
VULNERABLE CHILDREN
KNOWLEDGE REVIEW 3

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'



Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) identifies and coordinates local, regional and national evidence of 'what works', to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice in delivering children's services. Using this information, C4EO offers support to local authorities and their partners, working with them to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

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The Centre is also supported by a number of strategic partners, including Local Government and Development, the Family and Parenting Institute, the National Youth Agency and the Institute of Education.

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Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this knowledge review. It is one of three reviews that aim to help all those working with and for children and young people to improve the life chances of vulnerable 'looked-after' children. C4EO started its work on this theme in 2009, some time before the new Coalition Government was elected in May 2010. The review process we undertake in order to distil the very best learning and evidence from national literature and data, combined with effective local practice is cumulative, resulting in our full knowledge reviews. Policy priorities are currently being determined by the Coalition Government and we have amended the review in order to ensure that it reflects the current political context.

I am confident that the evidence of 'what works' contained in this review and in the other two reviews – with their clear and unremitting focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children – will help all those working with children and young people throughout the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Christine Davies CBE
C4EO Chief Executive

Summary

This knowledge review tells us what works in increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'. It is based on a rapid review of the research literature involving systematic searching, analysis of key data, validated local practice examples and views from service users and providers. It summarises the best available evidence that will help service providers to improve services and, ultimately, outcomes for looked-after young people and their families.

Reviews on improving looked-after children's emotional outcomes and emotional and behavioural health are also available on the C4EO website.

Mike Stein of the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York carried out this review on behalf of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted the data work.

What did we find out?

Key messages from our knowledge review

- Being in safe, settled accommodation is associated with increased wellbeing and engagement in education, employment or training.
- Young people leave care at an earlier age, on average, than other young people leave home. Those who leave care at a later age are more likely to have a successful transition to adulthood, including being in 'settled, safe accommodation'.
- Young people are likely to be in safe, settled accommodation after leaving care when they (i) have good-quality care that provides them with stability and pays attention to their education, health and wellbeing and (ii) are supported to leave care gradually, at an older age.
- Care leavers want and benefit from support services matched to their needs, including leaving care services, out-of-hours support, opportunities to become looked after again when under 18 years of age and return to their previous placements, mentoring and positive family and kinship contact. Care leavers also need practical support with moving and setting up in accommodation.
- Young people leaving kinship care placements made by the local authority, including extended family and friends placements, see their placements as very positive, though there is limited evidence on this.
- Leaving care services work well in assisting most young people in accessing accommodation and supporting them in managing their accommodation, although there is evidence of wide variations between local authorities in the provision of 'suitable accommodation'.
- Services for disabled care leavers are not always coordinated and planned with mainstream leaving care services. For young people with mental health problems, there needs to be better coordination between child and adult mental health services and across local authorities and NHS boundaries.

- More attention should be given to: the accommodation and support needs of young parents; the community and family links of black and minority ethnic young people when they leave care; asylum-seeking young people; and vulnerable young people returning from 'out of authority' placements.
- The contribution of foster and residential carers, birth families and other family members in supporting young people into adulthood should be addressed in the pathway planning process. The use of family group conferences may be an effective way of identifying supportive family networks.
- The role, training and support needs of former foster carers and residential carers in providing ongoing personal and practical support to care leavers should be reviewed further and formalised.
- Local authorities should have clear policies in respect of the financial assistance and support they provide to foster carers who offer extended placements and ongoing support to young people after they reach 18 years of age.
- Effective service provision requires good communication between leaving care services, adult services and accommodation providers and carers; it should include the young person in decisions.
- It is important to identify groups who are at particular risk of poor housing outcomes early on: young people who leave care at 16 and 17 years of age; those with social, emotional and behavioural problems; offenders, including those with a history of violence; young people who run away from care; young disabled people who do not meet the threshold for adult services; and young asylum seekers with unmet mental health needs who may be particularly vulnerable during transition, when placed in independent accommodation and when their asylum claims are being made.
- Housing and children's services need to identify problems with accommodation early on, have clear contingency arrangements – including sufficient emergency accommodation to prevent homelessness – and specialist accommodation for young people with higher support needs.

Who are the key stakeholders?

- looked-after children and care leavers
- carers (including foster carers, residential carers, kinship carers, housing support workers and those who provide supported accommodation)
- birth families
- personal advisers (appointed to work with care leavers under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000) and accompanying Guidance) and social workers
- managers working at a strategic level delivering services that include housing and children's services
- lead members and councillors responsible for how the local authority exercises its functions as a 'corporate parent' to looked-after children and care leavers.

Their contributions are valuable in the process of improvement

- For **care leavers**, being in 'settled, safe accommodation' is the outcome of a process involving a number of different stages: choosing when to leave care; being well prepared; having a choice of accommodation; being safe; being supported by leaving care services, family, friends and mentors; having an income or receiving financial assistance; and being involved in all these different stages. Leaving care to live in settled, safe accommodation is connected with continuing in education or employment, wellbeing and achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes, placed on a statutory footing by the *Children Act 2004* (England and Wales. Statutes 2004).
- **Carers** are responsible for looked-after people until they leave care. These may be foster and kinship carers (including extended family members and friends), residential carers, housing support workers, and those assisting young people in supported accommodation before they leave care. The evidence suggests that young people who develop a good relationship with their carer are more likely to be in stable and better housing after leaving care. Carers need to be well supported and their role formalised – through the pathway planning process – in providing this support to young people after they have left their care.
- **Birth family** contact is sometimes re-established by the young person when they leave care. This can be a positive source of both practical and emotional support for the young person. But for some young people, past difficulties can mean that re-establishing contact makes it harder for them to settle down and some young people may regress educationally or suffer harm as a result. The use of family group conferences may contribute to identifying positive family networks.
- **Personal advisers, leaving care workers and social workers** are responsible for assisting young people in moving on from care to their own accommodation. This will involve them in assessing the needs of the young person and agreeing a pathway plan with them. In carrying out these responsibilities they should pay particular attention to the different stages of 'being in settled, safe accommodation' identified above – problems arising in any of these stages may alert them to difficulties young people have in accessing and managing their accommodation. Strong commitment and positive relationships with young people are associated with good outcomes for care leavers.
- **Managers working at a strategic level** deliver services that include: leaving care services, access to supported accommodation and independent accommodation, homeless strategies, and bridging the gap between children's and adult services.
- **Local authorities**, acting as 'corporate parents', have a strategic role to play in managing care leavers' access to 'settled, safe accommodation'. This will require a framework of services with related funding underpinned by formal relationships between children's services, housing agencies and other services to ensure high-level commitment, effective communication, partnership working and joint planning across the local authority. This should include joint protocols and agreements, and detailed specifications for service commissioning.

- An integrated approach with **children's services, housing services, health and adult services** is essential in preparing young people for adulthood – not just at the time of leaving care: this should be the main purpose of multi-agency working. The success of leaving care is strongly associated with good relationships between the leaving care team and the young person and also with good communication between the leaving care team and housing providers. The variability of the range and quality of services needs to be addressed.

What data is available to inform the way forward?

DCSF (Department for Children Schools and Families; now the Department for Education) data is available on the accommodation types of young care leavers who had been looked-after continuously for at least 12 months and who were still in care aged 16 in April of their final year of compulsory education. The most recent dataset, however, does not distinguish between accommodation deemed suitable and that deemed unsuitable.

C4EO's interactive data site enables local authority managers to evaluate their current position in relation to a range of key national indicators and to easily access publicly available comparative data on disabled children.

The evidence base

Research relating to increasing the numbers of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation' is mainly descriptive, non-experimental and included within more general 'outcome' studies of care leaver's experiences. In particular, there is a need for:

- more information on young people's views of the accessibility and acceptability of the services and interventions offered
- information on services for young people who have left care and subsequently experience housing difficulties
- a review of the skills and behaviours of foster carers, residential workers, other carers and birth family members that best help young people find and sustain a home
- research that makes the link between housing and social care and the agencies that must work together to help a young person find settled, safe accommodation.

Knowledge review methods

This knowledge review is the culmination of an extensive knowledge gathering process. It builds on a scoping study and research review, which are available on the C4EO website.

Research literature was identified through systematic searches of relevant databases and websites, recommendations from our Theme Advisory Group (a group of experts in the policy, research and practice field of vulnerable (looked-after) children), and reference harvesting. The review team used a 'best evidence' approach to systematically select literature of the greatest relevance and quality to include in the review. This approach attempts to eliminate bias in the selection of literature in order to ensure that the research findings are objective. Research on

looked-after children or care leavers, aged 13 to 25, published since 2000 and relating to studies in the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand was included.

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.

The knowledge review also contains two examples of local practice sent in from the sector that have been assessed and validated by specialists in leaving care. The full versions of all the practice examples contained within this review, and those published since the review was written, are available on the C4EO website at www.c4eo.org.uk.

Evidence has also been gathered by C4EO from service providers and people using services. This has included: first, feedback from the C4EO parents and carers panel on the executive summary of the research review on 'increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'; second, feedback from a consultation event with a group of four birth parents who have, or have had, children in care; third, feedback from a group of nine young people who were involved with two of Action for Children's looked-after care projects; and finally, views from the fifty delegates (mainly service providers) who attended group discussions on increasing the number of care leavers in safe, settled accommodation at the six C4EO 'Vulnerable Children' knowledge workshops. People who use services and service providers are also contributors to many of the studies included within the review.

1. Introduction

This review aims to draw out the key 'what works?' messages on increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'. It addresses four questions, which were set by the C4EO Theme Advisory Group (TAG), a group of experts in leaving care policy, research and practice. These questions are:

1. What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and independent sector, including housing services and housing support services, for looked-after children and young people (LACYP)?
2. What are LACYP's views on what constitutes safe and settled accommodation and how do they compare to those of policy-makers, housing and children's services personnel and independent sector providers?
3. What do we know about the contribution made to being in safe, settled accommodation of LACYP by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, supported housing staff and birth families, and interventions to support this contribution?
4. What do we know about the 12.6 per cent of young people not in suitable accommodation at age 19 (as defined by national indicator 147)?

Reviews on improving looked-after children's emotional outcomes and emotional and behavioural health are available on the C4EO website. C4EO is also undertaking work on cost-effectiveness (which is outside the remit of these reviews). This will place a cost on the interventions and services local authorities deliver to children, young people and their families. The work includes the design of an outcomes-based model that can be applied to individual services. The model is being applied to a number of validated practice examples and work on this will be published from autumn 2010 onwards.

The reviews are based on:

- the best research evidence from the UK – and where relevant from abroad – on what works in improving services and outcomes for children and young people
- the best quantitative data with which to establish baselines and assess progress in improving outcomes
- the best validated local experience and practice on the strategies and interventions that have already proved to be the most powerful in helping services improve outcomes, and why this is so
- service user and provider views on 'what works?' in terms of improving services and outcomes.

C4EO will use the reviews to underpin the support it provides to children's trusts to help them improve service delivery and, ultimately, outcomes for children and young people.

Definitions of key terms

The following definitions were agreed by the TAG.

'Settled, safe accommodation'

The definition of **'settled, safe accommodation'** is drawn from both legislation and young people's views. According to the 2010 draft *Planning transition to adulthood for looked-after children* regulations and guidance to the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000; DCSF 2010a) 'suitable accommodation' required by the Act includes the following elements:

- accommodation which, so far as is reasonably practicable, is suitable in the light of a child's needs, including their health needs
- accommodation where the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider
- accommodation that complies with health and safety requirements related to rented accommodation
- accommodation where the responsible authority has, so far as is reasonably practicable, taken into account the child's wishes and feelings, and educational, training or employment needs
- accommodation which must take into account factors listed in Schedule 6 of the *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review England Regulations 2010*. These are: the general state of repair; safety; location; personal support; tenancy status; and the views of the young person about suitability.

Certain accommodation is not deemed suitable for 16- and 17-year-olds, including 'unsupported accommodation' and 'bed and breakfast', although it is acknowledged that the latter may be 'very occasionally' used in an emergency. The *Homelessness Act 2002* (GB. Statutes 2002) placed a duty on local authorities to make suitable accommodation available, including for a person who is in priority need. The *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002* extends 'priority need' to care leavers aged 18 to 20 years old and national indicators that contribute to this (NI 147) include an understanding that accommodation also needs to be affordable: 'accommodation is to be regarded as suitable if it provides safe, secure and *affordable* provision for young people'.

To young people who have been in care 'getting your own place to live' is top of the list of 'best things about leaving care' (Morgan and Lindsey 2006 p 6). They want a 'secure and safe place to live in' (NCAS 2010a p 10) and 'somewhere that was their own' (Centrepont 2006 p 7). They also want a say about where they live, rent that is affordable, help in budgeting and in managing their accommodation, including when they get into financial difficulties (A National Voice 2005; Harris and Broad 2005).

The following **groups of young people** have been included in this review:

- thirteen to 25-year-olds who are or have been looked after (more than six months) – wherever they are placed (for example, in residential care, foster care, a young offenders institution) – and their families

- thirteen to 25-year-olds who are or have been looked-after for several short-term (up to six months) periods in local authority care
- sixteen to 25-year-olds who have left or are preparing to leave medium-term or long-term local authority care.

The focus on young people aged up to 25 years old reflects the journey from care planning to adulthood.

The accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of interventions

The '**accessibility of interventions**' refers to how easily people can access services or interventions. The '**acceptability of interventions**' refers to how acceptable interventions are to people and carers who use services, and to other people (staff, for example) involved in delivering them. Accessibility and acceptability of some interventions may be affected by practicalities, such as lack of transport in rural areas, but also by cultural and attitudinal issues such as language barriers, stigma and other barriers or facilitators to participation. The '**effectiveness of interventions**' refers to how effective interventions are (in a practice setting), usually assessed by measuring outcomes in various dimensions. Only those studies that report some type of evaluation (as opposed to descriptions) of interventions can tell us something about 'effectiveness of interventions'. Studies which involve a comparison or control group or that measure characteristics before and after an intervention are more persuasive. The study considered items from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Publication dates were from 2000. The type of literature considered includes published research studies only.

Types of evidence used

The research included in this review was identified through systematic searching of key databases, reference harvesting or recommendations from the TAG. All research included has been appraised to ensure that the evidence presented is the most robust available.

The review also contains two examples of local practice that have been gathered from the sector and assessed as having a positive impact on outcomes by specialists in vulnerable children and young people. (See Appendix 5 for C4EO's validated local practice assessment criteria.) The full versions of all of the practice examples contained within this review, and those published since the review was written, are available on the C4EO website at www.c4eo.org.uk.

Evidence has also been gathered from service providers during discussion groups at C4EO knowledge workshops (events at which the authors presented the findings from the Vulnerable Children reviews). Evidence has also been collected from the C4EO parents and carers panel run by the Family and Parenting Institute; through consultation with birth parents; and from a group of nine young people involved in two Action for Children projects, who participated in podcasting workshops (see Appendix 6 for more details of the process).

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.

Strengths and limitations of the review

Strengths of the review include: identifying the best available evidence from research and national datasets to inform specific questions; comprehensive and documented searching for relevant information; an analysis of the quality and strength of evidence; guidance from an advisory group on the issues of greatest importance in leaving care policy, research and practice.

Limitations of the review include: the very tight deadlines that the review had to meet, which limited the ability of the review team to extend and develop the evidence base through reference harvesting and hand searching and the fact that the review was limited to English-speaking countries only. Also, the consultations (with providers and people using services) commissioned to inform this review were small-scale.

2. Context

Policy context

For most young people today, being 'in settled, safe accommodation' of their choice, represents an important landmark on their journey to adulthood. However, for young people leaving care, achieving this goal may be more difficult than for other young people. They may feel they have been forced to leave care before they are ready, often at just 16 to 17 years of age, whereas most young people leave their family home in their mid-to-late 20s. Some young care leavers are also likely to be living in unsuitable accommodation, move frequently and become homeless (A National Voice 2007; DCSF 2007). Being in 'settled, safe accommodation' also has to be considered in the context of connected and reinforcing pathways to adulthood: entering further and higher education or training, finding satisfying employment, and achieving good health and a positive sense of wellbeing – all pathways where there is evidence of care leavers being disadvantaged in comparison to other young people (Stein 2004).

Specific provisions in response to the accommodation needs of care leavers – as detailed below – as well as more general provisions in recognition of their wider and connected range of needs are reflected in the current legal and policy framework, including the *Children Act 2004* and revisions to guidance and regulations (DCSF 2010a). Local authorities acting as 'corporate parents' and the Every Child Matters universal outcomes are central to this framework: What if this was my young person, would it be good enough for them?

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (GB. Statutes 2000) was introduced in England and Wales in October 2001 against a background of wide variations between local authorities in the range and quality of services for care leavers. The Act's main aims are to: delay young people's transitions from care until they are prepared and ready to leave; strengthen the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care; provide better personal support for young people after care; and improve the financial arrangements for care leavers. The key responsibilities are: a duty to assist young people until they are at least 21, or longer if they are in approved programmes of education or training; a duty to assess and meet the needs of young people in and leaving care; pathway planning; financial support; maintenance in suitable accommodation; and a duty to keep in touch by the 'responsible authority'. Guidance to the Act, currently under revision, outlines how local authorities might be expected to apply the legal requirements so that young people can access suitable accommodation (DH 2001; DCSF 2010a).

The *Homelessness Act 2002* (GB. Statutes 2002) places a duty on housing and social services departments to develop joint strategies to prevent homelessness among vulnerable groups, including care leavers. The *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)* identifies both housing and children's services' roles in addressing the high risk of homelessness for care leavers (NCAS 2009). The non-statutory guidance, *Joint working between housing and children's services: preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people* (CLG and DCSF 2008), provides examples of good practice, information and resources. It proposes that children and housing services should have: a formal joint working protocol; joint working arrangements for promoting and planning care

leavers' transition to adulthood; and a joint protocol to ensure a quick, safe and supportive response to care leavers at risk of homelessness.

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of *R (G) v London Borough of Southwark*. The Lords ruled that the primary duty to a homeless 16- or 17-year-old is under the *Children Act 1989* (GB. Statutes 1989) and that the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will normally fall to the children's services authority. The judgement made it clear that children's services cannot avoid their duty to accommodate a homeless 16 -or 17-year-old under Section 20 of the *Children Act 1989* by claiming they were providing assistance by using their powers under Section 17 of the Act, or by helping the young person to get accommodation through homelessness legislation. Young people who are accommodated under Section 20 are 'looked-after' children who will in due course become entitled to services under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000) (as detailed above).

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (GB. Statutes 2008) provisions (due for staged implementation from 2011) include a new statutory requirement that 'a local authority cannot move a looked-after child to independent living arrangements without first conducting a statutory review of the care plan and that, where such a move takes place, it does not automatically result in the child leaving care. That is an entirely separate decision that must also be reviewed' (NCAS 2008). There will be a presumption that young people will continue to be looked-after up to the age of 18. The Act will also extend entitlement to the support of a personal adviser up to the age of 25 for care leavers who start or resume a programme of education or training after the age of 21. In a similar vein, the government has enabled local authorities to pilot: young people 'staying put' with foster carers until age 21; the involvement of young people in deciding when they move to independence through Right2BeCared4; and social pedagogic approaches in children's homes. Revisions to the *Children Act 1989* regulations and guidance are currently being made (GB. Statues 1989; DCSF 2008a, 2010a).

Also, the consultation process on the *Planning transition to adulthood for looked after children guidance and on the amended children (leaving care) (England) regulations* was closed on 25 March 2010, and the final guidance and amended regulations are awaited (DCSF 2010a).

The allocation of social housing through **choice-based lettings** (to be in place by 2010) recognises those in priority need, including certain care leavers, and there are new government targets for increasing social rented accommodation. Also, the government provided funding through the 'Co-location Fund' for nine projects to encourage local authorities to develop a range of housing options for care leavers.

Finally, in terms of the dynamic policy context: in April 2010 (in response to *R (G) v London Borough of Southwark* detailed above) the government issued guidance to children services and local housing authorities to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people (*Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation* (2010) (DCSF and CLG 2010); the (then) DCSF have funded *Journeys to home: care leavers' successful transition to independent accommodation*, a good-practice guide prepared by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) aimed at supporting local authorities in ensuring their young people are in safe, secure and affordable housing (NCAS 2009);

NCAS has carried out a survey of young people's views of 'What is suitable accommodation?', to contribute to the government's consultation on Schedule 6 of the Care Planning regulations (see page 6 above) (NCAS 2010a); NCAS also made proposals for local authorities, acting as 'corporate parents' to provide financial support to care leavers in further education until they are aged 21 – so they do not have to access the benefits system earlier than their peers. This will include financial support to maintain accommodation (NCAS 2010b).

