European Research and Practice on Young People’s Transitions from Care to Adulthood

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The challenge

- Improving outcomes for young people making the transition from care to adulthood
- Why?
  - Young people leaving care have to cope with challenges and responsibilities of major changes in their lives—leaving foster care and residential care and setting up home, leaving school and entering the world of work, (or more likely being unemployed and surviving on benefits) and being parents— at a far younger age than other young people (Stein:2002:68)
- High risk of social exclusion and poor outcomes including, low educational attainment, unemployment, poverty, mental health problems, social isolation, homelessness, instability and involvement in crime
Accelerated and abrupt transitions

- Common in Europe, Australia, Canada and US
- Early independence
- Negotiating multiple changes at the same time
- No option to return in times of difficulties

Fails to equip young people for the journey to adulthood
Extended and abrupt transitions

- Former communist countries
- Care until mid-twenties
- Unprepared and ill-equipped for adult life
- Instant adulthood

- Also fails to equip young people for adulthood
- Need combination of: gradual preparation, adequate planning; access to social, legal and medical services & financial support to young people leaving care and in the after-care period
Differences in approaches to addressing the challenge

- Role of the corporate parent
- Universal and/or specialist services?
- Duties or permissive legislation?
- Accessing services as a ‘right’ or conditional?
- Levels of funding, inspection, quality control, training and workforce issues
Norway

- 1954 legislation provided aftercare up to the age of 23 years but stopped in 1992
- Move towards young people having the opportunity to manage on their own at 18 without intervention from workers
- Lobbying to improve services and support
- 1998 legislation implemented allowing services to be provided up to 23 years when the child consents
Romania

- Advanced legal provisions for care leavers introduced 2000 onwards
- Grants for access to education, access to a job for youth between 16 and 25 at risk of social exclusion, housing up to the age of 35 for those who are unable to acquire a house on their own and access to health assistance (CRC, 2008)
- Multiple barriers to implementation in practice
England

- England: strong legal framework
- Move from permissive legislation (variable provision) to targeted legislation and extension of duties
- Principles: delay discharge (until 18), improve preparation, planning and support, personal advisers and pathway plans
Pilot initiatives in England: R2BCared4

- Active encouragement to remain looked after until 18 years increases number who choose to stay
- Taster or training flats ‘a taste of independence with a safety net’
- Need a range of provisions as some of those with more complex needs still opt to leave before they’re ready
Pilot initiatives: Staying Put 18 +

- Foster care up to 21 years
- Eligibility criteria and debates about who is ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’ of extended support
- Quality of past care planning influential
- Young people welcomed not being ‘pushed’, ‘forced’ or ‘kicked out’ of care
- Decisions to stay influenced by ‘familial attachment’ between carers and young people, feeling ‘part of the family’ and a ‘sense of belonging’
- Improved education, employment and training (EET) outcomes
Outcome groups

- Moving on: stability, later exit, satisfying career, ‘ordinary identity’
- Survivors: movement, disrupted careers, support makes a difference
- Strugglers: early difficulties, instability, complex problems, adult services, someone for them (Stein’s typology)
Shaping outcomes

- Comprehensive approach across the life course
- Pre-care: early intervention and family support when problems first arise
- In care: continuity, stability, a warm, nurturing environment, compensatory care and a secure base
- Leaving care: preparation, planning and gradual supported transitions
- After-care: ongoing support into adulthood
- Strong legal and policy framework
Further reading


Further reading


Further information

- Centre for Child and Family Research: http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/
- International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care: http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/INTRAC/index.html