



catch 22



'Impact of rise anti-migrant rhetoric on young people leaving care: Insights from leaving care professionals.'

January 2026

Insights from Local Authorities when asked about the Challenges of Supporting Young People and Staff Amid Rising Hostility.

Introduction

Catch22's National Leaving Care Benchmarking forum is a forum of 135 local authority leaving care teams working together to improve support for young people leaving care.

Practitioners from Local Authorities across the country were asked, as part of a training registration form, to describe any challenges they are facing related to or anti-migrant issues. The volume and depth of their responses far exceeded expectations. Collectively, their insights highlight the growing difficulties created by an increasingly hostile environment—not only for young people, including those in and leaving care, but also for the professionals who support them.

These accounts reveal a complex landscape in which young people, particularly separated and displaced young people who are care leavers, are increasingly exposed to discrimination, fear, and social isolation. At the same time, frontline staff are managing emotional strain, personal safety concerns, and gaps in policy guidance.

The following themes, drawn directly from Local Authority submissions, illustrate the depth and complexity of these challenges and highlight the significant pressures placed on young people, practitioner's and services who are striving to maintain safety, belonging, and equitable support during unpredictable times.

Racism, Hate Crime & Direct Abuse

- *Being able to support care leavers to feel safe when placed or living in a predominantly white British area where protest / marches are regular.*
- *We are corporate parents for many asylum-seeking children and they have stories of being verbally abused in public*
- *Certain geographical areas in the county being anti-immigration and causing issues for our young people in maintaining school/placements.*
- *Far right views from young people.*
- *Staff have reported no longer feeling able to talk about their work, some staff members have been impacted emotionally with this impacting on their mental health, some young people have experienced hostility and abuse.*
- *the young people we support are of the communities that are being directly affected by the racism.*
- *We support asylum seeking young adults who often face discrimination and hate crime. The challenge we have is supporting those victims and preparing young people for these eventualities/how to respond/manage these situations and protect themselves.*
- *Some of my young people will no longer go on social media and will not talk their own language outside the house. So, people do not become aware they are asylum seekers.*
- *Angry members of the public who target our separated young people for crimes they 'believe' they committed.*
- *We have young people who have experienced racially aggravated threats and assault.*
- *We have young people who have experienced direct racism.*

- *Experiencing hate / racism in their everyday lives. Impacting on well-being, safety etc and their employment, education or training activities*
- *Young people not feeling safe where they live.*
- *Young people have been approached in the street and questioned, they have been targeted outside their own homes*
- *There has been some verbal abuse of clients in the streets*
- *Discrimination from public at buildings and to individual young people.*
- *Racism and racist attacks on young people and staff.*
- *There has been discrimination around buildings and towards individuals.*

Protests, far-Right Activity & Community Tensions

- *At the current time there is a great deal of unrest in B, specifically linked to far-right groups.*
- *This has included England and union jack flags being placed on lamp posts...*
- *We are also seeing large groups protesting outside the town hall around migrants.*
- *Numerous far right protests in K.*
- *We have rioting in our town and we have a growing far right presence in our town.*
- *Strong and active far right presence in the city, our own councillors have been on national media expressing anti -migrant views.*
- *Intimidating far right marches in areas with high number of migrants*
- *We live in P, which has a Far-right organised groups targeting hotels*
- *Few weeks ago: ago had to cancel one of our groups due to an escalation of a flag protest outside Council's building.*
- *Hotels being targeted by far-right groups*
- *Possibility of community tensions in areas where far -right activity is more visible*
- *Being based in D and working with Asylum seeking young people has at times been challenging due to protests locally and nationally*

Mis-information, Social Media Influence & Online

Radicalisation

- *Promoting discrimination, misinformation*
- *lack of knowledge, influences from news and social media*
- *Online threats from members of the community.*
- *Media and news, some local demonstrations*
- *Online radicalisation of young people, watching 'news' on You-tube or social media.*
- *Young people then struggle to understand how something that is presented to them as facts can be false*
- *Many of my care leavers are subject to a barrage of disinformation on social media platforms.*
- *Many of my care leavers hold views they have acquired from media outlets and social media platforms which are ill informed or deliberately racist and inflammatory.*
- *The social media views from our young people that are inaccurate and unsafe, trying to educate them correctly.*
- *Generally, I have experienced a lot more of our young men... sharing far right and anti-migrant views openly and not always fact-checking.*