Research context

The contribution of different theoretical perspectives to a greater understanding of the main findings from empirical studies of young people leaving care, including those discussed in this review, has received some attention. Set in the context of social exclusion, work on attachment, transitions and resilience builds upon important earlier empirical and theoretical foundations that have particular relevance to this review (see Stein (2006b) for seminal works and references on these perspectives).

Social exclusion has come to mean both material disadvantage and marginalisation. Whereas the former is usually associated with low income and relative poverty, the latter refers to the way groups may be excluded, omitted or stigmatised by the majority, due to personal characteristics or experiences, such as being in care. In this context, international research from the mid-1980s has shown the high risk of social exclusion, on both these dimensions, for young people leaving care, including the high risk for them of homelessness and poor housing outcomes. This evidence has contributed to a greater awareness of their reduced life chances, their links with other excluded groups of young people and variations in services, as well as providing a focus for interventions.

Attachment theory is relevant to understanding the experiences of young people whose early family relationships have been disrupted, often by their experience of abuse and neglect, and who require compensatory attachments, stability and continuity in their lives. However, studies from the mid-1980s show that some of these young people may go on to experience a lot of further placement disruption while in care. This may contribute to some young people becoming more detached from their carers and other social relationships and institutions, moving a lot after they leave care for negative reasons and being unable to settle in their accommodation.

Research on **transitions** shows that many young people who leave care may have a very short and severe journey to adulthood. They have to cope with major changes in their lives – including leaving care and settling in accommodation, often in a new area, leaving school and finding work, or going to college – far younger, as well as in a far shorter time, than many other young people. These accelerated and compressed transitions may deny care leavers the psychological opportunity of dealing with these major issues over time, which is how most young people are able to cope with their journey into adulthood.

Resilience can be defined as the quality that enables some young people to find fulfilment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone, or the pressures they may experience. Bringing together research on resilience of young people from disadvantaged family backgrounds with outcome studies of care leavers

from the mid-1980s shows that the resilience of young people leaving care can be promoted through: good quality placements providing attachment, stability and continuity; helping young people develop health, wellbeing and a sense of identity; providing a positive experience of education; opportunities for participation, turning points and problem-solving in their lives, including preparation; and gradual and well-supported transitions from care into adulthood. These are the foundations of young people leaving care achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes.

3. The evidence base

This section provides an overview of the extent of the evidence base. For this knowledge review, the evidence base consisted of four main sources:

- A literature harvest updating the existing research review (Stein 2009a).
- Stakeholder views gained through C4EO organised consultation with: service providers; birth parents who have, or have had, children in care; members of the parent and carers panel; and young people participating in the podcasting workshops.
- Two validated practice examples assessed by experts as relating to increasing the numbers of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation', and as having a positive impact on outcomes.
- Data from national datasets, including data from known government publications and data published by the Office for National Statistics.

Twenty-one new references were assessed as relevant and incorporated into the knowledge review, resulting in 119 references in total. This included literature that was intended to fill gaps identified in the research review (Stein 2009a), or related to relevant literature published after the review. The following updates were incorporated:

- four new references were included in the policy context
- nine new references were included in answer to the first review question
- four new references were included in answer to the second review question (one also included in the policy context)
- three new references were included in answer to the third review question
- one new reference was included in answer to the fourth review question.

The research review details the evidence base (Stein 2009a). In respect of the updates incorporated in the research questions, these are as follows:

What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and independent sector, including housing services and housing support services for looked-after children and young people (LACY)?

The nine new references in answering this question include:

- The effect of support services for transition to adulthood/leaving care on the adult outcomes of looked-after young people (a systematic research review).
- A literature review and new findings from the Young People from a Public Care Background Pathways to Education in Europe project (YIPPEE).

In addition, there is new evidence from: the DCSF Ministerial Stocktake Report; a small-scale mental health survey; and more general literature on leaving care.

Overall, as identified in the research review, most of the studies are empirical, non-evaluative and based on interviews. The inclusion of the additional research review and new empirical material is helpful in addressing this question.

What are LACYP's views on what constitutes safe and settled accommodation and how do they compare to those of policy-makers, housing and children's services personnel and independent sector providers?

The four new references used in answering this question include a 2010 survey carried out by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) of young people's views about 'suitable accommodation', and surveys of young people's experiences of care and leaving care carried out by the Children's Rights Director for England. As identified in the research review, there are still gaps in the research evidence: of young people's experiences of extended placements; what young people value about continued support from carers; and young people's contact with birth families.

What do we know about the contribution made to being in safe, settled accommodation of LACYP by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, supported housing staff and birth families, and interventions to support this contribution?

As identified in the research review there is very little published research evidence that relates directly to interventions, training, assessment and support that makes any difference to the skills and behaviours of foster carers or residential workers in helping young people find and sustain a home. The role of birth families is also largely overlooked in the literature. Three new references were identified in response to this question, including a survey of family and friends care, early research on family involvement in supporting young people leaving care, and peer research on the views of care leavers.

What do we know about the 12.6 per cent of young people not in suitable accommodation at age 19 (as defined by national indicator 147)?

Only one further reference, a policy paper, was incorporated within the answer to this question. Overall, as for the research review, the evidence is a mix of descriptive and evaluative studies, with evaluations of services to homeless care leavers largely North American-based. Both the UK and US literature emphasise the importance of independent living schemes.

Gaps in the evidence base

- Methodologically, there is a lack of variety in the types of studies available. The majority are descriptive, non-experimental empirical studies using small samples and a qualitative methodology.
- Where effectiveness studies are available, they tend to be North American-based and do not capture young people's views on accessibility and acceptability of services and intervention.
- Intervention studies deal primarily with programmes and preventative services delivered prior to leaving care. Services for young people who have left care, who

subsequently experience homelessness or housing difficulties are only identified in a small number of studies.

- There is a lack of material to review the interventions, training, assessment and support that makes any difference to the skills and behaviours of foster carers, residential workers or kinship carers in helping young people find and sustain a home – as well as little material on the role of birth families.
- There is some literature on care leavers' experience of homelessness within care leavers' research and some within the literature on youth homelessness (the latter beyond the scope of this review).
- While housing is included in many of the studies, the housing perspective is often less evident. This may be due to disciplinary distinction with studies largely classed as 'social care' rather than 'housing' research. This may contribute to less attention being paid to the impact of structural and inter-agency dynamics on care leavers' ability to find safe, settled accommodation.
- Within the inclusion age range (13 to 25), there is a lack of research evidence of young people's transitions to adulthood (21 to 25), as distinct from at the time of leaving care (16 to 20). This means we know very little about the experiences of young adults in managing their accommodation, including what may contribute to their successes or the difficulties that they may experience.

4. The accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions for looked-after children and young people

This section seeks to identify what we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and independent sector, including housing services and housing support services, for looked-after children and young people (LACY).

Key messages

- How young people fare in respect of their housing is in part connected to the quality of care they receive, their transitions from care, the services they receive and the reinforcing and connected pathways to adulthood, including education, employment and wellbeing.
- Leaving care services work well in assisting most young people in accessing housing, in supporting them in managing their accommodation and in helping them when they get into difficulties. However, there is evidence of wide variations between local authorities in the provision of 'suitable accommodation'.
- The experience of being in higher education can assist young people in being in 'settled, safe accommodation', by providing them with the opportunity of moving into, and then on from, more sheltered accommodation to independent accommodation during their course. In this way, they will gain experience of looking after themselves, budgeting and negotiating with landlords, before moving to their own accommodation.
- More attention should be given to the accommodation and support needs of: young parents; the community and family links of black and minority ethnic young people when they leave care; asylum-seeking young people; and vulnerable young people returning from 'out of authority' placements.
- More attention should be given to the preparation skills of young men.
- Services for disabled care leavers should be coordinated and planned better with mainstream leaving care services.
- Services for young people with mental health problems need to be better coordinated, particularly in the transition between child and adult mental health services and across local authorities, or NHS boundaries.

This section of the review, incorporating nine new references, is based on 73 items. This includes, first, UK studies that focus on leaving care services, including the implementation of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GBN. Statlutes 2000), and the outcomes of leaving care services. Second, it includes North American-based evaluations of independent living programmes (ILPs) initiated by state governments. Differences in culture, legal and policy

frameworks, services and care contexts between the UK and the US, suggest the need for caution in making comparisons, including the implications for policy and practice (Stein and Munro 2008; Courtney and Thoburn 2009).

The development of leaving care services (UK) and independent living programmes (US)

The material included in this sub-section is contextual and mainly descriptive. It is drawn from the references cited in the text.

Leaving care services

In the UK specialist leaving care schemes have been introduced, particularly since the mid-1980s, to respond to the core needs of care leavers for assistance with accommodation, finance, education and careers, life skills, and personal support networks. The early schemes were, in the main, provided by the third sector, had small numbers of staff and access was limited to selected young people leaving children's homes within a local authority. However, the pioneering work of the early individual schemes and projects contributed to the development of authority-wide leaving care provision (Stein 2004).

Organisational models of leaving care services in the UK include:

- a centrally organised specialist service
- a geographically dispersed specialist service
- a non-specialist leaving care service
- a centrally organised integrated service for a range of vulnerable young people including care leavers, homeless young people and young offenders.

(Dixon *et al* 2004; Dixon and Stein 2005)

Variations of these models include specialist dual-system arrangements, where the young person is assisted by a specialist leaving care team but statutory responsibility is retained by the social worker and looked-after adolescent teams (Vernon 2000).

Research completed since the introduction of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000) in England and Wales, suggests the emergence of a 'corporate parenting case model'. Its main features are twofold: first, case responsibility is held by the designated personal adviser whose responsibilities include needs assessment, pathway planning and the provision of support and advice; second, the increased role played by a range of agencies, representing a shift from more informal inter-agency links to more formal agreements, as specified in the needs assessment and pathway planning requirements of the Act. This has included the setting up of multi-disciplinary teams with housing, employment and health specialists working alongside personal advisers (Dixon *et al* 2004; Hai and Williams 2004; Stein 2004; Broad 2005).

Independent living programmes

In the United States, also from the mid-1980s, Congressional concern about the extent to which young people 'aging out of care' were prepared to manage their lives led to the passage of the *Independent Living Initiative Law* in 1985. This law authorised funds for states to establish and carry out programmes to assist young people aged 16 and older to make the transition to independent living, leading to the development of a national network of independent living programmes (ILPs).

Since then the legal and policy framework has been strengthened, most recently by the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008*, which extended the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program to include young people who after the age of 16 leave foster care for kinship care, guardianship or adoption. It also introduces a new requirement for a 'personalised transitions plan' (Collins and Clay 2009). The strengthening of the legal framework can be seen in the context of growing evidence of the poor outcomes for care leavers (Courtney *et al* 2001; Courtney and Dworsky 2006; Pecora *et al* 2006). Research evidence from Canada is being used to recommend similar changes (Tweddle 2007).

ILPs may include life-training skills, mentoring programmes, transitional housing, health and behavioural health services, educational services and employment services. They generally employ social skills techniques such as instruction, modelling, role play and feedback: approaches that have been shown to improve skills for young people in clinical and non-clinical settings (Montgomery *et al* 2006). It has been suggested by Courtney and Terao (2002) that focusing on the range of services may detract from common programme elements including: case management and their underlying philosophy – many adopt a youth development philosophy that emphasises opportunities for young people to contribute to their community, increase their personal confidence and provide guidance to other young people. They also suggest that ILPs may be provided as one part of a wider range of services and there is evidence of variation in local state policies – for example, in allowing young people to remain in care longer or providing financial support for college education (Courtney and Terao 2002).

The implementation of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

There have been a small number of research studies and surveys evaluating the work of leaving care services in England and Wales since the introduction of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (Vernon 2000; Broad 2003, 2005; Dixon *et al* 2004; Hai and Williams 2004; Barn *et al* 2005; Harris and Broad 2005; Wheal and Matthews 2007; Simon 2008). These studies suggest the legislation is contributing to a number of positive changes:

- the increases in the percentages of young people living in supported accommodation and shared or transitional support accommodation
- the increased take-up of further education and reductions in those not in education, employment and training, directly linked to improvements in financial support for young people provided by local authorities
- a strengthening of leaving care responsibilities, especially through the introduction of needs assessment and pathway planning
- more formalised inter-agency work and multi-agency teams

- increased funding for leaving care teams.

However, there is also evidence that:

- young people continue to leave care at a younger age than other young people leave the family home
- divisions between better and poorer funded leaving care services before and after the Act are likely to remain
- young people's healthcare remains a low priority within leaving care teams
- services for young parents, young unaccompanied asylum and refugee seekers, and young people from care remanded in custody, were predominantly reported as 'remaining the same' since the introduction of the Act.

Research on the experiences of specific groups of young people since the introduction of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act* shows:

- Black and minority ethnic young people, including those of mixed heritage, face similar challenges to other young people leaving care. However, they may also experience identity problems derived from a lack of knowledge of their background, or contact with family and community, as well as the impact of racism and discrimination (Barn *et al* 2005).
- Young disabled people may experience inadequate planning and poor consultation, and their transitions from care may be abrupt or delayed by restricted housing and employment options and poor support after care (Priestley *et al* 2003).
- Earlier research, prior to 2003, showed that unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were likely to receive poorer housing (including bed and breakfast accommodation) and other services than looked-after young people, especially in respect of support from leaving care teams (Stanley 2001; Hai and Williams 2004). Subsequent research identified distinctive care pathways for unaccompanied young people according to age, with younger children tending to enter foster or residential care under Section 20 of the *Children Act 1989* and a much larger group of older young people (mostly aged 15 to 17 at arrival) being supported in the community under Section 17 provisions. This latter group were found to be significantly disadvantaged with respect to quality of accommodation, educational progress and social work support, including access to leaving care services (Wade *et al* 2005). Evidence suggests that young people placed in independent settings continue to face greater adversity than those in more highly supported accommodation. This includes evidence of high levels of unmet mental health needs and transitions being affected by their asylum claims (Chase *et al* 2008).

Department of Health (2003) guidance on the appropriate use of Section 17 accommodation and the findings of the Hillingdon Judicial Review have led to improved access to Section 20 accommodation and leaving care services.¹ Some evidence of early progress was found in 2005 (Refugee Council 2005), but emerging findings from an ongoing study into the fostering experiences of unaccompanied young people

¹ Hillingdon Judgement: *R (Behr and others) v Hillingdon Borough Council* (2003) EWHC 2075 (Admin).

suggest there is now a predominant use of Section 20 accommodation and that most young people are able to access leaving care services, at least until their right to remain is removed.² However, whether these welcome juridical reforms are leading to substantive changes in the range of supported accommodation options available for this group of young people needs to be the subject of further research.

- Leaving care teams and, in particular, personal advisers play an important role in assisting young people with mental health problems. However, there is evidence of the need to better coordinate services, particularly in the transition between child and adult mental health services, and across local authorities or NHS boundaries. Young people with mental health problems require a higher level of support between 16 and 21 years of age and there is also evidence of a lack of appropriate accommodation for care leavers with mental health difficulties (Lamont *et al* 2009).
- Although the numbers are small, young women who have been in care are more likely to become teenage parents than other young people and many have short-term difficulties in finding suitable accommodation, as well as accessing additional personal and financial support. Where leaving care services are involved they tend to offer a wide range of support and young parents appreciate this. For some young people parenthood is a very positive experience and it can also contribute to an improvement in family relationships (Barn *et al* 2005; Chase and Knight 2006; Lewis 2006; Wade 2008).

This picture has been added to by a recent Ofsted survey (2009) based on visits to six local authorities, four secure provisions, and the views of 103 care leavers. This suggests improvements have been made in:

- transitional planning for care leavers with disabilities
- building links between ethnic minority care leavers and their local community groups, assisted by interpreters, the training of carers and workforce recruitment
- meeting the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people by additional specialist training, targeted support and interventions to meet their additional needs
- providing access to additional personal and financial support for young parents.

(Ofsted 2009)

There is also evidence in the survey of improvements in access to health services by the greater flexibility and informal approaches adopted by looked-after children's nurses. This includes nurses being based part-time in leaving care teams, visiting young people in their homes, offering advice to personal advisers and developing access to other services, including substance abuse, drug and alcohol, sexual health, and child and adolescent mental health services. In respect of the four secure establishments, the survey revealed an absence of pathway plans from young people's home-area local authority, although, by contrast, there was evidence of good support to young people while in secure accommodation from the local

² Personal correspondence provided by Jim Wade, SPRU, University of York. The fostering project is being funded by the Big Lottery and undertaken in partnership with the British Association for Adoption and Fostering and the University of Bedfordshire.

authorities, integrated working with youth-offending teams, and clear exit strategies for young people on release (Ofsted 2009).

The outcomes of independent living programmes (US) and leaving care services (UK)

The outcomes of independent living programmes

Concerns about the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of ILPs, despite their widespread use in the United States, led to the first systematic review with rigorous inclusion criteria. This found no randomised or quasi-randomised controlled studies worldwide evaluating the effectiveness of ILPs (Donkoh *et al* 2006; Montgomery *et al* 2006). However, as Montgomery *et al* suggest 'despite a lack of randomisation, the available research evidence may still provide informative data to researchers and practitioners' (Montgomery *et al* 2006 p 1437). Eight papers were identified from the systematic review that met all the inclusion criteria apart from random assignment. These assessed the effectiveness of ILPs by comparing them to usual care, no intervention or another intervention.

This review shows that in almost every study, ILP participants did better than non-participants for housing, educational attainment, employment, health and life skills outcomes. In the areas of housing and educational attainment, the findings were statistically significant in some of the studies. All eight studies examining housing report more favourable outcomes for ILP participants, including:

- a significantly higher proportion of young people living independently at follow-up
- young people moving significantly fewer times and experiencing less homelessness.

However, although ILP participants did better than the population of care leavers, they were still poorer than the general population of young people. The review evidence did not allow reviewers to identify which elements of ILPs are most effective, which young people may benefit most from ILPs, or the mechanisms by which ILPs may influence outcomes (Montgomery *et al* 2006).

Everson-Hock *et al* (2010) carried out a systematic review of 'the effectiveness of support services for transition to adulthood/leaving care for improving a range of adult outcomes for looked-after young people, compared with no intervention or usual care' (p 6). The transitional support services were delivered to young people aged between 15 and 19 who were about to leave full-time care. They identified seven studies that met their inclusion criteria. These were carried out between 1991 and 2005; six were conducted in the United States, with one UK study. Data on education, employment, offending behaviour, pregnancy and parenthood, housing and homelessness and health were considered 'sufficiently measured across studies' for the data to be integrated in the review (p 8).

The review found there was 'moderate evidence' (p 8) that transitional support services had a positive effect on housing and independent living, in that those that received support services were more likely to have a place to live and be living independently than those who did not receive services. The evidence as regards homelessness (four studies reviewed) was more mixed: two studies reported that those who received support services

were less likely to have had a homeless episode at discharge or to have ever been without a place to sleep, where as two other studies showed no difference between those who had and had not received support services. The review also suggested that transition support services can have a beneficial effect on the adult outcomes for looked-after young people for education, employment and parenthood. Finally, the lack of detail on individual components of interventions and services meant that it was not possible to assess their impact.

Naccarato and DeLorenzo (2008) reviewed 19 studies on independent living in order to identify their practice implications. The main implications for ILPs in relation to housing include:

- encouraging young people to maintain long-term relationships with foster carers and other supportive adults so they have a place to live during difficult times
- building links with the range of housing providers
- the development and funding of transitional living programmes, including ongoing support counselling and assistance.

Several non-randomised studies have evaluated individual ILPs using, in the main, interviews with staff and young people and different outcome measures (Reilly 2003; Rashid 2004; Georgiades 2005a and b; Freundlich and Avery 2006; Freundlich *et al* 2007; Geenen *et al* 2007; Giffords *et al* 2007; Goyette 2007; Naccarato and DeLorenzo 2008). The main focus of these studies has been to identify the key messages for service providers and – given the methodological restraints – they should be viewed as providing pointers. These include:

- the importance of early preparation and consistent attendance at ILPs and preparation being geared to the real challenges young people face
- involving young people and different agencies more in transitional planning
- personalising planning arrangements to meet the individual needs of young people
- encouraging social experimentation to allow young people to put the skills they have gained into practice.
- providing supported transitional living programmes for homeless care leavers, as a route into stable accommodation
- paying more attention to parenting skills, sexual behaviour and risks, and substance abuse
- being in employment before leaving care and providing ongoing support in the community
- developing more specialised responses to the needs of young people with disabilities and mental health problems
- providing interdisciplinary case management services: counselling; adult and peer mentors; employment advice
- outcome-assessment tools to enable staff to constantly assess and re-evaluate programme goals and services.

