know how to go to ask for help if you need it?



Every care experienced individual should know where and how to seek help. Local Offer's should be kept up to date and made accessible to every care experienced individual. Transition support before the ages of 21 or 25 could help avoid the 'cliff edge' when support suddenly ends such as helping them prepare for independence and build a support network. If support is withdrawn services should stay in contact at least annually to remind care experienced individuals that they can still reach out for help and advice.



Experience of support post 21

Do you know what support is available after the age of 21 from your local authority?

The majority care experienced individuals do not know what support is available after the age of 21. In most cases this is because they are not at this stage yet, however some that are approaching 21 are still not aware despite wanting to find out.

Support that was mentioned for 21+

- **Personal Advisor/leaving care worker support**
- **Education Employment Training support** – career advice or financial support for those in further education
- **Care Leavers Hubs**
- **Homelessness support**
- **Pathway planning** (if requested)

In terms of the support from your leaving care team did things change for you when you became 21 - what was better or worse?

The majority said the support they received became worse at the age of 21.

“

Nothing is better. They constantly try to close your case.”

Others said their support stayed the same, and a small number who changed their PA felt their support improved.

“

The Personal Advisor. I currently have offers very good support.”

How support changed after 21

- **Less Contact with Personal Advisor** - Care experienced individuals had more difficulty reaching their PA, and calls and visits became less frequent. They stopped receiving birthday and Christmas cards and gifts.
- **Support stopped** - Some felt they were left on their own when their support ended. Whereas others were reassured by knowing they could get in touch with the leaving care team if they needed anything.
- **Financial support reduces or ends**
- **Accommodation changes**

“

After 21 I no longer got any Christmas or birthday money. I feel as if I am more alone and have less support now.”



Experience of support post 25

Do you know what support is available after the age of 25 from your local authority?

The majority of care experienced individuals do not know what support is available after the age of 25. Mostly this is because they are not yet at this stage.

Support that was mentioned for 25+:

- **A 25+ care experienced group**
- **A meeting to help plan for the future**
- **PA support continues**
- **Still welcome to contact leaving care team for help**



I am aware I no longer need any plans or formal things but it's nice to know I can still turn to them as and when I need too."

In terms of the support from your leaving care team did things change for you when you became 25 - what was better or worse?

Many felt that support did not change as it had already been withdrawn at an earlier age.

However, for those that were still receiving support there were changes at age 25, mainly that support was significantly reduced or withdrawn completely.



Went from almost weekly support to absolutely nothing. My Personal Advisor is great and there if I need her but I'm high maintenance and need more support than they can give. It was an awkward time for them to move on."

“

Everything is worse after 18. So many people involved directly with you go away. It's not acceptable because you get chucked out at 25 and everyone's 25 is different, which is why I don't agree with it. It should be if you have eligible care needs you get what you want and need.”



What are we asking for?

Local asks:

- **A clear offer for 21 - 25 years** – care experienced individuals need to know what support is available through the Local Offer.
- **Look for best practice examples of support and opportunities after 25 years** - such as the North Yorkshire model.
- **Commission organisations to create communities of support** - e.g. Rees Foundation, Pure Insight.
- **Identify additional funding that can be offered after 21/25 years** – support organisations, Christmas dinners, Council Tax Exemption to 25, travel passes e.g. 16–25 year train card or even 26 – 31.
- **A place to return to** – could Care Leaver Hubs host regular over 25 events e.g. reunions, celebrations, meals.

National asks:

- **Care Review** – following up recommendations of the care review.
- **Staying Close & Staying Put** – extend, review and make sure it is funded to ensure as many benefit as possible .
- **Fund Networks of Support** – National funding for 21+ Youth groups activities, care leaver projects that are focussed on the needs and interests of care experienced individuals after the age of 25 years.
- **Be our Corporate parent** – you are all our corporate parents, find out how to be a good one.

Best practice examples & Top Tips

- **Blackpool's 'Stepping Back' process at 21 including regular, friendly letters out-lining support available; Sharing 'Thoughts and Memories of you' when PAs do step back.**
- **'Always Here' care leavers in North Yorkshire have someone to turn. Stockport's Post 25 Offer to care leavers includes advice and connection to Pure Insights services up to the age of 28 years.**
- **Partnering with Charity partners like Pure Insight and National House Project who can support care experienced young people beyond the age of 25 years.**
- **Bromley: transitional safeguarding - MEGA panel reviews young people up to the age of 25, bringing together multi-agency partners to explore and analyse risks and vulnerabilities associated with contextual safeguarding.**
- **Organisations including Care Leavers Association and Rees Foundation offer support to care experienced people over the age of 25.**



Top Tips for care experienced young people who are turning 21 years or 25 years

“

Keep your head up! Focus on your dreams.”

“

*Try to be independent. Don't let them close your case.
Look up your entitlement.”*

Please watch more words of advice & encouragement from care experienced young people on our [In Their Own Words](#) page.

Senior decision makers pledges & reflections:

Here are some actions senior policy and decision makers said they were going to take following our In Their Own words event in July 2024.

“

Look at groups and opportunities for young adults leaving care up to the age of 30.”

“

Remind ourselves that keeping in touch doesn't stop at 21-25! Explore a buddy system to encourage young people and adults to participate in organised activities.”

What do you plan to do to help us?





Please scan QR code to view the 'In Their Own Words' page

Thank you to the care experienced young people and adults who shared their views and contributed to this report.

Thanks to our YPBMF Champions, Legends and NLCBF Sessional workers who co-produced our workshops, events and reports.

Thank you to the Local Authority Leaving Care teams, Coram Voice, Become, Care Leavers National Movement, Drive Forward Foundation, and everybody who circulated the survey.

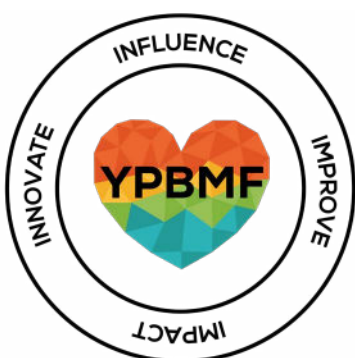
CONTACT US

Invite us to your events, ask us questions about the reports and let us know what you are planning to do as a result of reading our reports, listening to or watching our events:

Email: nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk

Website: www.leavingcare.org

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum is run by the charity Catch22 & funded through membership fees from local authorities.



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