Young People Feeling Unsafe, Worried or Isolated

- *UASC feel threatened and unwelcome, with some of them feeling that investing their efforts to integrate in society would be a waste of time.*
- *fear and worry for our young people*
- *Young people have expressed their worries about what they have seen in the media in relation to asylum seekers here in the UK.*
- *UASC young people expressing concerns about people with these views*
- *Our young people are often subject to discrimination and/or abuse from the public both in person and online.*
- *Our young people have experienced direct racism.*
- *Our young people are seeing anxiety and worry over far-right protests and verbal abuse.*
- *Some young people have stopped working because of fears*
- *I have heard from colleagues that the UASC young people are concerned*

- *The general hostile environment has made it increasingly difficult for our young people to settle and build lives in the UK.*
- *I have had young people express their worries.*

Staff Safety, Emotional Impact & Professional Stress

- *Staff have reported no longer feeling able to talk about their work*
- *Some staff members have been impacted emotionally with this impacting on their mental health*
- *frontline staff being verbally assaulted whilst undertaking roles in community*
- *personal information about... staff being leaked online... encouraging hate and active risk*
- *Staff have encountered situations where they needed to challenge discriminatory attitudes*
- *As an immigrant social worker... I have experienced racial intimidation. We sometimes find ourselves needing protection too*
- *Emotional weight can make the job harder*
- *Team morale impacted by negativity and misinformation*
- *Some staff have felt intimidated visiting separated young people in the community*

Safe Homes & Community Integration Issues

- *Being able to support care leavers to feel safe when placed.*
- *Certain geographical areas in the county being anti-immigration... maintaining school/placements.*
- *Local young people (white British) seeing migrants given housing ahead of the local people, and this causing tensions*
- *It has been difficult supporting our young people who are seeking Asylum, they are not feeling safe or welcome.*
- *Matching young people in less diverse areas*
- *Young people have been approached outside their homes*
- *Young people fear wearing traditional attire.*
- *Young people isolated or worried about future status*

- *Lack of understanding in predominantly White British market town*
- *Difficulty supporting integration or belonging*

Policy Gaps, System Limitations & Barriers to Support

- *No clear direction from senior Managers for managing incidents.*
- *The message has been we have to remain impartial - not helpful or fair.*
- *Staff highlighting need for training in cultural competence and anti-racism*
- *Strict immigration rules and rising demand stretching resources*
- *Barriers accessing services due to their status*
- *Disappointing responses from services such as the police... belittled experiences*
- *Concerns about proposed changes to immigration status causing anxiety*

Professional Challenges: Responding to Prejudice, Supporting Young People

- *Not knowing how to respond and protect my YP*
- *Some young people hold alarming views*
- *Some young people see it from both sides of the story*
- *Working with White British and UASC young people – opinions influenced by news*
- *Need to support staff to support children and young people*
- *Staff unsure how to confidently challenge*
- *White British young people can have strong opinions... teaching opportunities*
- *Supporting new arrivals... hostile environment narrative from the UK government*

Key Safeguarding, Risk & Safety Management Pressures

- *It is a rush to ensure all Young People are safe and have risk assessments in place when a protest is taking place.*
- *Young people avoiding leaving home during protests*
- *Warnings to avoid certain areas*
- *Hotels being targeted*
- *Online threats*

- *Leakage of personal information creating active risk*
- *Damage and trespassing in homes to fearmonger*

Conclusion

The testimonies shared by Local Authorities provide a stark and timely insight into the realities of working within an increasingly hostile environment. Across regions and roles, practitioners consistently describe rising levels of racism, misinformation, far-right mobilisation, and public hostility—alongside growing fears and isolation among the young people they support.

These pressures also impact staff, who deal with emotional stress, safety worries, and unclear policies as they work to keep people safe and help everyone feel included.

These stories show how big the challenge is and how dedicated frontline teams are. By focusing on their real experiences, this report shows why we urgently need better guidance, stronger support, more training, and teamwork to keep young people and staff safe, informed, and confident in these uncertain times.