There is some evidence that many young people learn their independent living skills from their foster or residential carers, before joining an ILP, and some of these young people maintain contact with their past caseworkers. The same study emphasises the importance of collaboration between ILPs and foster, residential and family carers (Lemon *et al* 2005). There is also limited evidence that the positive outcomes of extended aftercare services for young people represents a cost saving, when taking into account the costs associated with dropping out of school, becoming a drug user or criminal (Kerman *et al* 2004).

The literature on ILPs, discussed in the wider context of research evidence of normative youth transitions in the United States shows: first, how parental support (emotional and financial) continues well into adulthood; second, the large percentages of young people who return to their family home at some time after they leave; and third, the contribution of social policy in supporting or inhibiting successful youth transitions (Collins 2001). It is suggested that services for young people leaving care should be more integrated with the child welfare system and youth policy more generally (Collins 2004).

The outcomes of leaving care services

In the UK, since 1995, there have been a small number of studies evaluating the outcomes of leaving care services. These include follow-up studies adopting outcome measures, policy surveys and studies of young people's views and experiences. The studies drawn on are cited within the text and include material related to accommodation, education, employment and training, and 'doing well'. Outcome evidence from the *Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009* and Ofsted inspection is also used (DCSF 2009a; Ofsted 2009). However, there are no randomised or quasi-randomised controlled studies.

Accommodation

The numbers of care leavers living in suitable accommodation after moving on from their care placement has steadily increased from 77 per cent in 2004 to 90 per cent in 2009 (DCSF 2009a). The studies adopting outcome measures show that leaving care services can make a positive contribution to specific outcomes for care leavers. In relation to accommodation these studies show:

First, leaving care services are effective in assisting most young people leaving care in accessing housing. This includes:

- Setting up a young person's accommodation on leaving care and liaising with housing providers (housing officers and departments, housing associations and voluntary sector housing projects) as advocates for care leavers.
- The success of this process is underpinned by good relationships between the care leaver and the leaving care team and good communication between leaving care teams and housing providers.
- It is also assisted by corporate housing strategies, formal arrangements and agreed protocols between leaving care services and housing providers.

(Dixon and Stein 2005; Wade and Dixon 2006; Simon 2008; Ofsted 2009)

Implicit in this process is the approval of the 'suitability of the provider' by the 'responsible authority' (as detailed in the regulations and guidance to the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*, see Introduction) although there is little specific reference to this in the research literature.

Second, studies of initial access to housing and follow-up studies, show that most young people receive the accommodation they want on leaving care and have good outcomes after leaving care (Dixon and Stein 2005; Wade and Dixon 2006; Cameron *et al* 2007; Simon 2008). In these studies positive outcomes were associated with:

- having access to 'good' housing on leaving care: those who failed to secure good housing arrangements early on tended to fare worse over the follow-up period
- having good-quality support in accommodation after leaving care
- receiving adequate planning and preparation prior to leaving care, so they had developed strong life and social skills
- being engaged in education, employment or training
- having a positive sense of their own wellbeing
- having a network of informal support, including family and friends.

Third, there is evidence that being settled and happy in accommodation after leaving care is associated with an enhanced sense of wellbeing, which is to some extent independent of young people's past care experiences or being unsettled at the point of leaving care (Wade and Dixon 2006). This suggests that housing has a very important and positive mediating role for young people leaving care.

Fourth, there is evidence, particularly in rural areas of a shortage of housing and increased dependency on the private sector for provision (Ofsted 2009). Bed and breakfast accommodation is being used as a short-term measure to accommodate asylum-seeking young people and those whose behaviour is described as 'chaotic' (Ofsted 2009).

Fifth, the Care Matters stocktake showed evidence of wide variations between local authorities in the provision of 'suitable accommodation': 17 local authorities had all their care leavers in suitable accommodation, but 18 local authorities only had between 60 to 79 per cent (DCSF 2009a).

Sixth, and discussed in more detail below, many young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, mental health problems, persistent offending or substance-misuse problems and young disabled people are likely to have the poorest housing outcomes.

As well as accommodation, there is evidence that leaving care services can also assist young people with the connected and often reinforcing pathways to adulthood, including having the life skills to manage in their accommodation (discussed below) and being in education, employment or training.

Education, employment and careers

Studies have also consistently shown poor educational and employment outcomes for young people leaving care (Barn *et al* 2005; Dixon and Stein 2005; Mallon 2005; Stein 2005b; Wade and Dixon 2006; Cameron *et al* 2007; Cashmore *et al* 2007; Stein and Munro 2008). These studies suggest that successful educational outcomes are more closely associated with:

- placement quality – feeling loved and part of the family
- stability and continuity
- being looked-after longer, more often – although not exclusively – achieved in foster care placements
- being female
- high carer expectations and a supportive and encouraging environment for study.

Without these foundations post-16 employment, education and training outcomes are also likely to be very poor.

Validated local practice example

Maintaining young people in stable placements and providing them with support and continuity

Southampton City Council has introduced the Dreamwall's 'Time Out' programme for young people within or at risk of entering the care system. This provides young people deemed to be at risk of placement breakdown with a four-day residential activity break during the summer and a subsequent package of 12 weekends throughout the year. It provides longevity of service for young people (an assured four years) and extended service provision for young people aged 16 to 18 years of age. The programme was initially designed to prevent foster care placement breakdown and excessive use of respite care. Since 2004, 182 young people have taken part and participated in a range of leisure activities, including sports, outdoor, drama, arts and crafts, as well as group discussions and team games. Since its introduction Southampton has experienced: a 95 per cent reduction in foster carers leaving the service as a result of discontent or burn out; improvements in placement stability; and improvements in educational attainment. It is also seen by young people as 'a non-stigmatising programme, widening their opportunities. It has had success in engaging and retaining 'hard to reach' young people. The longevity of the programme, through working with the same young people over time, enhances integrated working with other providers including: colleges, employers, health services; crime prevention and the children's trust.

A literature review drawing on research from five European Union countries (Denmark, England, Hungary, Spain and Sweden) – collaborating in the Young People from a Public Care Background Pathways to Education in Europe (YIPPEE) project – showed that the participation rates of young people from care were much lower than those in the general population (Hojer *et al* 2008). Findings from the literature review and empirical data based on the views of 38 leaving care managers in England suggest that young people will be helped by: high expectations of social workers and carers; stability of placements and

schooling; enabling young people to stay in care throughout their studies; consistent and reliable financial and practical support; individual motivation and self-confidence related to high-quality placements; having a specific person within the team with an educational remit; having further and higher education mentors; and working closely with colleges to develop support plan mentors (Jackson and Cameron 2009a and b).

Personal and professional support is important to young people in developing and pursuing their career options (Morgan 2009a). The Ofsted survey provides examples of local authorities using their strategic position as an employer to help young people into work within the council and with independent employers, and the contribution of specialist employment workers based in leaving care teams (Ofsted 2009). Evidence from service providers highlights the importance of partnerships with industry to create more work experiences and apprenticeship schemes (C4EO knowledge workshops). The From Care2Work project brings together local and national partners, including central government, employers, local authorities and third-sector organisations to create career opportunities for young people in and from care (www.leavingcare.org/professionals/projects/fromcare2work).

Encouragement from family members could also help young people stay engaged with education, employment and training. Generally, these studies found that young people, who left care earlier – at 16 or 17 years old – had more unsettled carer careers and challenging behaviour. They were also more likely to be unemployed and have very poor outcomes. Young people with mental health or emotional or behavioural difficulties were particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes (Wade and Dixon 2006).

Research has shown that young people who go on to higher education are more likely to have had stable care experiences, a positive experience of school, continuity in their schooling which may compensate for placement movement, been encouraged by their birth parents, even though they were unable to care for them, and have been greatly assisted by their foster carers in their schooling (Allen 2003; Jackson *et al* 2003, 2005; Merdinger and Hines 2005).

The experience of higher education can also assist young people in being in 'settled, safe accommodation'. It can provide them with the opportunity of moving into, and then on from, more sheltered accommodation (such as a hall of residence) in their first year, to flat sharing in their second and third years. In this way, they will gain experience of looking after themselves, budgeting and negotiating with landlords, before moving to their own accommodation. There is evidence of local authorities working in partnership with universities to raise care leavers' expectations and improve access, through residential summer programmes (Mann 2005).

'Doing well'

Research into the outcomes for young people leaving foster care has identified key variables that distinguished those 'doing well' after leaving care – including being settled in their accommodation – from those who were less successful (Sinclair *et al* 2005): a strong attachment with a family member, partner or partner's family or foster carer was associated with a good outcome. Conversely, those young people who were assessed as 'disturbed' at first contact – and this correlated with other key variables including performance at school, placement disruption and attachment disorder – had poorer outcomes. Another variable, involvement in work, although identified by foster carers as an indication of success, was seen

by young people as problematic, especially low-paid, unfulfilling work. Young people being seen as ready and willing to leave care was also associated with the 'doing well' outcome measure.

Outcome evidence from Ofsted's inspection

Ofsted's inspection survey provides a different type of evidence from the research studies. They identified the features that were associated with good outcomes for care leavers in the six authorities and services they visited. This included:

- high aspirations for care leavers, supported by corporate parenting strategies, coordinated partnerships and the delivery of effective coordinated services
- a recognition of 'leaving care' as a process of transition; and a commitment to support young people into adulthood through positive experiences, planning, preparation and needs-led packages of support
- leaving care workers having a strong commitment and positive, robust relationships with care leavers
- young people being involved in planning, development, commissioning recruitment and training processes in order to bring about improvements in the quality of leaving care services. (Ofsted 2009 p 6)

Resilience and outcome groups

The studies drawn on in this section of the review suggest that how young people fare in respect of their housing is in part connected to their lives in care, their transitions from care and the services they receive after care. A synthesis of outcome studies identified within the text (Jackson *et al* 2003, 2005; Dixon *et al* 2004; earlier studies reviewed in Stein 2004; Dixon and Stein 2005; Sinclair *et al* 2005; Wade and Dixon 2006; Cameron *et al* 2007; Simon 2008), linking them with research on resilience, suggests that young people may broadly fall into one of three outcome groups: those successfully 'moving on' from care, those 'surviving' and those who are 'strugglers' (Stein 2005a, 2006a; Stein and Munro 2008). However, it is recognised that this material could be synthesised differently using other outcome frameworks.

Moving on

Young people who successfully 'move on' from care are likely to have:

- had stability and continuity in their lives, including a secure attachment relationship
- made sense of their family relationships so they could psychologically move on from them
- achieved some educational success before leaving care.

Their preparation had been gradual, they had left care later and their moving on was likely to have been planned. Participating in further or higher education, having a job they liked or being a parent themselves played a significant part in 'feeling normal'. They welcomed the challenge

of moving on, living in their own accommodation and gaining more control over their lives. They saw this as improving their confidence and self-esteem. In general, their resilience had been enhanced by their experiences both in and after care. They had been able to make good use of the help they had been offered, often maintaining contact and support from former carers. They were, in the main, living in 'settled, safe accommodation'.

Survivors

The second group, the 'survivors', had experienced more instability, movement and disruption while living in care than the 'moving on' group. They were also likely to leave care younger, with few or no qualifications, and often following a breakdown in foster care or a sudden exit from their children's home. They were likely to experience further movement and problems after leaving care, including periods of homelessness, low-paid casual or short-term, unfulfilling work and unemployment. Many in this group saw themselves as 'more tough', as having done things 'off my own back' and as 'survivors' since leaving care. They believed that the many problems they had faced, and often were still coping with, had made them more grown-up and self-reliant – although their view of themselves as independent was often contradicted by the reality of high degrees of agency dependency for assistance with accommodation, money and personal problems.

The research evidence suggests that what makes the difference to 'survivors' lives, including their housing outcomes, is the professional and personal support they receive. Specialist leaving care workers and key workers could assist these young people. Also, mentoring, including mentoring by ex-care young people (or peer mentoring), may assist them during their journey to adulthood; offering them a different type of relationship from professional support or troubled family relationships. Helping these young people in finding and maintaining their accommodation can be critical to their mental health and wellbeing. Families may also help, but returning to them may prove very problematic. Overall, some combination of personal and professional support networks can help them overcome their very poor starting points and help them sustain 'settled, safe accommodation'.

Strugglers

The third group of care leavers was the most disadvantaged in comparison to the two other groups. They had the most damaging pre-care family experiences and, in the main, care was unable to compensate them, or to help them overcome their past difficulties. Their lives in care were likely to include many further placement moves, the largest number of moves of the three groups identified in the different research studies cited above, and the associated disruption to their lives, especially in relation to their personal relationships and education.

They were also likely to have a cluster of difficulties while in care that often began earlier, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, problems at school and getting into trouble. They were the least likely of the groups to have a redeeming relationship with a family member or carer, and were likely to leave care younger, following a placement breakdown. After leaving care they were likely to be unemployed, become homeless and have great difficulties in maintaining their accommodation. They were also highly likely to be lonely, isolated and have mental health problems, often being seen by projects as young people with very complex needs. Aftercare support was very important to them.

5. Views on what constitutes 'settled, safe accommodation'

This section sets out looked-after children and young people's (LACYP's) views on what constitutes safe and settled accommodation and looks at how these views compare to those of policy-makers, housing and children's services personnel and independent sector providers.

Key messages

- Being in 'settled, safe accommodation' is the outcome of a process for young people:
 - choosing when to leave care, not being expected to leave care too early
 - being well prepared in practical, self-care, emotional and interpersonal skills
 - having a choice of accommodation matched to needs
 - being safe
 - being supported by leaving care services, family, friends and mentors
 - having an income or receiving financial assistance
 - being involved.
- Policy-makers and key staff from different agencies should pay attention to the different stages of this process in needs assessment and pathway planning.
- Recognition of these different stages may also alert staff to potential difficulties for young people in accessing and managing their accommodation.
- Increasing the supply of accommodation will be assisted by developing joint protocols and working in partnership with a range of housing providers.
- For many young people the level of leaving care grants does not cover the costs attached to moving and setting up in accommodation.

In answering the review question the evidence is drawn, in the main, from empirical, non-evaluative studies, using small samples. As detailed in Section 3, the studies are largely based on questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with young people, carers and leaving care workers, and carried out in the UK. The studies drawn on are all identified in the body of the text. This section also includes the experiences and opinions of nine 16- to 23-year-olds who had been looked after in foster care, supported accommodation and a residential school. The young people participated in a podcast workshop organised by Action for Children for C4EO. It also includes views from the fifty delegates (mainly service providers) who participated in group discussions on increasing the number of care leavers in safe, settled accommodation at the six C4EO 'Vulnerable Children' knowledge workshops

Most young people look forward to moving on from their families to living in their own accommodation. They may have doubts and uncertainties about whether they will cope but

these will be secondary to their desire to take this big step on the road to adulthood. Today, young people are likely to move into their own accommodation in their early to mid-twenties (typically when they are 24 years old) either from their family home or having had the opportunity to live away from home while being in higher education. They may also return home at times of difficulty. Young people moving on from children's homes and foster care also welcome being 'free' and not being 'constantly watched' (Simon 2008 p 96). But a quarter of young people moving on from children's homes and foster care leave at just 16 years of age and nearly all by the time they are 18 years old (DfES 2006). Their journey to adulthood is shorter, more severe and often more hazardous than for most young people.

What constitutes 'settled, safe accommodation'?

Being in 'settled, safe accommodation' is part of a process involving a number of different stages:

- choosing when to leave care
- being prepared
- having a choice of accommodation
- being safe
- being supported by workers, family, friends and mentors
- receiving financial assistance
- being involved in shaping services.

Having a choice when to leave care

To young people, 'settled, safe accommodation' means having a choice of when they leave care and move on – not just when they become 16, 17 or 18 years old (Morgan and Lindsay 2006). Consistent advice from Scottish young people who had left care to those leaving care in the future was 'don't leave care too soon ... don't believe it's as easy as people tell you, just be mature about it ... don't run before you can walk ... it's not as easy as you think' (Dixon and Stein 2005 p 159). These views are also echoed by leaving care workers and personal advisers. In a survey of their views just over three quarters thought that young people were leaving care at too young an age (although this included some 'older' young people who had left care before the implementation of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (A National Voice 2005). There has also been evidence that foster carers are concerned that young people leave their care before they are ready (Sinclair *et al* 2005). The only survey of housing workers views (a sample of 82 housing workers from nine English regions) found that 80 per cent thought that young people left care too young (A National Voice 2005).

Being prepared for leaving care

Safe and settled accommodation means being well prepared for leaving care. Pathway plans are an important part of both preparation and supporting young people after they leave care. Just over two-thirds of young people surveyed by the Children's Rights Director knew they had a pathway plan, and of those, most (86 per cent) knew what it contained, were involved in the process (80 per cent), agreed fully with it (78 per cent) and were aware that it was being kept

to (70 per cent) (Morgan 2009a). The same survey showed that young people living in children's homes were likely to be prepared for leaving care from the age of 14. Children living in foster care were more likely to start their preparation at an older age. This reflected the planned age of leaving care, which was later for those leaving foster care.

Young people want assistance with:

- practical skills, including budgeting, shopping, cooking and cleaning
- self-care skills, including personal hygiene, diet and health, sexual health, drugs and alcohol advice
- emotional and interpersonal skills, including personal wellbeing, negotiating skills, such as managing encounters with officials, landlords and employers.

(A National Voice 2005; Dixon and Stein 2005; Morgan and Lindsay 2006)

There is evidence that preparation in these three main areas is significantly associated with how well young people cope after leaving care, practical skills and self-care skills having the most measurable effect. Young people who left care later and young women generally did better, the latter suggesting that more attention should be paid to the preparation skills of young men (Dixon and Stein 2005). Evaluations of good practice in regard to preparation point to the importance of:

- Assessment to identify young people's needs and how they will be met – this is an important part of the needs assessment and pathway planning process under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*.
- Involving young people fully in the planning process – although not all young people feel that they are being involved enough in this critical process and plans are not always updated (although recent case law (*Liverpool City Council v London Borough of Hillingdon*, 2009) suggests the 'wishes' of the young person were 'not determinative', and have to be considered in the context of 'assessed needs' and 'welfare'; this should not be seen as contrary to involving young people fully in the planning process).
- Providing ongoing support and opportunities for participation, involving discussion, negotiation and risk-taking.
- The gradual learning of skills, in the context of a stable placement.
- Providing continuity of staff during care and at the time of leaving care.
- Carers being trained to assist care leavers.

(Stein 2004; Ofsted 2009)

Also, preparation should be responsive to ethnic diversity and any disability the young person may have (Priestley *et al* 2003; Barn *et al* 2005). Specialist leaving care schemes and programmes can assist carers with the development of skills training programmes, and by offering intensive compensatory help at the aftercare stage (York Consulting 2007).

Choice of accommodation

Young people want a choice of accommodation matched to their needs. A National Voice surveyed 271 young people and found that over half of young people (55 per cent) felt 'they had no real choice', and a third (32 per cent) that the accommodation failed 'to meet their needs' (A National Voice 2005). Another survey of young people's views (132 young people) showed that just under a quarter of young people considered they were in the wrong accommodation for them, and just under 60 per cent thought their accommodation right for them. In the same survey, just under three quarters of young people rated the standard of accommodation as either good or very good and one in ten rated their accommodation as bad or very bad (Morgan 2009a).

The range of first accommodation identified in care leavers' studies includes (Wade and Dixon 2006; Simon 2008):

- young people returning to their birth families
- young people staying on in foster care after they legally leave care, which may become 'supported lodgings'
- supported accommodation (supported lodgings, hostels, foyers (providing supported hostel accommodation), independent housing with floating support and trainer flats)
- independent housing (council and private tenancies)
- other settings (bed and breakfast accommodation, friends, custody).

A range of options is important in providing choice and this is likely to be influenced by local housing markets, as well as the contribution of the local authority acting as 'corporate parents' in securing access and supply for young people leaving care (Rainer 2007; NCAS 2009).

Service providers have highlighted the different ways they have increased the supply of accommodation, including: developing joint protocols and working in partnership with housing authorities and associations; providing training for the Corporate Parenting Board on the accommodation needs of care leavers, and involving young people in this process; setting up 'corporate buy-ins' for looked-after young people, involving councillors; using 'supporting people' funding; piloting 'staying put' foster placements; providing financial support for 'families and friends' care; employing a housing officer to develop a range of provision in rural areas; and working regionally with other local authorities and housing providers. Service providers have also drawn attention to the problems small local authorities have in providing a range of accommodation and in providing young people with extended support into adulthood (C4EO service provider workshops).

However, the type of accommodation by itself tells us very little. What is equally relevant is whether young people like where they are living, whether they and their workers think that it meets their personal needs and whether the young person has the skills to cope and manage their accommodation (Wade and Dixon 2006).

Being safe

Being and 'feeling safe' is a priority for young people (A National Voice 2005; Morgan and Lindsay 2006, NCAS 2010a; C4EO young people's podcast workshop). 'A secure and safe place to live in' is the most important thing in making 'accommodation suitable' for young people (NCAS 2010a). For young people 'being safe' means:

- a 'good location' where neighbours make an 'effort to be friendly' and living in a 'relatively crime-free area' (A National Voice 2005 pp 8–9)
- not being housed in 'rough areas' or other temporary or transient accommodation, where there is often drug dealing, prostitution and where they could be the victims of break-ins (NCAS 2010a)
- having access to transport, education, training and employment, proximity to amenities, including shops, doctors and leisure facilities; having support networks, including being close to friends and families, and not living in isolated areas – especially where there are poor and costly transport links (NCAS 2010a; C4EO young people's podcast workshop).

There was also evidence of young people from black and minority ethnic groups being frightened of going out at night in predominantly 'rough' white areas (A National Voice 2005). Also important to young people in feeling safe was:

- the condition of the physical environment in which they were living: some young people had concerns about the physical state of the property they lived in, including cold and dampness, crumbling walls and infestations
- having access to services including: heating, hot water, electricity, telephone, television aerial, food preparation and storage 24 hours a day, floor coverings, furniture, furnishings and equipment (NCAS 2010a)
- feeling secure – having their own room and key, so they could lock it; lighting in communal areas; ensuring communal areas are lockable; having a mobile phone, to call for help, if needed; smoke detectors; and having a place where personal items can be locked away. Having health and safety checks – some young people had experience of poor security, faulty electrics and dangerous stairs (A National Voice 2005; NCAS 2010a)
- having safe play areas – young parents had been placed in accommodation without adequate play spaces and a lack of safety fencing.

An audit of leaving care services in London found that young people returning from 'out of authority placements', who are recognised as a highly vulnerable group, may have particular difficulties in accessing social or council accommodation, unless formal arrangements are in place (Vernon 2000). Feedback from service providers who attended the C4EO knowledge workshops included evidence that one local authority is proposing to offer all young people with complex needs returning from 'out of borough provision' a supported placement up to the age of 21. The feedback also recognised that young people who have been 'out of area' for a long time may wish to stay there – and it was essential to listen to young people's views about where they wish to live (C4EO knowledge workshop). Young disabled people may also miss out on access to mainstream housing as a result of inadequate planning between disability

teams and leaving care services and, as a consequence, find that they are restricted to specialist disabled schemes (Morris 2002). For those young people who remained with their carer, being safe meant feeling 'physically and emotionally protected' – 'you're not going to come to any harm'. Being settled meant 'getting on well with your carers' (C4EO young people's podcast workshop).

Practical and personal support

Young people want both practical and personal support in preparation for moving, at the time of moving on from care and when they have moved into their accommodation, including when they get into difficulties.

The nine young people aged between 16 and 23 who participated in the C4EO podcast workshop wanted help in planning their move, including visiting the area before moving in, help in equipping their accommodation with the necessities, help in moving and help in setting up their accommodation, including decorating. They also wanted help in managing their accommodation, including budgeting, and domestic tasks – 'It is important that a carer helps you learn how to be independent.' Young people also recognised that carers need training and support in order to understand young people 'as a specific person' and recognise that young people need a 'chance to prove that we can live on our own' (C4EO young people's podcast workshop).

In the NCAS (National Care Advisory Service) survey of 93 young people's views of 'what is suitable accommodation?', 85 young people (92 per cent) thought that it was 'very important' for young people to 'have contact details for support with 24 hours access' (NCAS 2010a p 17). In preparation for 'moving on', 90 per cent of the young people surveyed by NCAS were of the opinion that it was 'very important' they 'understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement', and that 'all charges are detailed in their agreement' (p 19). Also, in preparation for moving they would like clear and easily understood information about their tenancy agreement and costs, including 'someone to read through the agreement ... to ensure they understand all that is expected of them' (p 19).

In setting up home they would like assistance with transport for moving and their first big shop – and assistance with decorating and making their accommodation homely. Also, in the early days, young people welcome support with budgeting and help with benefits.

Young people are aware of the importance of personal support, recognising that they have both social and emotional needs, including being 'lonely and feeling depressed'. They want workers who they get on with and trust, do what they say they are going to do and who treat them with respect (Ofsted 2009). Generally, they would like support to be more accessible and available, including support outside of normal office hours, such as weekends and evenings (A National Voice 2005; Morgan and Lindsay 2006; NCAS 2010a). Disabled young people would welcome more support in accessing social networks (National Foster Care Association 2000; Priestley *et al* 2003).

Research studies show that children and young people who become looked after are subject to many of the risk factors associated with the development of mental health problems (Koprowska and Stein 2000). The Office for National Statistics surveys for the mental health of

young people aged from 5 to 17 years old living in private households and being looked-after in England, showed that looked-after young people aged 11 to 15 were four to five times more likely to have a mental disorder than those living in private households: 49 per cent compared with 11 per cent, conduct disorder being the most prevalent (Meltzer *et al* 2003; Fish *et al* 2009).

Research has also shown that transitions from care can combine with earlier pre-care and in-care difficulties in affecting the overall health and wellbeing of care leavers (Cameron *et al* 2007; Dixon 2008). These studies show the links between mental health and general wellbeing, as well as other dimensions of young people's lives such as risk behaviour, progress in finding a home and embarking on a career – highlighting the inter-connectedness of young people's lives (Dixon 2008).

Young asylum seekers who are learning English may also have additional needs for personal support, especially in building social networks (Chase *et al* 2008).

How are leaving care services responding to these support needs? The Children's Rights Director surveyed 135 young people who had recently left care and of these 70 per cent (94) rated the quality of the support they were getting after leaving care as 'good' or 'very good'. But this meant that for 20 per cent it was 'just about OK', 6 per cent 'bad' and 4 per cent 'very bad' (Morgan 2009a and b). Similarly, about two-thirds of young people surveyed by A National Voice were 'happy' or 'very happy' with the aftercare support they received and a similar proportion felt that when a problem arose help from leaving care services was useful (A National Voice 2005).

Two studies carried out following the introduction of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* echo these positive findings (Wade and Dixon 2006; Simon 2008). The first follow-up study found that nearly all the young people (93 per cent) had received support in achieving 'good' or 'fair' housing outcomes. At follow-up (12 to 15 months after leaving care), three quarters were living in suitable accommodation and two-thirds of young people reported that they had been helped to look after their homes more effectively, and more than four in five young people reported that they had received help with finding somewhere to live (Wade and Dixon 2006).

The second study highlighted 'how young people's transitions were smoothed by both practical and emotional support' (Simon 2008 p 98). Ofsted's survey provides practice examples of the high levels of support being offered by leaving care teams, including out-of-hours support, a high-commitment 'can do' problem-solving approach, and assisting access to social and leisure facilities (Ofsted 2009). However, there is also evidence that mental health services are not responding to the high levels of need experienced by care leavers (McAuley 2005; Cameron *et al* 2007).

Service providers attending the C4EO knowledge workshops have also highlighted the lack of resources in meeting the needs of young people with more challenging emotional and behavioural needs. Their suggestions and practice examples include: developing a regional approach to commissioning services by grouping together commissioning with neighbouring local authorities providing intensive support (ongoing and out-of-hours); giving young people the opportunity to return to foster and residential care; working jointly with adult services on transitions; and having a range of supported accommodation (lodgings; intensive residential support projects; trainer/transitional flats) (C4EO knowledge workshops).

Support from families, friends and former carers

Young people can also benefit from informal support from families, former carers and friends. Having a 'sense of family' is symbolically important to care leavers, as it is to other young people – even though they recognise that it was often their families who failed them, and that poor family relationships ruled out a return home (Sinclair *et al* 2005). The limited available research evidence on this topic shows that:

- for some young people, over time, there can be increased contact and reconciliation between young people and their parents (Wade 2008)
- parents and friends can offer help when young people get into difficulties with their accommodation as well as practical help, including help with money and company, especially where young people settled in the same neighbourhood (Simon 2008)
- young people most often cited 'mothers' as the person they would turn to if in need of help – brothers and sisters, aunts, nieces and nephews, and grandparents were also identified (Dixon and Stein 2005; Wade 2008)
- some young people were able to sustain a relationship with their foster carers, or have good relationships their partner's family (Sinclair *et al* 2005)
- there are examples of formalising attachments with foster carers – foster carers being paid a retainer while a young person was at university and then full-board when they returned (Sinclair *et al* 2005).

Care may also inhibit or prevent young people's friendship networks. Feeling different by being in care and frequent change of placements could result in transitory or very weak friendships, especially at school or in the local neighbourhood, contributing to a lack of social support at the time of leaving care. Their vulnerability at this time may also be increased by the low self-esteem and lack of autonomy (Ridge and Millar 2000). However, the renewal of family relationships could be a mixed blessing – sometimes helpful, other times disappointing as past difficulties resurfaced. Some young people leaving foster care are unable to psychologically distance themselves from the traumas they have suffered at the hands of their birth families – they are psychologically held back from being able to move on from care and find satisfaction with their lives after care (McAuley 2005; Sinclair *et al* 2005; C4EO service provider workshops).

Mentoring schemes

Mentoring schemes may also offer support to young people leaving care (McBriar *et al* 2001; Clayden and Stein 2005; Ahrens *et al* 2008). They can be seen as occupying a space between formal or professional support and the informal support by families or friends, in assisting care leavers during their journey to adulthood. Research on resilience has given support to mentoring by highlighting the importance of a caring and consistent adult in the lives of vulnerable young people to help them overcome a range of problems (Stein 2005). Young people valued the advice they received from mentors during their transition to independence. They thought that mentoring had helped them with:

- important practical advice, particularly in relation to maintaining their accommodation
- assisting them in education and finding work

- relationship problems, building their confidence and improving their emotional wellbeing.

The mentor's views on the impact of mentoring generally reflected the young people's views (Clayden and Stein 2005).

Financial support

Young people are acutely aware of the importance of financial support – including being in education, employment and training – in sustaining their accommodation (Morgan and Lindsay 2006; Morgan 2009a). The contribution of leaving care service to improving education and career outcomes is discussed above (Question 1). There is evidence that disadvantaged young people, including those leaving care, recognise that they are held back by a lack of qualifications (Calder and Cope 2003). Some young people also regard expectations as too low (Jackson and Sachdev 2001). Follow-up research carried out since the introduction of the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* shows:

- young people not completing further education courses, some 12 to 15 months after leaving care
- the 'mediating contribution' of 'good' housing outcomes to 'good' career outcomes and mental wellbeing
- the importance of specific careers advice
- the contribution of leaving care later (age 18 or over) to positive career outcomes
- young people who leave care younger and those who have mental health, emotional or behavioural difficulties are more than twice as likely to have poor career outcomes.

(Wade and Dixon 2006)

As regards financial support received under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act*, there is evidence from two surveys of considerable variation in the amounts of leaving care grants (including financial assistance to set up home, and help with education and employment) received by young people (A National Voice 2005; Care Leavers' Foundation 2009). A 2005 National Voice survey of 271 young people showed that the amount received in the setting-up home grant varied from nothing (29 per cent of young people) to £2,000 or more (just 1 per cent of young people) Of the 231 leaving care workers/personal advisers surveyed, 84 per cent thought that the grant should be increased. Sixty-eight per cent of the 80 housing workers surveyed also thought that the grant should be higher (A National Voice 2005). The Care Leaver's Foundation survey calculated that young people needed £2,500 for the most basic furnishings and essentials to enable them to live independently – but only one out of 150 local authorities surveyed provided this sum (Care Leavers Foundation 2009).

Some of the participants attending the C4EO knowledge workshops provided evidence of variations between local authorities in the financial arrangements governing young people remaining in foster care placements beyond the age of 18, and in the funding of supported lodging schemes (C4EO knowledge workshops).

In a policy paper, NCAS have highlighted the problems for care leavers being expected to claim benefits at 18 years of age, including managing their own income and household, and

claiming housing benefit to part-fund continuing placements with former foster carers. This distinguishes them from most of their peers who remain at home and do not claim benefits, especially if they are in further education. They suggest that the current dual system of support (benefits and local authority payments) can result in: inconsistencies in support; disincentives to move into education, training and employment; problems for some vulnerable young people in maintaining their housing; and young people being uncomfortable when the status of the former carer they continue to live with changes to a 'landlord'. They propose that local authorities as 'corporate parents' should provide financial support for care leavers in further education (as parents do) until they reach 21 years of age (NCAS 2010a).

Being involved

Young people want to be involved in decisions both about their individual care – including their accommodation needs – and the services that they receive. As regards the former, the evidence presented above suggests that there is variation in practice at different stages of the process. Although many young people feel involved, not all think that they have a real choice when they leave care, or are involved in their assessment and pathway planning, or feel that they have a choice of 'suitable accommodation' and support matched to their needs (A National Voice 2005; Morgan and Lindsay 2006, NCAS 2010a). There is evidence that advocacy services may assist young people, including with accommodation issues, although not all service level agreements include young people aged over 18 (Ofsted 2009; Stein 2009b).

There is evidence of young people being involved in shaping the services they receive. This includes participation in supported lodgings and fostering panels, corporate parenting panels, local authority youth parliaments and children in care panels, and various strategy groups, including those related to accommodation and homelessness (NCAS 2009; Ofsted 2009). They are also involved in training and recruiting staff, meetings and training with councillors and senior staff, as 'corporate parents', and assisting other looked-after young people as peer mentors. Some young people were also playing an active role in the work of A National Voice and the NCAS.

A synthesis of studies that include the views of young people about being in 'settled, safe accommodation' and those taking part in the C4EO podcast workshop (nine young people) suggests that it can be viewed as part of a process involving a number of different stages:

- having a choice when to leave care placements – not just being expected to leave at 16 or 17 years of age
- being well prepared in practical, self-care and emotional and interpersonal skills and feeling ready to move on
- having a good choice of accommodation matched to their needs
- being in a safe neighbourhood in safe accommodation in good physical condition close to amenities
- being well supported – by key workers, by mentors and by positive family and friendship networks
- being assisted with mental health problems and difficulties

- being in education, employment or training, to have an income or receive adequate financial assistance.

Although the evidence is more limited on the views of 'policy-makers, housing and children's services staff' and those from 'the independent sector', where it does exist, it generally supports the views of young people as regards the importance of the different stages of this process.

6. The contribution of attitudes, skills and abilities of carers, staff and families to 'settled, safe accommodation'

This section examines what we know about the contribution made to being in safe, settled accommodation of looked-after children and young people (LACYYP) by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, supported housing staff and birth families³ and interventions to support this contribution.

Key messages

- The review shows we know very little about the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' of foster and residential carers, housing staff and birth family and kinship carers in assisting young people during their transition to adulthood.
- The limited evidence, including that from literature and the C4EO parents and carers panel and birth parents group, suggests carers need to assist young people acquire a range of practical and personal skills over time; this will be underpinned by good quality relationships with their carers. Additionally, carers need to assist young people with problem-solving skills.
- Young people who remain in foster care beyond 18 years of age can be assisted to make a better transition to adulthood, although this may be different from providing a stable home base.
- Both foster and residential carers do provide support to young people who have left their care, although this receives little formal recognition in terms of pathway planning.
- Local authorities should have clear policies in respect of the support and financial assistance they provide to foster carers who offer extended placements and ongoing support to young people after 18 years of age.
- There is very little research on young people leaving care either by moving into, or moving on from, kinship care. The limited evidence does suggest that it is seen as very positive by young people. Its potential should be further explored.
- Young people also identify a wide range of family members, beyond their birth families, who they see as their 'closest family' and who, therefore, could also be seen as a potential source of support.
- The contribution of birth families and other family members in supporting young people should be addressed in the pathway planning process. Using family group conferences as part of this process may be an effective way of identifying supportive family networks.

³ These groups were identified by the Vulnerable (looked-after) Children Theme Advisory Group

As detailed in Section 3, this section is based upon just 15 studies and the majority of these (11) are based on interviews. The studies drawn on in this section are cited within the text. It also includes: the views of four birth parents who have, or have had, children in care from a C4EO focus group; and the views of the C4EO parents and carers panel on the executive summary of the research review.

Foster care: extended placements

As suggested earlier in this review 'how young people fare in respect of their housing is in part connected to the quality of care they receive' (p 15). High-quality placements provide the emotional foundations of the present and future wellbeing of children and young people. Research shows that foster carers' 'attitudes, skills and abilities' in 'authoritative' parenting contribute to the wellbeing of young people (see Stein 2009b for a review of studies). (Authoritative parenting combines love, emotional warmth, physical care, safety, stability, stimulation, and guidance and boundaries.) There is also evidence from young people living in care that they value these qualities in their carers. Peer research on the views of 250 young people identified 'the best things about care' as: feeling emotionally secure and supported; feeling safe; having opportunities for fun and enjoyment; having opportunities for self-development; having financial and material support; and having new friendships, bonds and social skills (Miller and Sweetman 2007).

Building on these foundations, foster care can assist young people with their accommodation in two main ways. First, it may give them the opportunity to remain with their carers beyond the age of 18, where they are settled and want to stay. This means that they will be able to leave care gradually, when they are prepared and ready to leave – more akin to the journey made by other young people. Research studies show that this process, as distinct from the accelerated and compressed transitions made by many care leavers, is associated with better outcomes (Stein 2004). These extended placements usually come about by foster carers being re-designated as 'supported lodgings' (Wade and Dixon 2006; Broad 2008).

The government is funding two pilot programmes – Right2BCared4 and Staying Put. New provisions contained within the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* (England and Wales. Statutes 2008) will introduce a legal and policy framework for young people to move on from their care placements at their own pace when they feel ready and have been properly prepared. The evaluation of the two pilots will also provide a stronger evidence base on the use of extended placements. The available evidence on extended placements suggests that while they provide young people with the opportunity for 'a breathing space' to make planned transitions, they rarely provide them with a stable home base into adulthood (Wade and Dixon 2006).

An evaluation of a foster care scheme for young people remaining with their foster carers up to 21 years of age carried out in Northern Ireland describes their role as helping 'young people mature and become independent' (McCrea 2008). They need the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' to assist young people on a range of fronts including:

- motivation and encouragement with education, training and employment and helping them find suitable work
- making decisions about their future

- emotional support, including dealing with past issues, help with relationships, social networks and friendships
- interpersonal skills, self-esteem and boundary setting and decision-making
- finances to support young people and maintain their interests, hobbies and keep up to date with current fashion
- independence skills such as managing and running a home, budgeting and debt management and help with preparation towards independent living
- supporting young people's contact with their birth parent(s)
- opportunities for peer support.

The scheme evaluation shows that young people, in the main, thought that their foster carers were successful in meeting their needs in these respects. However, the evaluation does not include a description or analysis of the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' required by foster carers to assist young people with these tasks, beyond recognising the changing 'parenting role' with young adults.

As regards 'interventions' to support their role, the foster carers welcomed the support they received but wanted:

- more clarification of the separate roles and responsibilities of personal advisers, social workers and carers
- more training on specific issues related to their roles (as identified above)
- opportunities for peer support meetings
- increased financial support, in recognition of the costs associated with supporting young people in this age group with regard to education, employment and training, and especially lifestyle issues.

Although not specifically connected to accommodation, Schofield's study (2002) is one of the very few which attempts to identify the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' of foster carers as well as the 'interventions' needed that may contribute to positive outcomes. Drawing on the accounts of 40 young adults, Schofield proposes a 'psychosocial model of long-term foster care'. The study identifies five main domains:

- to love – promoting felt security
- to act – promoting self-efficacy
- to think – promoting resolution of loss and trauma and developing reflective functions
- to belong – promoting family membership in childhood and adult life
- to hope – promoting resilience.

Each of these domains contains specific points related to 'attitudes, skills and abilities'.

The parents and carers panel suggested the 'skills and qualities' needed to prepare young people included being able to give their time to assist young people to acquire both a range of

practical skills (self-care, budgeting) and personal skills. It was the view of a birth mother of three children that 'these skills are numerous and cannot be learned overnight, so will probably take many years to develop'. It was also recognised that it is 'impossible to teach a young person to be fully prepared for everything prior to them leaving home, but if they have the basics and they know how to deal with problems ... they will be in a good position to learn from their experiences.' The 'ability to let go' was important.

The panel also identified training and support that would be helpful. This included self-care and budgeting skills. The same mother-of-three children commented 'the most important thing will be the strength of the relationship between the parents and the young person. If that is good then they will be able to discuss problems and help that young person to find a way forward. Perhaps everything goes back to ensuring that the relationship is strong and consistent from as early as possible.' Mentoring support was seen as positive – 'freedom with a safety net' (C4EO parents and carers panel).

Foster care: providing ongoing support

The second way in which foster carers may assist young people with their accommodation is through providing ongoing support after young people have left their care. The evidence suggests that:

- such contact is common at first but drops off sharply over time
- it is generally very positive for young people and may reduce social isolation
- it can support young people in their life and social skills – both of which may help young people remain in their accommodation
- it is unlikely to be able to help young people when they face major difficulties in their lives
- as an 'intervention' it is invisible, in that it takes place informally, outside of the pathway planning process and without financial support.

(Sinclair *et al* 2005; Wade 2008)

However, service providers raised the question of how far such arrangements could, or should, be formalised (C4EO service provider workshops).

There is also one description of a 'pro-teen fostering' project that made provision for young people, who found it too difficult to cope alone, to return to their foster placement until they felt they were prepared and ready to be 'relaunched'. The project also provided the foster carers with additional and flexible financial support to maintain ongoing contact with the young people they cared for (Jackson and Thomas 2001).

The parents and carers panel felt that young people should be able to return to care when things don't work out for them – 'the door is open ... as with young people who leave home'. 'Care leavers would benefit from similar support provided by parents ... this usually lasts for many years, if not for a lifetime in terms of emotional support ... ideally this would be the same person they had developed a relationship with during their time in care'. They believed the carer should meet up with the young people they cared for on a regular basis to ensure they are well. They also thought that there is a need for more specialist provision within the area

where young people live, so they do not have to be placed in 'out of authority' placements (C4EO parents and carers panel).

The contribution of foster carers in preparing young people for adulthood after they reach 18 years of age, including providing extended placements and ongoing support, also raises the issue of paying foster carers to carry out this work. This is one of the issues that is being explored in the evaluation of the 'Staying Put' pilots' described earlier, in which young people remain with their foster carers until they are aged 21.

Residential workers

No recent studies of residential care were identified in the scoping review relevant to addressing this question (Bostock *et al* 2009). At a more general level, research into the outcomes of a social-pedagogical approach in residential care in Germany showed that positive gains made while in care – in education, life management, reduced offending, personality development and social relations – had been maintained for a majority of young people four to five years after leaving care (Stein and Munro 2008).

Social pedagogy represents a different approach to the practice of residential work in England, including different training and skills. It is also being piloted and evaluated as part of the Care Matters implementation plan. Research comparing English, German and Danish residential homes showed that those in Germany and Denmark employing social pedagogues considered it an important part of their role to help young people find suitable accommodation (Petrie *et al* 2006). Also, in Denmark and Spain young people may remain in residential care beyond 18 years of age and receive support into adulthood (Hojer *et al* 2008). There is evidence from England of young people keeping in touch with residential workers after they leave children's homes. Keeping in touch with former foster carers brings similar benefits to young people and is also an unacknowledged and unsupported 'intervention' (Wade 2008).

Kinship care

Research studies on kinship care have, in the main, focused on younger children and as a consequence very little attention has been given to transitions from care to adulthood from such placements, including the adult outcomes of former kinship care children (Iglehart 2004; Stein 2009b). For example, in Farmer and Moyes' study of 142 young people in kinship care, 85 per cent were under 15 years at selection and the focus of the study – including the 21 young people who were aged 15 and older (15 per cent) – was on young people under 18 years before moving on to live independently. In respect of 'plans for children', the aim in 93 per cent of these kinship care placements was to provide a 'long-term home' – and for none of the older young people, was 'preparation for independence' planned (Farmer and Moyes (2008). Only one study by Broad *et al* (2001) casts light on the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' of kinship carers that may be seen as helping young people feel safe and settled in accommodation. From the viewpoint of young people, kinship carers make them:

- feel loved, valued and cared for, especially after being in care or by not going into care
- feel safe from harm and threatening behaviour in care
- feel they are listened to

- sustain a sense of who they are, through contact with family, siblings and friends
- feel that they belong and feel settled, especially in not being moved around.

The potential contribution of kinship care in providing young people with 'settled, safe accommodation' is underdeveloped – currently only about 12 per cent of looked-after children, of all ages, are placed with 'family and friends' in England (Farmer and Moyes 2008).

There is also evidence that young people identify a wide range of family members in their kinship network who they regard as their 'closest family', including siblings, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. Yet both social workers and leaving care workers are not good at identifying them or involving them in leaving care planning (Wade 2008).

Birth families

As discussed above (in response to the previous question), birth family relationships can be a mixed blessing. Where they are positive they can provide both practical and emotional support to young people, including assistance with accommodation and help when they may get into difficulties (Marsh and Peel 1999, cited in Stein 2004; Simon 2008).

The four birth parents who attended the C4EO birth parents group said they would like to be involved in the plans when young people leave care – one mother had not been given any information and was not involved in any way. There was also recognition by the group that not all young people were ready to leave their care placements at 16 to 18 years of age. They also highlighted the variation in support received by young people, including 'the importance of allowing independence and self-sufficiency'. Living in shared housing with regular support, having mentors, including role models who have been in care themselves (for example, Friends United) were seen as helpful to young people leaving care, by the group (C4EO birth parents group).

However, past difficulties in family relationships may also cast a long shadow on young people's lives, making it more difficult for them to settle down. There is evidence that young people may regress educationally and suffer harm when they return home. Also, some young people leaving foster care are unable to distance themselves psychologically from the traumas they have suffered at the hands of their birth families – they are held back from being able to move on from care and find satisfaction with their lives after care (McAuley 2005; Sinclair *et al* 2005). In this context, assessment of birth parents' 'attitudes, skills and abilities' – and the 'interventions' needed in supporting parents – in meeting young people's accommodation needs will be critical to the pathway planning process. Using family group conferences as part of the pathway planning process may be an effective way of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of family networks in assisting young people during their transition to adulthood (Marsh and Peel 1999, cited in Stein 2004).

The review shows we know very little about the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' of foster and residential carers, housing staff and birth family and kinship carers in supporting young people in making the transition from care to adulthood. What we do know is that young people who remain in foster care can be assisted to make a better transition to adulthood, although this may be different from providing a stable home base. The review also shows that both foster and residential carers do provide support to young people who have left their care, although

this receives little formal recognition in terms of pathway planning. There is very little research on young people leaving care either by moving into, or moving on from, kinship care. The limited evidence does suggest that it is seen as very positive by young people. Its potential should, therefore, be further explored. Young people also identify a wide range of family members beyond their birth families who they see as their 'closest family' and who could also be seen as a potential source of support. But, again, there is little evidence of their involvement in the pathway planning process.

7. Characteristics of young people not in suitable accommodation at age 19

This section identifies what we know about young people who are not in suitable accommodation at age 19 (as defined by national indicator 147).

Key messages

- There is a distinction to be made between young people who may experience homelessness sometime after leaving care and those who have more entrenched poor housing outcomes.
- Leaving care services, the use of 'emergency accommodation', opportunities to return to accommodation when in difficulty and better contingency planning may help prevent homelessness episodes.
- The groups most vulnerable to poor housing outcomes are: young people who leave care at 16 and 17 years of age; those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; those involved in offending, including a history of violence, substance misuse and running away from care; young disabled people who do not meet the threshold for adult services; and young asylum seekers with unmet mental health needs who may be particularly vulnerable during transition, when placed in independent accommodation and when their asylum claims are being made.
- This suggests improving housing outcomes will require a multi-agency response including preventative services and interventions, and joint working between leaving care, housing providers and adult services, in response to the needs of the high-risk groups identified above.

It is based on 30 studies including 15 UK and 15 US studies. The majority are empirical and there is a mix of descriptive and evaluative work. The studies drawn on in this section are all cited in the text. As noted in the scoping review, '*current published data from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (SFR23/08) does not distinguish between suitable and unsuitable accommodation (DCSF 2008a)*' (Bostock *et al* 2009 p 26). The Statistical First Release from 2007 (DCSF 2008a) made this distinction, identifying 87.3 per cent of young people who were looked after at age 16 in April 2004 as being in suitable accommodation at age 19.

Homelessness and housing outcomes

Research studies show that about one third of young people experience homelessness at some stage, between six and 24 months after leaving care (Dixon and Stein 2005; Wade and Dixon 2006). The pattern in these follow-up studies was for these young people to move in and out of homelessness and there was not necessarily a connection between single episodes of homelessness and final housing outcomes.

In these studies homelessness had involved young people staying – or more likely ‘kipping on the floor or the sofa’ – with family or friends to prevent them ‘sleeping rough’, stopping at homeless hostels or refuges, sleeping rough, or spending short periods in bed and breakfast accommodation. The provision of more ‘emergency accommodation’ and better contingency planning could prevent some of these episodes (NCAS 2009; Ofsted 2009). Opportunities for young people to return to foster care placements could also be considered (Jackson and Thomas 2001).

There is recent evidence that the proportion of rough sleepers with a care background has fallen from 17 per cent in 2001/02, to 7 per cent in 2007/08: ‘The findings do suggest an improvement in the way young people and children in care are provided with the skills for independent living and advice and support with housing when they become adults and leave care’ (Savage 2009 p 4).

Care leavers most vulnerable to poor housing outcomes

The patterns from these follow-up studies and related research also suggests key issues in respect of the group of care leavers who are most vulnerable to be living in unsuitable accommodation.

First, they are likely to leave their care placements early, often at 16 or 17 years of age, following a placement breakdown. Some of these young people see themselves as ‘out of place’ and ‘pushed out’ of children’s homes and ‘too old’ for foster care (Dixon and Stein 2005 p 72). Leaving care early may also be a result of young people’s expectations, wanting to be independent, ‘I was 16, I felt ready and wanted to move on’ (Dixon and Stein 2005 p 72).

A survey of all 35 Scottish local authorities and the views of young people and workers also showed that young people may feel pressure to leave care at just 16, before they feel they are prepared or ready to leave (SCCYP 2008). The views of these young people raise issues about the role, culture and organisation of both children’s homes and foster care in relation to preparing, engaging and supporting young people during their journey to adulthood, as distinct from their role in looking after younger children.

There is also evidence that foster placement breakdown may be a consequence of young people being unable to settle and commit themselves to their foster carers because of their unresolved feelings towards their birth families (Sinclair *et al* 2005). Leaving care early is also strongly associated with young people being at greater risk of unemployment after care which is likely to contribute to young people being in unsuitable accommodation (Wade and Dixon 2006).

Second, this group of highly vulnerable young people is likely to move more frequently for negative reasons. This may include an inability to manage in their accommodation, getting into debt, or not getting on with the people with whom they are living. Also, those who moved most frequently, for negative reasons, often found themselves in the most unstable and insecure types of accommodation. This included bed and breakfast, hostels, friends and returning to very difficult family relationships (Dixon and Stein 2005).

Third, frequent movement and instability, and poor housing outcomes are significantly higher for young people with mental health problems, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and those

involved in offending, running away from care and substance misuse (Slesnick and Meade 2001; Social Exclusion Unit 2002; Vasillou and Ryrie 2006; Wade and Dixon 2006). Evidence from the US suggests that the roots of these problems, resulting in homelessness, may be related to the 'more general out-of-home care experience', including the lasting effects of abuse, removal from the family home and lack of family support, rather than failures of specific preparation programmes (Park *et al* 2004). There is evidence in relation to men who have sex with men, including those who have been in care that homelessness itself may contribute to drug use and result in poor access to healthcare (Clatts *et al* 2005; Kushel *et al* 2007). In addition to these groups, young disabled people and young offenders leaving secure accommodation – including those who have a history of violence – are vulnerable to poor housing outcomes (Priestley *et al*; Youth Justice Board 2007). As detailed above (see pp 21–22) unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people may have high levels of unmet mental health needs and may be particularly vulnerable during transition, when placed in independent accommodation and when their asylum claims are being made (Chase *et al* 2008).

As detailed above, there is evidence that leaving care services and independent living programmes can assist young people when they get into difficulties (Collins 2001; Dixon and Stein 2005; Georgiades 2005a; Courtney and Dworsky 2006; Wade and Dixon 2006). Even for those young people experiencing the greatest instability, continuity of support by services can prevent a descent into homelessness or a rapid escape from it. This is achieved in two ways: first, by the role of leaving care services in accessing a range of accommodation options, including emergency accommodation; second, by the commitment and ongoing support from leaving care workers in helping young people in sustaining their tenancies and being available to assist them at times of crisis (Simon 2008).

Validated local practice example**The Young People's Housing Hub Service: meeting the needs of young people in housing need or crisis**

Hull City Council has introduced a Young People's Housing Hub Service as part of its Young People's Support Service (YPSS) to assist young people, including care leavers, who are in housing need or crisis. The Hub service has a dedicated team including housing, family mediation and youth offending staff, providing a single port of call. The Hub aims to minimise homelessness and the numbers of young people accepted as statutory homeless. Its services include: emergency and temporary accommodation; mediation (between young people and family, carers, housing providers), pre-tenancy training (to assist young people with the skills to maintain their tenancy); supported lodgings that provide 54 placements enabling young people to live with a family to prepare them for independent living; and advice to all young people up to 25 years of age, about a range of housing options and how to access them.

The Hub service has contributed to 'a sustained decrease' in the numbers of care leavers becoming homeless, as well as reductions in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The success of the YPSS (of which the Hub is part) is attributed to young people being assisted with the skills they need for independent living. This contributes to the prevention of homelessness. An independent evaluation of the YPSS found that: 75 per cent of young people were happy with the support they had received in finding accommodation; most of the young people felt that they had been given enough choice in terms of location and type of accommodation; and they valued the help and advice they had been given. During the first three quarters of 2009/2010, 100 per cent of young people were returned as being in 'suitable accommodation' (under NI 147).

However, as detailed above, preventing and helping young people out of homelessness – experienced by about a third of young people in follow-up studies – is different from tackling more entrenched poor housing outcomes, or those young people 'not in suitable accommodation'. It is the young people who leave care early that have many negative moves and who have a lot of problems that present the biggest challenge to leaving care services.

The current legal and policy provisions for young people to leave care later – when they are prepared and ready to leave – are a starting point. But the evidence also suggests that more attention needs to be given to young people with complex problems. Drawing on the youth homelessness literature highlights the importance of preventative services (Quilgars *et al* 2008). In the context of the different groups of very troubled young people living in care this suggests:

- The need for early identification and prevention of problems, and agreed multi-agency interventions, including joint working between leaving care services, housing providers and adult services (Biehal *et al* 2000; Slesnick and Meade 2001; DCSF 2010b, C4EO service provider knowledge workshop).

- Where problems persist during and after care, the evidence shows that there is a shortage of more specialist accommodation for young people with higher support needs, including young people with mental health problems, disabled young people who do not meet the threshold for adult services, persistent offenders and young people with drug dependencies (Wade and Dixon 2006; Lamont *et al* 2009).
- This suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach across the life course of care leavers, from early prevention to ongoing aftercare support (Choca *et al* 2004).

8. Conclusions and main messages

Increasing the numbers of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation' has been the subject of this review. The evidence shows that how young people fare after they leave care – including in relation to their housing – is associated with their experiences while they are in care, their transitions from care and the services they receive.

Being in 'settled, safe accommodation' is also associated with connected and reinforcing pathways to adulthood: entering further and higher education or training, finding satisfying employment, and achieving good health and a positive sense of wellbeing.

On average, young people leave their final care placements at an earlier age than other young people leave home. Those who leave care at a later age are more likely to have a successful transition to adulthood, including being in 'settled, safe accommodation'.

The foundation stones upon which effective leaving care services must build are good-quality placements providing young people with stability, giving high priority to their education, health and wellbeing, and supporting them during their gradual journey into adulthood. These are also the foundations for promoting resilience – for young people achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes. The review also identified how leaving care services may contribute to each of the five outcomes in respect of young people being in 'settled, safe accommodation'.

Be healthy

There is evidence that being settled in accommodation can contribute to a young person's enhanced sense of wellbeing and this can, to some extent, help some young people overcome past difficulties. However, this is not the case for young people with very complex needs, including mental health problems and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They are less likely to be able to settle, and they have the poorest housing outcomes. There is some evidence that healthcare, including physical health and emotional wellbeing, does not receive as much attention in leaving care services as other areas of need. The transition between child and adult mental health services is not always well coordinated for young people with mental health problems, partly as result of different legal and service frameworks. There is also evidence that services for disabled young people are not always well coordinated with leaving care services resulting in restricted housing choices and poor support after care.

Staying safe

Studies show that not all young people feel safe in their accommodation. They have serious concerns about living in 'rough areas' with high levels of crime, including drug dealing, prostitution and thieving. They also feel unsafe when living in isolated areas, away from social networks and facilities, including work and college, shops and leisure. One study showed that black and minority ethnic (BME) young people could feel unsafe in 'rough' predominantly white areas. The same study found that the physical state of their properties could also concern young people, especially if they had poor security, faulty electrical wiring and were generally run down or neglected. Young mothers could fear for their children's safety if there were unsafe play facilities.

Enjoy and achieve

A positive experience of education provides the platform for future success in careers, including young people being able to support themselves and manage their accommodation. The experience of higher education can assist young people in being in 'settled, safe accommodation', by providing them with the opportunity of moving into, and then on from, more sheltered accommodation to independent accommodation during their course. In this way, they will gain experience of looking after themselves, budgeting and negotiating with landlords, before moving to their own accommodation. The review shows that good educational outcomes are associated with placement quality, providing for stability, a carer highly committed to helping the young person with their education, and a supportive and encouraging environment for study. There is also evidence that young people who have had several placements can achieve educational success if they remain in the same school, maintaining positive friendships and contacts with helpful teachers.

Make a positive contribution

School, further and higher education, employment, or care itself, may also open the door for participation in a range of leisure or extra-curricular activities that may lead to new friends and opportunities, including the learning of new skills. The review shows that positive friendship networks can support and assist young people in being settled in their accommodation, and in helping them when they get into difficulties. There is also evidence of young people making a positive contribution through their involvement in service development, planning, recruitment, training, as well as in organisations such as A National Voice and the National Care Advisory Service.

Achieve economic wellbeing

The review shows that young people are acutely aware of the importance of having an income or consistent financial support, in sustaining their accommodation, including being in education, employment and training. The evidence suggests that although leaving care services can greatly assist young people in accessing further and higher education, employment and training, the foundations of future achievements lie within having a positive experience of school and the factors associated with this, as identified above.

Policy and practice recommendations arising from the review

The *Children Act 2004* which placed the Every Child Matters outcomes framework on a statutory footing reflects normative aspirations for children and young people – what any good parent would want for their child. The aim of this review is to identify evidence-informed recommendations – as a basis for children's services acting as corporate parents – to develop in detail (including what actions would be necessary) and to connect outcomes for young people through to inter-agency governance. The evidence of variability in the range and quality of services is a major challenge that has implications for central government.

A connecting theme of this review is young people having the opportunity for more gradual and supported transitions well into adulthood. This is recognised in the current and proposed legal and policy framework, including the 2010 draft guidance on *Planning transitions to adulthood for*

looked after children (DCSF 2010a). However, the implications are far reaching and will require major changes in the way services are planned and organised by local authorities acting as corporate parents.

Inter-agency governance

- Children's services should identify that the main purpose of multi-agency services is the preparation and support for young people from care into adulthood – not just at the time of 'leaving care'.
- This purpose, as well as the linked accommodation and support needs of young people, should be detailed in the Children and Young People's Plan and local authorities' housing and homeless strategies.
- Children's services should carry out a strategic review of the implications of this purpose for: the relationship between children's and adult services; the recruitment, support, funding and training of foster carers, including their re-designation as supported lodgings; the organisation, role and culture of children's homes; the contribution of kinship care; and the supply and range of supported transitional accommodation.

The review shows that leaving care services are successful in assisting most young people in accessing and maintaining their accommodation, although there is evidence of wide variations between local authorities in the provision of 'suitable accommodation'. For young people, being in 'settled, safe accommodation' is the outcome of a process involving a number of different stages: choosing when to leave care; being well prepared; having a choice of accommodation; being safe; being supported by leaving care services, family, friends and mentors; having an income or receiving financial assistance; and being involved. Services could be improved by:

Integrated processes

- Joint protocols and agreements between children's services, housing authorities, health, adult services and the third sector, to increase the choice and range of accommodation options available to young people from care into adulthood.
- Recognition of the different stages (identified above) within policy documentation and practice guides.
- **Greater multi-agency recognition of the accommodation and support needs of specific groups of young people, including: those with mental health problems and complex needs; those returning from 'out of authority' placements who may be very vulnerable and require intensive support; young parents; BME young people – recognition of family and community links; and young asylum seekers.** This should include joint protocols and agreements in respect of these vulnerable groups and for service commissioning.
- **Better joint planning and coordination between leaving care services and disability teams of accommodation services for disabled young people, and between child and adult mental health services, and across local authority and NHS boundaries, for young people with mental health problems.**

- Good quality needs assessment and pathway planning are essential in order to identify the individual housing needs of young people and improve their housing outcomes.

Integrated strategies

- Children's services should review the level of leaving care grants to ensure they cover the costs attached to moving and setting up in accommodation.
- Monitoring of services and outcome evidence, to assess the impact of services and strategies.

Integrated front-line delivery

- Leaving care and housing services should ensure accommodation is in a safe neighbourhood, close to required facilities, and in a good physical condition.
- **Needs assessments and pathway planning should ensure young people have the range and levels of support they need, including out-of-hours support, opportunities to return to accommodation when problems arise, leaving care services, mentoring and informal family, friendship and kinship networks.**

The review shows that we know very little about the 'attitudes, skills and abilities' of carers, families and staff in supporting young people during their transition to adulthood. In addition to much-needed research, more consideration should be given at a **strategic level** to:

- **formal recognition of the role, training and support needs of former foster and residential carers in providing ongoing personal and practical support**
- **the financial assistance and support local authorities provide to foster carers who offer extended placements and ongoing support to young people after they reach 18 years of age**
- **the contribution of birth families and kinship care – including extended family and friendship networks – in supporting young people after they leave care. The identification of positive family links may be assisted by the use of family group conferences.**

The evidence suggests that there is a distinction to be made between young people who may experience homelessness some time after leaving care and those who have more entrenched poor housing outcomes. Leaving care services assist most of the former group, although more emergency accommodation and better contingency planning, including opportunities to become looked after again where care leavers are below the age of majority, may prevent homelessness. It is the latter group who are most likely to be in unsuitable accommodation. The main strategic implications are:

- The development of preventative services by housing and children's services, including the early identification of problems and the provision of emergency accommodation.
- Multi-agency interventions in response to the groups of young people most vulnerable to poor housing outcomes: young people with mental health problems and social emotional and behavioural difficulties; those involved in offending, substance misuse and running away

from placements; young disabled people who do not meet the threshold for adult services; and young asylum seekers with unmet mental health needs who may be particularly vulnerable during transition, when placed in independent accommodation and when their asylum claims are being made.

- Children's services housing and health should review the need for more specialist accommodation for young people with higher support needs.

Data annexe

Key messages

- The Department for Education is the main data source on the accommodation of young care leavers.
- In 2008/09, 90 per cent of former care leavers aged 19 were living in suitable accommodation (national indicator 147).
- More detailed data about accommodation type at age 19 is also available, but does not distinguish between suitable and unsuitable accommodation. Over 40 per cent of care leavers were living independently in 2008/09.
- Data on the accommodation of care leavers is not comprehensive, as it only includes former care leavers aged 19 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and who were still in care aged 16 in April of their final year of compulsory education.

Introduction and availability of data

The main focus of this priority is 'increasing the number of care leavers (young people) in "settled, safe accommodation"'. In the majority of cases, children cease to be looked after on their 18th birthday, although, under the provisions of the *Children Act 1989 Section 20(5)* (GB. Statutes 1989) young people who have reached the age of 16 may be provided with accommodation to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The Department for Education (DfE) is the main source of data on outcomes for looked-after children up to the age of 16. It provides data on activities and accommodation on their 19th birthday for those young people who were looked after at age 16.

This data annexe presents further discussion about the data currently available on the accommodation of care leavers. It provides:

- a summary of the search strategy for identifying data
- an overview of the nature and scope of the data that was found, with a brief commentary on the quality of this data and any gaps that have been identified
- some examples of the types of charts and diagrams that could be produced, showing, for example, comparisons between outcomes for looked-after children and all children.

A summary table of the data sources of readily available, published data for looked-after children at a national, regional and/or local authority level can be found in Appendix 2.

Search strategy

There are a number of archival databases in the UK, such as the National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD) and the UK Data Archive, some of which have services that facilitate searching or access to macro- and micro-datasets (including Economic and Social Data

Service (ESDS) International). Even so, searching for current and recently published data cannot yet be conducted in the same way as searching for published research findings. Access to newly published data is not supported by comprehensive searchable databases in the same way that literature searches are supported, although the DfE produces a publications schedule for Statistical First Releases and Statistical Volumes.

Data for this data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications (such as the Statistical First Releases and Statistical Volumes from the DfE) and exploring data published by the Department of Health and Office for National Statistics, other government departments, the National Health Service and other national, regional and local bodies. It should be noted that links to statistical sources that were live at the time of searching may not remain live at the time of publication.

Nature and scope of the data

Data on looked-after children has been collated by local authorities from 1997/98 until 2002/03 by CLA100, AD1, OC1 and OC3 returns and then through the SSDA903 return, and until 2008/09, also by OC2 returns (DCSF 2009b). OC2 returns specifically recorded outcomes for looked-after children who had been in care for 12 months up to the end of September of each year until 2008/09. The OC2 returns will be replaced by a matched dataset from 2009/10 onwards. This new data source will match SSDA903 returns to the National Pupil Database (containing individual level attainment and pupil characteristic data).

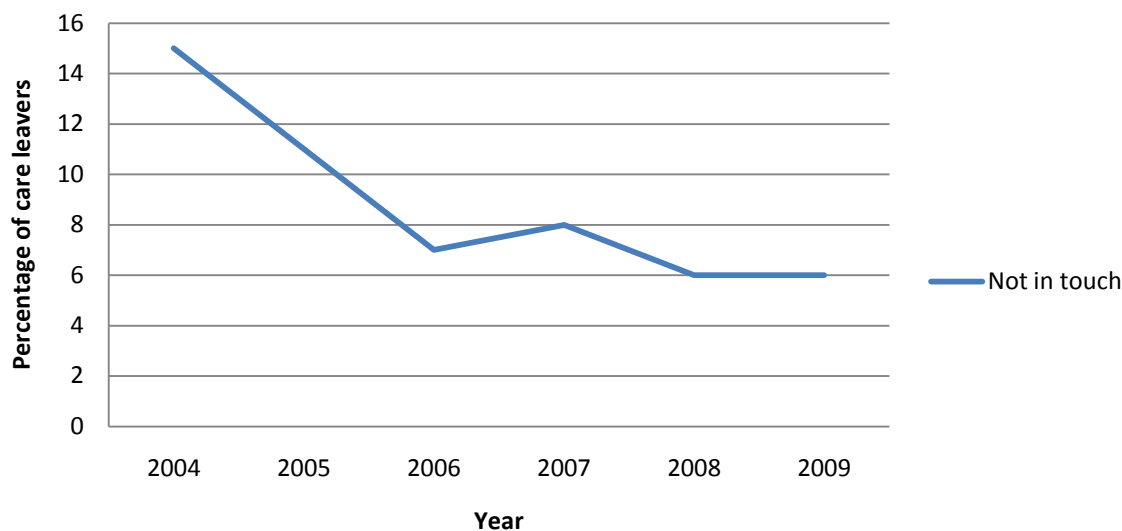
Data on the outcomes for children and young people who are looked after is presented for fewer young people than would actually have been looked after, as it refers only to those young people who were looked after continuously for a period of at least 12 months. In 2009, for example, a total of 60,900 children and young people were recorded as having been looked after (DCSF 2009b). Over a similar time period (the twelve months to 30 September 2009) 43,200 (just under three quarters) were identified as having been in care for 12 months or longer (DCSF 2010c).

Therefore, the data on outcomes of looked-after children at age 19 is also not comprehensive, since it draws only on data about young people who were looked after in their 16th year and will exclude young people who become looked after later than this. In 2009, there were 6,100 former care leavers aged 19 in the cohort (DCSF 2009b).

Trend data

The key change in relation to national indicator 147 (care leavers in suitable accommodation) is that the proportion of those about whom local authorities have no information has decreased markedly from 15 per cent in 2004 (see Figure 1) to 6 per cent in 2009. Hence, at least 6 per cent of the 6,100 care leavers who comprised the long-term looked-after cohort in 2009 were not in touch with their responsible authority on their 19th birthday (DCSF 2009b).

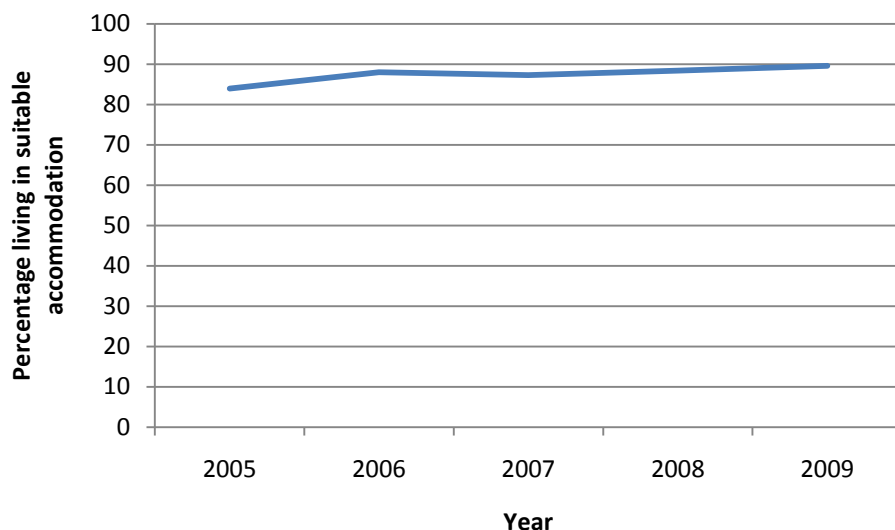
Figure 1. Care leavers with whom the local authorities have no contact



Source: DCSF 2008b, 2009b

In 2009, 89.6 per cent of former care leavers age 19 (who local authorities were still in touch with) were living in suitable accommodation (national indicator 147). This is an increase of 5.7 percentage points since 2005 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Care leavers living in suitable accommodation aged 19



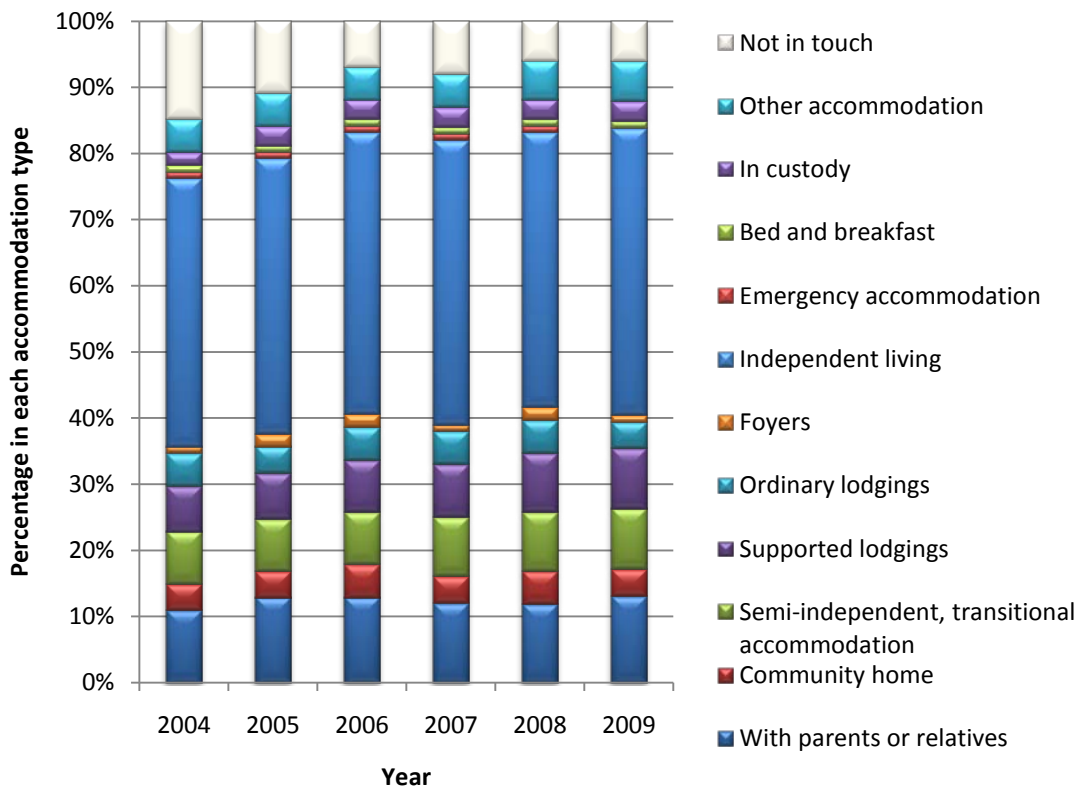
Source: DCSF 2009b

More detailed data about accommodation type for the cohort of former care leavers at age 19 is also available, (DCSF 2009b). The trend data published in the Statistical First Release for 2009 (DCSF 2009b) also may differ from historical data as a result of 'implemented amendments and corrections sent by some local authorities'.

The picture now available suggests that there has been a marginal increase over the six years from 2004 to 2009 in the proportion of care leavers living in supported lodgings (from 7 to 9 per cent), but that the proportion living in other types of accommodation has remained fairly constant across the years. The highest proportion of care leavers in each year (over 40 per cent) were living independently, with smaller proportions living with parents or relatives (around 13 per cent), in semi-independent or transitional accommodation (around 9 per cent), in community homes (around 4 per cent) or ordinary lodgings (around 4 per cent). Some, however, were in custody on their 19th birthday (3 per cent), in emergency accommodation (around 1 per cent) or in some form of bed and breakfast arrangement (1 per cent). Figure 3 provides an overview of the pattern of accommodation.

Accurate comparisons with the living circumstances of all other young people in this age group are not available, though the indications from Stein (2004) are that young people leaving care may be more likely to become young householders or become homeless than their peers. The difficulties faced by some young people leaving care were highlighted in the Stein report (2004), which suggested that there was evidence that young disabled people leaving care were not accessing mainstream services.

Figure 3. Accommodation of care leavers: by type of setting



Source: DCSF 2008b; DCSF 2009b

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Appendix 1: Knowledge review methods

The review includes literature identified by a C4EO scoping study (Bostock *et al* 2009) as being relevant to the review questions. The scoping study used systematic searching of key databases and other sources to identify literature that was then screened and coded (see Appendix 3 for the parameters document, search strategy and coding frame). Apart from reference harvesting, no further searching for material other than that located by the scoping review was undertaken for this review.

The harvesting carried out since the research review was completed identified 16 new references (as detailed in Section 3) resulting in 119 references in total. This included literature that was intended to fill gaps identified in the research review (Stein 2009a), or related to relevant literature published after the review. The following updates were incorporated:

- four new references were included in the policy context
- nine new references were included in answer to the first review question
- four new references were included in answer to the second review question
- three new reference was included in answer to the third review question (also included in answer to the first question)
- one new reference was included in answer to the fourth review question.

The review team used a 'best evidence' approach to select literature of the greatest relevance and quality for the review. This entailed identifying:

- the items of greatest relevance to the review questions
- the items that came closest to providing an ideal design to answer the review questions
- the quality of the research methods, execution and reporting.

The team reviewed all priority items and summarised their findings in relation to the review questions. The review team also assessed the quality of the evidence in each case. In judging the quality of studies, the team was guided by principles established to assess quantitative research (Farrington *et al* 2002) and qualitative studies (Spencer *et al* 2003).

Appendix 2: Scoping study process

The study began with the Theme Advisory Group (TAG) – a group of experts in the policy, research and practice field of vulnerable (looked-after) children – establishing the key questions to be addressed and the parameters for the search (see Appendix 1). The scoping study used a broad range of sources to identify relevant material:

- searches of bibliographic databases
- searches of research project databases
- browsing the websites of relevant organisations
- recommendations from TAG.

(See the Search strategy section below for the sources and strategy used.)

The research team undertook an initial screening process of the search results, using record titles and abstracts (where available) to ensure the search results conformed to the search parameters and were relevant for answering the scoping study questions. Items were excluded if:

- they were not about looked-after children or care leavers, aged up to 25
- they had been published before 2000
- they were not from a peer-reviewed journal or report or not a key book
- they were not empirical research
- they did not relate to a study in the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand
- they did not answer the scoping study questions
- a fuller report was published elsewhere
- they could not be obtained in full text, either at all, or within the scoping study deadline
- they were duplicate records.

The inclusion/exclusion criteria are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The following criteria were applied sequentially from the top down:

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria		Guidance
1	Exclude date of publication if before 2000	Published before 2000
2	Exclude publication type if not peer-reviewed journal or report	Exclude books, dissertation abstracts, trade magazines, policy (unless evaluated), guidance (unless evaluated) Include relevant reports, evaluated policy
3	Exclude location if not UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand	
4	Exclude population if not about looked-after children or care leavers, or their care	Upper age limit 25
5	Exclude research type if not empirical research	Exclude case study, vignette, opinion piece, commentary or briefing
6	Exclude scope	Use if not excluded above but does not answer one of the questions
7	Exclude if insufficient details to identify reference	

8	Exclude if unable to retrieve	Covers records for which full text could not be obtained at all or not in time for this piece of work
9	Exclude full study already reported	For studies where identical methodology and findings are reported in more than one record
10	INCLUDE	Guidance not excluded by the above
Extra exclusion criterion for questions 3.2.2, and for 3.2.3 where intervention involved	Exclude not intervention	Intervention is defined as a named, bounded, activity or set of activities with specific objectives that are assessed/evaluated in some way.

Additional criteria were applied in relation to sub-questions 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 and the records rescreened. This served to define interventions more strictly as a specific activity with specified outcomes that concerned the emotional and behavioural health (EBH) of looked-after children and young people (LACY). The papers included in 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 were also required to include some evaluation of outcomes, whether related to effectiveness, accessibility or acceptability: descriptive accounts were excluded as it was felt they did not contribute to our understanding of interventions. These measures were intended to narrow the focus and to exclude system-wide approaches (such as an account of introducing looked-after children (LAC) into a child welfare system). While system-wide approaches may concern the EBH of LACY, they are not always linked directly to outcomes addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties and usually have a wide remit to improve the overall performance and accountability of the child welfare system. Policy was excluded unless evaluated.

A proportion of records of doubtful relevance according to the available abstract/title were parked for later examination.

Records from the searches which were screened as relevant according to title or abstract were then loaded into the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI)-Reviewer database.

Full texts were retrieved for the second stage of screening, since the team considered that scoping required the use of full texts. All records screened for inclusion were sought. Inclusion/exclusion criteria were then applied to the full text articles. Approximately one-third of retrieved items were excluded using full texts (see exclusion criteria above; see flow chart, below). Thirty-eight items could not be retrieved in full text within the scoping study deadline.

The content of the **rejected** records included those that focused on:

- adopted children
- policy
- overviews or briefings of the topic
- descriptions of interventions with no indication of outcomes.

The research team then assessed the remaining items and coded them in relation to the following:

- relevance to research question or questions
- country (UK, Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia or New Zealand)
- study type (including experimental study with comparison/control, non-experimental study, systematic review etc.)
- main methods (including survey, interviews and focus groups, control trial, literature review etc.)
- intervention setting (including foster care, residential care, school, housing services or floating support etc.)
- study population (including LACYP, care leavers, health, education, housing and education staff etc.)
- cross-cutting issues (child poverty and safeguarding).

It was subsequently agreed that the term 'intervention setting' is an ambiguous, and therefore unhelpful, term. It can capture both the environmental space in which an intervention happens (a school meeting room, for example) or the context in which the child(ren) are placed. Many studies don't report either and, therefore, the scoping review does not analyse the responses checked on this section of the coding form.

An agreed part of the scoping methodology was to undertake independent coding quality assurance checks on 10 per cent of the references. References were selected randomly from EndNote listings of papers allocated to each sub-question. In addition, all studies excluded on reading the full text were checked (i.e. reviewed by at least two people).

The checks on coding demonstrated a high degree of consistency and reliability in the use of the coding tool. With minor exceptions (for example, varied understanding of 'intervention setting': see above), the result of double coding was principally to add to the recording of methodological detail.

The check on exclusions at full text again demonstrated the consistent and reliable use of scoping criteria, and did not reveal any systematic bias in the decisions. In three cases, an exclusion decision was subject to further discussion before being resolved. The process is summarised in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Summary of different stages

	Stage	Material used
1	Question setting	

2	Searching, browsing and recommendations to identify relevant material	
3	Initial screening using inclusion/exclusion criteria	Using title and abstract
4	Included studies entered into EPPI-Reviewer software	
5	Second stage screening	Using full paper
6	Final included studies coded	Using full paper
7	QA on 10% of coded papers	Full paper
8	Assessment of content and scope of included papers	Full paper

See Table 12 (below) for a full copy of the coding tool.

The numbers of items found by the initial search, and subsequently selected, can be found in the following table. The three columns represent:

- items found in the initial searches
- items selected at first screening for further consideration (that is those complying with the search parameters after the removal of duplicates)
- items considered relevant to the study at second screening by a researcher who had read the abstract and/or accessed the full document.

Table 10. Overview of searches for all topics

Source	Items found ⁴	Items selected for consideration	Items identified as relevant to this theme
Databases			
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	3,508	128	7
Australian Society and Family	59	52	2

⁴ Where n/a is indicated, this is because these resources were browsed rather than searched. Initial output was publication date from beginning of 1990, this was restricted to the start of 2000 at first screening.

Abstracts			
British Education Index (BEI)	443	291	7
ChildData	8,576	977	57
CINAHL Plus	3,889	576	29
Cochrane Library	71	10	1
EMBASE	2,929	277	2
Google	n/a	1	1
HMIC	2,615	154	0
IBSS	900	47	6
MEDLINE	3,325	235	15
PsycInfo	4,539	908	26
Social Care Online	7,673	490	35
Social Services Abstracts	3,114	257	6
Social Work Abstracts	2,044	187	3
Zetoc	1,159	4	1
Internet databases/portals (also see Search strategy section)			
Barnardo's	n/a	1	1
British Library Welfare Reform on the Web	n/a	n/a	n/a
CERUKplus	57	47	1
Intute	n/a	n/a	n/a
INVOLVE	n/a	n/a	n/a

JSTOR	n/a	n/a	n/a
Research Register for Social Care	Incorporated in Social Care Online search		
Reference harvest 'Taking care of education'	n/a	9	2
TAG recommendations (including texts and organisations)	n/a	56	8

Note: duplicate removal was ongoing throughout the process.

Total number of relevant records by question

3.3 Care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation': 83

3.3.1 LACYP's views: 50

3.3.2 Services/interventions (effectiveness, acceptability, accessibility): 63

3.3.3 Attitudes and skills of carers and families: 12

3.3.4 What is known about those not in 'settled, safe accommodation' at 19?: 26

Note: studies may be coded as relevant to more than one priority.

Table 11. Overview of search output for care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

Source	Items identified as relevant to this priority
Databases	
ASSIA	1
Australian Society and Family Abstracts	0
BEI	2
ChildData	22

CINAHL Plus	6
Cochrane Library	1
EMBASE	0
HMIC	0
Google	0
IBSS	3
MEDLINE	4
PsycInfo	8
Social Care Online	14
Social Services Abstracts	2
Social Work Abstracts	2
Zetoc	1
Barnardo's	1
Reference harvest: 'Taking care of education'	1
TAG recommendations (including texts and organisations)	15

Note: as this was derived from aggregated output of all searches, no columns are given for initial output.

Search strategy

The following section provides information on the keywords and search strategy for each database and web source searched as part of the scoping study. Searching was carried out by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) social care information specialist.

The list of databases and sources to be searched included the databases recommended for systematic reviews, 40 organisations' databases and subject portals identified by a SCIE scope and recommendations from TAG members. The general approach was:

- A detailed search on relevant terms for the looked-after children population was carried out across 15 databases. The search strategy was translated for each database and the output was de-duplicated, creating a database of approximately 19,000 records.
- Topic-specific searches were carried out on this combined population database, to create a second database.
- References obtained by recommendation and browsing were added to these records, creating a database of approximately 5,000 records.
- All these records were screened for relevance to all the questions. This approach dealt with significant overlap in topic relevance between the priorities.

All searches were limited to publication years 2000 to 2008, in English language only. The keywords used in the searches, together with a brief description of each of the databases searched, are outlined below.

The following conventions have been used: (ft) denotes that free-text search terms were used and * denotes a truncation of terms. (+NT) denotes that narrower subject terms have been included (where available).

1.1.1 Stage 1

1.1.2. Compiling the looked-after children population set

Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

(searched via CSA Illumina 27/08/08)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 500 international English language social science journal

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| #1 | looked-after child* (ft) | #11 | care orders |
| #2 | child* in care (ft) | #12 | special guardianship (ft) |
| #3 | foster care (+NT) | #13 | leaving care (ft) |
| #4 | adoption (+NT) | #14 | care leaver* |
| #5 | kinship care (ft) | #15 | secure accommodation |
| #6 | children (+NT) or adolescents (+NT) or young people (+NT) | #16 | unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #7 | residential care (+NT) | #17 | placement (ft) and #6 |
| #8 | #6 and #7 | #18 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #8 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 |
| #9 | group homes (+NT) | | |
| #10 | #6 and #9 | | |

Australian Family and Society Abstracts

(searched via Informit 13/11/08)

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| #1 | child* (ft) | #4 | residential childcare |
| #2 | adopt* (ft) or foster* (ft) | #5 | looked-after children |
| #3 | #1 and #2 | #6 | #3 or #4 or #5 |

British Education Index (BEI)

(searched via Dialog 11/11/08)

BEI provides information on research, policy and practice in education and training in the UK. Sources include over 300 journals, mostly published in the UK, plus other material including reports, series and conference papers.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| #1 | looked-after children (ft) | #12 | special guardian* (ft) |
| #2 | child* looked-after (ft) | #13 | care leav* (ft) |
| #3 | child* in care (ft) | #14 | leav* care (ft) |
| #4 | orphan* (ft) | #15 | secure accommodation (ft) |
| #5 | orphans | #16 | unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #6 | adopted children | #17 | placement* (ft) and (child* (ft) or children) |
| #7 | foster (ft) | #18 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 |
| #8 | foster care or foster children | | |
| #9 | residential child care (ft) | | |
| #10 | residential care and (child* (ft) or children) | | |
| #11 | care order* (ft) | | |

Campbell Collaboration C2 Library

(searched 14/10/08)

The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews contains systematic reviews and review protocols in the areas of education, criminal justice and social welfare.

The Education and Social Welfare sections were browsed but no relevant records were found.

CERUKplus

(searched 11/11/08)

The CERUKplus database provides access to information about current and recently completed research, PhD level work and practitioner research in the field of education and children's services.

#1 (looked-after children) or (care leavers)

ChildData

(searched via NCB Inmagic interface 01/09/08)

ChildData is the National Children's Bureau database, containing details of around 35,000 books, reports and journal articles about children and young people.

#1 children in care	#11 care orders
#2 looked-after child* (ft)	#12 special guardianship
#3 child* looked-after (ft)	#13 leaving care
#4 orphans	#16 care leaver* (ft)
#5 foster care or foster carers or foster children	#17 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#6 kinship care	#18 placement
#7 adoption or adopted children	#19 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18
#8 residential care or residential care staff	
#9 group home* (ft)	
#10 children's homes	

Cochrane Library

(searched via Wiley Interscience 09/09/08)

#1 child, institutionalized (+NT)	#10 group homes (+NT)
#2 looked-after child* (ft)	#11 care order* (ft)
#3 child* in care (ft)	#12 special guardianship (ft)
#4 child, orphaned	#13 care leaver* (ft)
#5 orphanages	#14 secure accommodation (ft)
#6 foster home care	#15 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#7 kinship care (ft)	#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15
#8 adoption (+NT)	
#9 residential child care (ft)	

1.1.3. Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL Plus)

(searched via EBSCO Host 29/08/08)

CINAHL Plus provides indexing for 3,802 journals from the fields of nursing and allied health.

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|-----|---|
| #1 | looked-after child* (ft) | #9 | leaving care (ft) |
| #2 | child* in care (ft) | #10 | care leaver* (ft) |
| #3 | "orphans and orphanages" (+NT) | #11 | secure accommodation (ft) |
| #4 | foster home care (+NT) | #12 | unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #5 | kinship care (ft) | #13 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 |
| #6 | adoption | | |
| #7 | residential child care (ft) | | |
| #8 | special guardianship (ft) | | |

EMBASE

(searched via Ovid SP 05/09/08)

The Excerpta Medica database (EMBASE) is a major biomedical and pharmaceutical database. There is selective coverage for nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, psychology, and alternative medicine.

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|---|
| #1 | looked-after child* (ft) | #10 | special guardianship (ft) |
| #2 | child* in care (ft) | #11 | leaving care (ft) |
| #3 | orphanage (+NT) | #12 | care leaver* (ft) |
| #4 | foster care (+NT) | #13 | secure accommodation (ft) |
| #5 | adoption (+NT) or adopted child (+NT) | #14 | unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #6 | residential home (+NT) and (child* or adolescen* (ft)) | #15 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 |
| #7 | group homes (ft) and (child* or adolescen* (ft)) | | |
| #8 | children's homes (ft) | | |
| #9 | care orders (ft) | | |

Health Management Information Consortium (HMIC)

(searched via Ovid SP 03/09/08)

The Health Management Information Consortium (HMIC) database is a compilation of data from two sources, the Department of Health's Library and Information Services and King's Fund Information and Library Service. Topic coverage is on health services.

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|--|
| #1 | looked-after child* (ft) | #9 | residential child care (+NT) |
| #2 | child* in care (ft) | #10 | children's homes (ft) |
| #3 | children in care | #11 | care orders |
| #4 | orphans | #12 | special guardianship (ft) |
| #5 | disabilities (+NT) | #13 | former children in care or care leavers |
| #6 | (foster care or foster children or foster parents) (+NT) | #14 | secure accommodation |
| #7 | kinship care (ft) | #15 | unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #8 | (adoption or adopted children or adoptive parents) (+NT) | #16 | placement (ft) and children (+NT) |

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

#17 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or

#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16

International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)

(searched via EBSCO Host 05/09/08)

#1 looked-after child* (ft)
#2 children in care
#3 orphanages
#4 orphans
#5 (foster care or foster child* or
foster parent) (ft)
#6 kinship care (ft)
#7 adopted children
#8 residential child care (ft)
#9 children's homes (ft)

#10 care order* (ft)
#11 special guardianship (ft)
#12 leaving care (ft)
#13 care leaver* (ft)
#14 secure accommodation
#15 unaccompanied asylum seeking
child* (ft)
#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#12 or #13 or #14 or #15

JSTOR

(searched 14/11/08)

JSTOR is an international archive of journal articles and grey literature.

#1 children in care (ft)

MEDLINE

(searched via Ovid SP 27/08/08)

MEDLINE is the primary source of international literature on biomedicine and healthcare

#1 looked-after children (ft)
#2 child* in care (ft)
#3 looked-after child* (ft)
#4 child, orphaned (+NT)
#5 orphanages (+NT)
#6 foster home care (+NT)
#7 kinship care (ft)
#8 adoption (+NT)
#9 residential child care (ft)
#10 special guardianship (ft)
#11 leaving care (ft)
#12 secure accommodation (ft)

#13 unaccompanied asylum seeking
child* (ft)
#14 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6
or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#12 or #13
#15 child (+NT) or adolescent
#16 group homes (+NT)
#17 #15 and #16
#18 #14 or #17

PsycInfo

(searched via Ovid SP 05/09/08)

PsycInfo contains more than 2.5 million records on psychological and behavioural science.

- | | |
|---|--|
| #1 looked-after child* (ft) | #12 leaving care (ft) |
| #2 child* in care (ft) | #13 care leaver* (ft) |
| #3 orphans (+NT) | #14 secure accommodation (ft) |
| #4 orphanages (+NT) | #15 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #5 foster children (+NT) or foster care (+NT) or foster parents (+NT) | #16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 |
| #6 kinship care (ft) | #17 child (+NT) or adolescent |
| #7 adoption (child) (+NT) | #18 group homes (+NT) |
| #8 adopted children (+NT) | #19 #17 and #18 |
| #9 residential child care (ft) | #20 #16 or #19 |
| #10 care orders (ft) | |
| #11 special guardianship (ft) | |

Social Care Online

(searched 21/08/08)

Social Care Online is the Social Care Institute for Excellence's (SCIE's) database covering an extensive range of information and research on all aspects of social care. Content is drawn from a range of sources including journal articles, websites, research reviews, legislation and government documents, and from the knowledge of people using these services.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 looked-after children | #11 leaving care |
| #2 children looked-after (ft) | #12 care leaver* (ft) |
| #3 child* in care (ft) | #13 secure accommodation and (children or young people) |
| #4 foster care (+NT) | #14 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #5 foster children | #15 placement and (children or young people) |
| #6 adoption (+NT) | |
| #7 adopted children | |
| #8 residential child care | |
| #9 care orders | |
| #10 special guardianship | #16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 |

Social Services Abstracts

(searched via CSA Illumina 02/09/08)

Social Services Abstracts is an international database covering social work, social welfare and social policy.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| #1 looked-after child* (ft) | #5 adoption (+NT) |
| | #6 adopted children (+NT) |
| #2 child* in care (ft) | #7 residential care (ft) and (children (+NT)) |
| #3 orphans | #8 children's homes (ft) |
| #4 foster care or foster children | #9 special guardianship (ft) |

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

- | | |
|--|--|
| #10 care leaver* (ft) | #13 placement and (child (+NT)) |
| #11 secure accommodation (ft) | #14 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #12 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) | #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 |

Social Work Abstracts

(searched via Ovid SP 03/09/08)

Social Work Abstracts covers material published in primarily US-based journals with social work relevance

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| #1 looked-after child* (ft) | #11 care leaver* (ft) |
| #2 child* in care (ft) | #12 leaving care (ft) |
| #3 orphan* (ft) | #13 secure accommodation (ft) |
| #4 foster* (ft) | #14 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft) |
| #5 kinship care (ft) | #15 placement and (child* (ft)) |
| #6 adoption (ft) | #16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #7 residential child care (ft) | #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or |
| #8 children's homes (ft) | #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 |
| #9 care orders (ft) | |
| #10 special guardianship (ft) | |

Zetoc

(searched via British Library 03/09/08)

Zetoc provides access to the British Library's electronic table of contents of journals and conference proceedings. This search interface has quite limited functionality

- | | |
|--|---|
| #1 looked-after children (ft) | #7 care leaver (ft) |
| #2 foster care (ft) and health (ft) | #8 care leavers (ft) |
| #3 adopted children (ft) and health (ft) | #9 secure accommodation (ft) |
| #4 residential child care (ft) | #10 placement (ft) and children (ft) and care (ft) |
| #5 children's homes (ft) | #11 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 |
| #6 special guardianship (ft) | |

Search output from each database was combined (using OR) in an EndNote library, which was subsequently searched for each priority. The EndNote library was produced from the above references on 05/12/08.

1.1.4 Stage 2

Topic-specific searches

(All later aggregated for screening for all priorities, due to overlap in relevance.)

Education priority

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----|----------------------|
| #1 | school* (ft) | #4 | pupil* (ft) |
| #2 | education* (ft) | #5 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 |
| #3 | learning (ft) | | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Educational outcomes and positive school experiences set

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| #1 | achievement* (ft) | #14 | friend* (ft) |
| #2 | qualification* (ft) | #15 | career* (ft) |
| #3 | examin* (ft) | #16 | occupation* (ft) |
| #4 | key stage* (ft) | #17 | job* (ft) |
| #5 | college* (ft) | #18 | employ* (ft) |
| #6 | university (ft) | #19 | citizen* (ft) |
| #7 | degree* (ft) | #20 | school refusal (ft) |
| #8 | attendance (ft) | #21 | school phobia (ft) |
| #9 | truan* (ft) | #22 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #10 | stability (ft) | | #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or |
| #11 | dropout* (ft) | | #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or |
| #12 | expulsion* (ft) | | #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 |
| #13 | exclu* (ft) | | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Views set

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|----|----------------------------|
| #1 | opinion* (ft) | #4 | listen* (ft) |
| #2 | view* (ft) | #5 | voice* (ft) |
| #3 | feedback (ft) | #6 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 |

This output was used to answer Q 3.1.1

The education set was searched using the following terms:

Educational policy and interventions set

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| #1 | virtual school head* (ft) | #10 | guidance (ft) |
| #2 | education support (ft) | #11 | policy |
| #3 | out of school hours learning (ft) | #12 | green paper* (ft) |
| #4 | specialist* (ft) | #13 | white paper* (ft) |
| #5 | designated teacher* (ft) | #14 | Every Child Matters (ft) |
| #6 | club* (ft) | #15 | Children's Act |
| #7 | personal education plan* (ft) | #16 | Care Matters (ft) |
| #8 | mentor* (ft) | #17 | educational psychologist* (ft) |
| #9 | education at home (ft) | #18 | mental health professional* (ft) |

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

#19 camhs (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or
#20 achievement ceremon* (ft)	#17 or #18 or #19 or #20
#21 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or	
#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or	

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1 acceptab* (ft)	#11 outcomes (ft)
#2 accessib* (ft)	#12 evaluat* (ft)
#3 satisfaction (ft)	#13 making a difference (ft)
#4 service uptake (ft)	#14 success* (ft)
#5 service use (ft)	#15 improvement (ft)
#6 engage* (ft)	#16 implementation (ft)
#7 involv* (ft)	#17 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#8 participat* (ft)	#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#9 effective* (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16
#10 What works (ft)	

This output was used to answer Qs 3.1.2 and 3.1.3

The education set was searched using the following terms:

Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families

#1 carer* (ft)	#6 mother* (ft)
#2 worker* (ft)	#7 father* (ft)
#3 assistant* (ft)	#8 parent* (ft)
#4 guardian* (ft)	#9 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#5 family (ft)	#7 or #8

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

#1 attitude* (ft)	#10 promote (ft)
#2 skill* (ft)	#11 help* (ft)
#3 abilit* (ft)	#12 assist* (ft)
#4 behaviour* (ft)	#13 facilitate (ft)
#5 behavior* (ft)	#14 value (ft)
#6 encourage* (ft)	#15 engage* (ft)
#7 supportive (ft)	#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#8 supporting (ft)	#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#9 empathy (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Training and support for above behaviours set

#1 training (ft)	#4 regist* (ft)
#2 support* (ft)	#5 counselling (ft)
#3 competen* (ft)	#6 assess* (ft)

#7 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Quantitative, correlate set

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|--|
| #1 | quantitative (ft) | #6 | percentage (ft) |
| #2 | correlate* (ft) | #7 | significant difference (ft) |
| #3 | effective* (ft) | #8 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 |
| #4 | statistic* (ft) | | |
| #5 | cohort* (ft) | | |

This output was used to answer Q 3.1.4

Emotional/behavioural health priority

Population terms EndNote library above was searched using the following terms:

Emotional/behavioural health set

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----|--|
| #1 | children's centre* (ft) | #25 | hyperactiv* (ft) |
| #2 | family centre* (ft) | #26 | relationship* (ft) |
| #3 | confiden* (ft) | #27 | risk taking (ft) |
| #4 | esteem (ft) | #28 | self harm (ft) |
| #5 | grie* (ft) | #29 | stress (ft) |
| #6 | happy (ft) | #30 | suicide (ft) |
| #7 | happiness (ft) | #31 | personality disorder* (ft) |
| #8 | emotion* (ft) | #32 | ADHD (ft) |
| #9 | self control (ft) | #33 | buddy (ft) |
| #10 | mental* (ft) | #34 | mentor* (ft) |
| #11 | qaly (ft) | #35 | counsellor* (ft) |
| #12 | quality of life (ft) | #36 | psych* (ft) |
| #13 | resilen* (ft) | #37 | advoca* (ft) |
| #14 | respect (ft) | #38 | therap* (ft) |
| #15 | wellbeing (ft) | #39 | support worker* (ft) |
| #16 | antisocial (ft) | #40 | key worker* (ft) |
| #17 | anxi* (ft) | #41 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20# or #21 or #22 or #23 or #24 or #25 or #26 or #27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31 or #32 or #33 or #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40 |
| #18 | attach* (ft) | | |
| #19 | behav* (ft) | | |
| #20 | bereav* (ft) | | |
| #21 | bully* (ft) | | |
| #22 | conduct (ft) | | |
| #23 | cortisol (ft) | | |
| #24 | depress* (ft) | | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Positive emotional and behavioural health set

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----|----------------------|
| #1 | confiden* (ft) | #11 | qaly (ft) |
| #2 | esteem (ft) | #12 | quality of life (ft) |
| #6 | happy (ft) | #13 | resilen* (ft) |
| #7 | happiness (ft) | #14 | respect (ft) |
| #9 | self control (ft) | #15 | wellbeing (ft) |

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

#16 feeling good (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or
#17 feel good (ft)	#17
#18 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or	
#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or	

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Views set

#1 opinion* (ft)	#4 listen* (ft)
#2 view* (ft)	#5 voice* (ft)
#3 feedback (ft)	#6 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5

This output was used to answer Q 3.2.1

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:

Emotional/behavioural health policy and interventions set

#1 advoca* (ft)	#14 Healthy Care (ft)
#2 mentor* (ft)	#15 mental health professional* (ft)
#3 counsell* (ft)	#19 camhs (ft)
#4 therap* (ft)	#20 achievement ceremon* (ft)
#5 dedicated (ft)	#21 guidance (ft)
#6 specialist (ft)	#22 educational psychologist* (ft)
#7 policy (ft)	#23 psychiatrist* (ft)
#8 legislation (ft)	#24 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#9 green paper (ft)	#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#10 white paper (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or
#11 Every Child Matters (ft)	#17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or
#12 Children's Act	#22 or #23
#13 secure attachment (ft)	

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1 acceptab* (ft)	#11 outcomes (ft)
#2 accessib* (ft)	#12 evaluat* (ft)
#3 satisfaction (ft)	#13 making a difference (ft)
#4 service uptake (ft)	#14 success* (ft)
#5 service use (ft)	#15 improvement (ft)
#6 engage* (ft)	#16 implementation (ft)
#7 involv* (ft)	#17 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#8 participat* (ft)	#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#9 effective* (ft)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16
#10 What works (ft)	

This output was used to answer Q 3.2.2

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:

Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families set

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| #1 carer* (ft) | #6 mother* (ft) |
| #2 worker* (ft) | #7 father* (ft) |
| #3 assistant* (ft) | #8 parent* (ft) |
| #4 guardian* (ft) | #9 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #5 family (ft) | #7 or #8 |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| #1 attitude* (ft) | #13 facilitate (ft) |
| #2 skill* (ft) | #14 value (ft) |
| #3 abilit* (ft) | #15 engage* (ft) |
| #4 behaviour* (ft) | #16 bond (ft) |
| #5 behavior* (ft) | #17 sympath* (ft) |
| #6 encourage* (ft) | #18 warmth (ft) |
| #7 supportive (ft) | #19 love (ft) |
| #8 supporting (ft) | #20 belonging (ft) |
| #9 empathy (ft) | #21 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #10 promote (ft) | #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or |
| #11 help* (ft) | #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or |
| #12 assist* (ft) | #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Training and support for above behaviours set

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| #1 training (ft) | #5 counselling (ft) |
| #2 support* (ft) | #6 assess* (ft) |
| #3 competen* (ft) | #7 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 |
| #4 regist* (ft) | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Quantitative, correlate set

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| #1 quantitative (ft) | #6 percentage (ft) |
| #2 correlate* (ft) | #7 significant difference (ft) |
| #3 effective* (ft) | #8 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #4 statistic* (ft) | #7 |
| #5 cohort* (ft) | |

This output was used to answer Q 3.2.3

Safe, settled accommodation priority

Population terms EndNote library above was searched using the following terms:

Accommodation set

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| #1 accommodation (ft) | #9 floating support (ft) |
| #2 housing (ft) | #10 tenan* (ft) |
| #3 homeless* (ft) | #11 B&B (ft) |
| #4 flat* (ft) | #12 bed and breakfast (ft) |
| #5 bedsit* (ft) | #13 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #6 lodging* (ft) | #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or |
| #7 hostel* (ft) | #12 |
| #8 independent living (ft) | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Safe, settled set

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| #1 safe* (ft) | #4 permanen* (ft) |
| #2 settled (ft) | #5 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 |
| #3 secur* (ft) | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Views set

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| #1 opinion* (ft) | #4 listen* (ft) |
| #2 view* (ft) | #5 voice* (ft) |
| #3 feedback (ft) | #6 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 |

This output was used to answer Q 3.3.1

The accommodation set was searched using the following terms:

Not in settled accommodation set

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| #1 unsafe (ft) | #7 lost (ft) |
| #2 unsettled (ft) | #8 rough sleep* (ft) |
| #3 temporary (ft) | #9 on the street* (ft) |
| #4 homeless* (ft) | #10 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or |
| #5 out of touch (ft) | #7 or #8 or #9 |
| #6 not in contact (ft) | |

This output was used to answer Q 3.3.2

The accommodation set was searched using the following terms:

Accommodation policy and interventions set

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| #1 floating support (ft) | #11 policy |
| #2 housing support (ft) | #12 legislation |
| #3 housing service* (ft) | #13 green paper (ft) |
| #4 housing officer* (ft) | #14 white paper (ft) |
| #5 benefit* (ft) | #15 Children (Leaving Care) Act (ft) |
| #6 credit* (ft) | #16 affordable (ft) |
| #7 grant* (ft) | #17 low cost (ft) |
| #8 fund* (ft) | #18 guidance (ft) |
| #9 dedicated | #19 joint working (ft) |
| #10 specialist* (ft) | #20 Homelessness Act (ft) |

#21 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or

#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or
#17 or #18 or #19 or #20

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1	acceptab* (ft)	#11	outcomes (ft)
#2	accessib* (ft)	#12	evaluat* (ft)
#3	satisfaction (ft)	#13	making a difference (ft)
#4	service uptake (ft)	#14	success* (ft)
#5	service use (ft)	#15	improvement (ft)
#6	engage* (ft)	#16	implementation (ft)
#7	involv* (ft)	#17	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16
#8	participat* (ft)		
#9	effective* (ft)		
#10	What works (ft)		

This output was used to answer Q 3.3.3

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:

Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families

#1	carer* (ft)	#6	mother* (ft)
#2	worker* (ft)	#7	father* (ft)
#3	assistant* (ft)	#8	parent* (ft)
#4	guardian* (ft)	#9	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8
#5	family (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

#1	attitude* (ft)	#12	assist* (ft)
#2	skill* (ft)	#13	facilitate (ft)
#3	abilit* (ft)	#14	value (ft)
#4	behaviour* (ft)	#15	engage* (ft)
#5	behavior* (ft)	#16	financ* (ft)
#6	encourage* (ft)	#17	fund* (ft)
#7	supportive (ft)	#18	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
#8	supporting (ft)		
#9	empathy (ft)		
#10	promote (ft)		
#11	help* (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Training and support for above behaviours set

#1	training (ft)	#5	counselling (ft)
#2	support* (ft)	#6	assess* (ft)
#3	competen* (ft)	#7	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6
#4	regist* (ft)		

Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:

Quantitative, correlate set

#1 quantitative (ft)

#2 correlate* (ft)

#3 effective* (ft)

#4 statistic* (ft)

#5 cohort* (ft)

#6 percentage (ft)

#7 significant difference (ft)

#8 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7

This output was used to answer Q 3.3.4

For all priorities**Literature suggestions from Theme Advisory Group and other experts**

These were incorporated into the pool of references that were screened.

Policy, government agencies, academic and third sector websites

The following websites were browsed and searched for each priority, and relevant documents incorporated in the screening EndNote libraries. These websites included government departments and agencies, academic centres and third-sector organisations.

Output figures were not compiled for each website because this work was carried out during background preparation for this project.

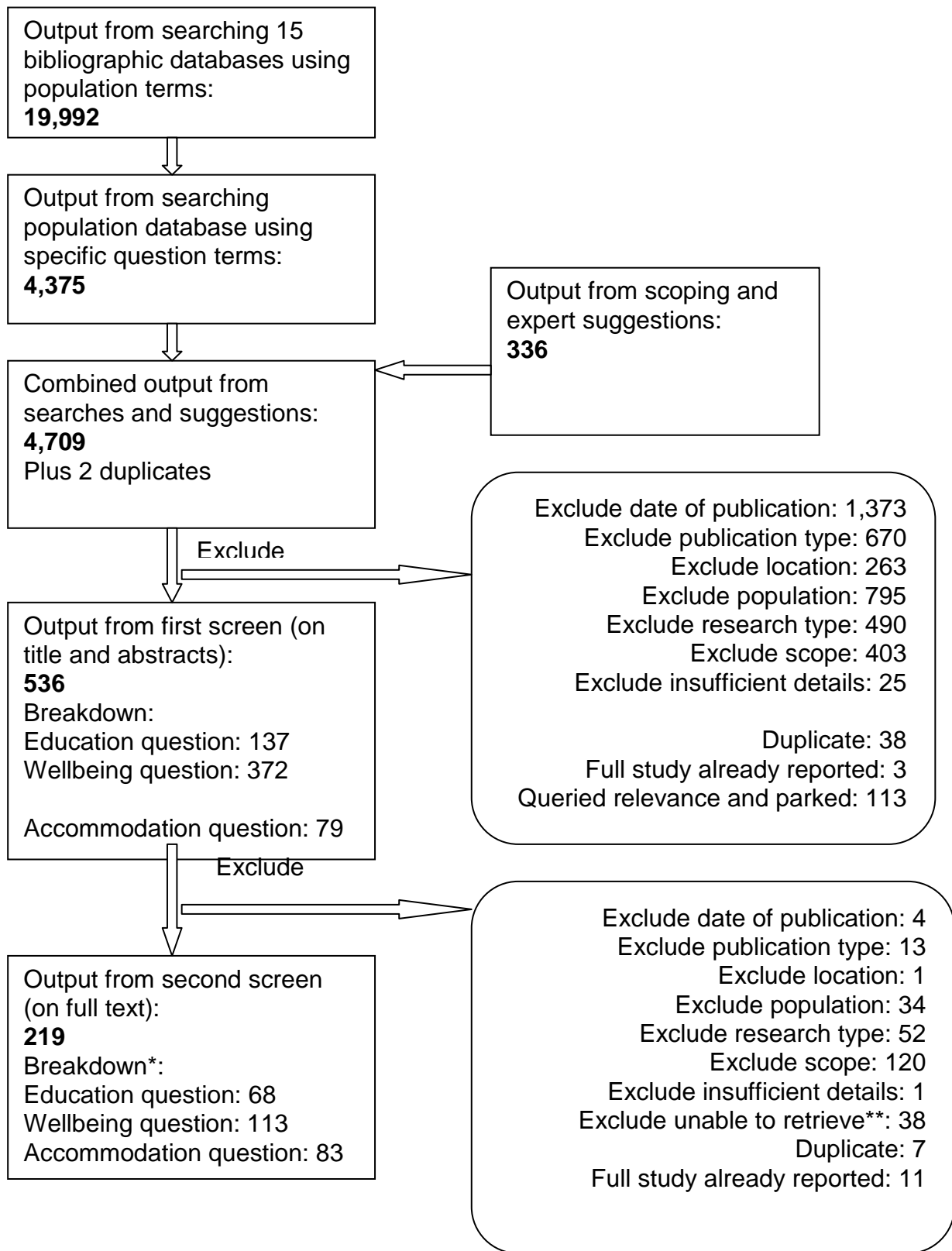
Organisation	URL
4 Nations Child Policy Network	www.childpolicy.org.uk/
A National Voice	www.anationalvoice.org/
Barnardo's	www.barnardos.org.uk/
British Association for Adoption & Fostering	www.baaf.org.uk/
Care Services Improvement Partnership Knowledge Community	http://kc.csip.org.uk/
Caspari Foundation	www.caspari.org.uk/
Centre for Policy Studies	www.cps.org.uk/
Connexions Direct	www.connexions-direct.com/
DEMOS	www.demos.co.uk/
Department for Children, Schools and Families	www.dcsf.gov.uk/
Department of Health	www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm
Evidence Network	www.evidencenetwork.org/
Government Social Research	www.gsr.gov.uk/
Howard League for Penal Reform	www.howardleague.org/
Intute	www.intute.ac.uk/

INVOLVE	www.invo.org.uk/
Institute for Public Policy Research	www.ippr.org.uk/
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	www.jrf.org.uk/
Kings' Fund	www.kingsfund.org.uk/
Local Government Analysis and Research	www.local.gov.uk
Mental Health Foundation	www.mentalhealth.org.uk/
Nacro	www.nacro.org.uk/
National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care	www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?sve=934
National Centre for Social Research (NATCEN)	www.natcen.ac.uk/
National Children's Bureau	www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp
National Library for Health	www.library.nhs.uk/
Office for National Statistics	www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp
NCVCCO (Children England)	www.ncvcco.org/
National Foundation for Educational Research	www.nfer.ac.uk/index.cfm
National Youth Agency	www.nya.org.uk/
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	www.niccy.org/
Personal Social Services Research Unit	www.pssru.ac.uk/
Prison Reform Trust	www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/
Promising Practices Network	www.promisingpractices.net/
Research in Practice	www.rip.org.uk/
Restorative Justice Consortium	www.restorativejustice.org.uk/
Rethink	www.rethink.org/

What Works for Children	www.whatworksforchildren.org.uk/
York Systematic Reviews in Social Policy and Social Care	www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/srspsc/index.htm
Young Minds	www.youngminds.org.uk/

Figure 4. Literature flow chart

Note: removal of duplicate references took place throughout; referral between priorities took place at second screening.



Notes:

* includes material that could not be obtained at all, as well as records that could not be obtained in time for this piece of work.

** includes referrals from other priorities

Table 12. Coding tool – vulnerable children keywording guideline

Section A:

<p>A.1 On reading full text, is this paper now excluded? <i>(Date, publication type, location, population not LACs, research type, doesn't address scope questions)</i></p>	<p>A.1.1 No</p> <p>A.1.2 Yes (add reason for exclusion) <i>(add reason for exclusion)</i></p>
<p>A.2 Research question relevance <i>Code all priorities that apply. Code for sub-questions (all that apply) also as far as possible.</i></p>	<p>A.2.1 Relevant 3.1 Improving educational outcomes</p> <p>A.2.2 Relevant 3.1.1 LACYP's views</p> <p>A.2.3 Relevant 3.1.2 Services/interventions (effectiveness, acceptable, accessible)</p> <p>A.2.4 Relevant 3.1.3 Attitudes and skills of carers and families</p> <p>A.2.5 Relevant 3.2 Emotional/behavioural health</p> <p>A.2.6 Relevant 3.2.1 LACYP's views</p> <p>A.2.7 Relevant 3.2.2 Services/interventions (effectiveness, acceptable, accessible)</p> <p>A.2.8 Relevant 3.2.3 Attitudes and skills of carers and families</p> <p>A.2.9 Relevant 3.3 Care leavers in settled safe accommodation</p> <p>A.2.10 Relevant 3.3.1 LACYP's views</p> <p>A.2.11 Relevant 3.3.2 Services/interventions (effectiveness, acceptable, accessible)</p>

	<p>A.2.12 Relevant 3.3.3 Attitudes and skills of carers and families</p> <p>A.2.13 Relevant 3.3.4 What is known about those not in SSA at 19?</p> <p>A.2.14 Concept, theory or policy paper (important background)</p>
<p>A.3 Country <i>(Tick all that apply)</i></p>	<p>A.3.1 UK</p> <p>A.3.2 Ireland</p> <p>A.3.3 Canada</p> <p>A.3.4 USA</p> <p>A.3.5 Australia or New Zealand</p> <p>A.3.6 Not specified</p>
<p>A.4 Study type <i>(Tick one)</i></p>	<p>A.4.1 Systematic review <i>(QA of papers and transparent methodology)</i></p> <p>A.4.2 Empirical experimental study with comparison/control <i>(controlled trials, before/after designs, matched/waiting list control)</i></p> <p>A.4.3 Empirical non-experimental study <i>(includes qualitative studies of the views of people who use services, their carers and supporters, case studies, survey reports, testing of assessment tools, surveys and cohort studies)</i></p> <p>A.4.4 Review article <i>(expert, consensus, literature: NOT systematic or unbiased)</i></p> <p>A.4.5 Background critical account of</p>

	<p>policy, concepts, definitions, models</p> <p>A.4.6 Inadequate information</p> <p>A.4.7 Other (<i>specify</i>)</p>
<p>A.5 Main methods (<i>Tick all that apply</i>)</p>	<p>A.5.1 Not research (<i>opinion, policy, etc.</i>)</p> <p>A.5.2 Survey</p> <p>A.5.3 Interviews and focus groups</p> <p>A.5.4 Observation</p> <p>A.5.5 Ethnographic study</p> <p>A.5.6 Secondary analysis</p> <p>A.5.7 Controlled trial (<i>+/- randomisation</i>)</p> <p>A.5.8 Case study/case studies</p> <p>A.5.9 Literature review</p> <p>A.5.10 Inadequate information</p> <p>A.5.11 Other (<i>specify</i>)</p>
<p>A.6 Intervention setting (<i>tick all that apply</i>)</p> <p>NOTES:</p> <p>1. <i>Primarily this is where intervention is delivered, or with/to whom, though if that's not important, may relate to who delivers (for example, housing workers).</i></p> <p>2. <i>This data is important to accessibility and acceptability of interventions.</i></p> <p>3. <i>If study evaluates different care settings, such as family versus residential</i></p>	<p>A.6.1 No intervention in study</p> <p>A.6.2 Foster care placement</p> <p>A.6.3 Residential care</p> <p>A.6.4 Secure settings</p> <p>A.6.5 Relatives/friends (kinship) placement</p>

<p><i>placement, that is the intervention.</i></p>	<p>A.6.6 Birth family</p> <p>A.6.7 School or school-related service</p> <p>A.6.8 Healthcare settings</p> <p>A.6.9 Children's or youth centres</p> <p>A.6.10 Housing services or floating support</p> <p>A.6.11 Unspecified</p> <p>A.6.12 Other <i>(specify)</i></p>
<p>A.7 Study population <i>(tick all that apply)</i></p>	<p>A.7.1 LACYP <i>(specify age range if given)</i></p> <p>A.7.2 Male LACYP only</p> <p>A.7.3 Female LACYP only</p> <p>A.7.4 Disabled LACs or those with LTCs <i>(incl. with Learning Difficulties and SENs)</i></p> <p>A.7.5 Care leavers</p> <p>A.7.6 LACYP of BME background <i>(incl. travellers, Irish, any ethnic minority)</i></p> <p>A.7.7 Unaccompanied asylum seekers in care</p> <p>A.7.8 LAC in secure accommodation <i>(incl. YOI, psychiatric)</i></p> <p>A.7.9 Sibling groups of LACYP</p> <p>A.7.10 Birth families</p>

	<p>A.7.11 Family and relatives of LACYF</p> <p>A.7.12 Frontline paid carers <i>(foster, kinship carers, residential workers)</i></p> <p>A.7.13 Other health, social care and housing staff <i>(not covered in above, managers, for example)</i></p> <p>A.7.14 Other <i>(specify)</i></p>
<p>A.8 Identify as key item in relation to one of the topics? <i>Is this one of the 10–20 most relevant items for the vulnerable children theme? Complete the following, all that apply</i></p>	<p>A.8.1 NO: Definitely not a key item <i>(scores nil)</i></p> <p>A.8.2 YES: Suggest a reason if you wish</p> <p>A.8.3 Key item for 3.1 Educational outcomes <i>(enter all that apply)</i></p> <p>A.8.4 Key item for 3.2 Emotional health and wellbeing <i>(enter all that apply)</i></p> <p>A.8.5 Key item for 3.3. Accommodation <i>(enter all that apply)</i></p>
<p>A.9 Cross-cutting issues</p>	<p>A.9.1 Child poverty</p> <p>A.9.2 Safeguarding children <i>(Government definition: The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.)</i></p>

Appendix 3: Parameters document

1. C4EO Theme 3 Vulnerable Children

2. Priority

3.3 This appendix contains the parameters for the scoping study set up by the Theme Advisory Group (TAG) to examine the priority of increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'

3. Context for this priority

Increasing the numbers of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation' is a key priority for the government and is reflected in its Public Service Agreements (PSA). Housing stability and support are precursors to the outcomes outlined in Every Child Matters (ECM). Examples of effective practice from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) focus on multi-agency collaboration, such as the Leaving Care Councils and illustrate the systems-level change required. Steps on the ways to achieving the outcomes outlined in ECM, include: planned moves towards independence; maintained or developing family support where safe; and appropriate and increased use of supported housing via improved joint working between housing and children's services⁵. Young people themselves emphasise the importance of affordability and housing choice⁶.

5 CLG and DCSF (2008) Joint working between housing and children's services: preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people. London: CLG and DCSF.

6 A National Voice (2005) There's no place like home: housing for care leavers. Manchester: ANV.

4. Main review questions⁷ to be addressed in this scoping study (no more than five, preferably fewer)

Overall question:

What do we know about how to improve the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'?

Sub-questions:

1. What are looked-after children and young people's (LACYP's) views on what constitutes safe and settled accommodation and how do they compare to those of policy-makers, housing and children's services personnel and independent sector providers?

2. What do we know about the 12.6 per cent of young people not in suitable accommodation at age 19 (as defined by National Indicator 147)?

3. What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and independent sector, including housing services and housing support services, for LACYP?

4. What do we know about the contribution made to being in safe, settled accommodation of LACYP by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, supported housing staff and birth families, and interventions to support this contribution?

5. Which cross-cutting issues should be included?

(Child poverty; safeguarding; equality and diversity; disability; workforce development; change management; leadership; learning organisations?) Please specify the review questions for cross-cutting issues in this scope, and please keep these limited in number.

Child poverty
Safeguarding

6. Definitions for any terms used in the review questions¹

Population of young people:

- Looked-after children and young people in medium- and long-term care (more than 6 months) – wherever they are looked-after (for example, residential care, foster care, young offenders institution) – up to age 25, and their families.
- Children and young people who have several short-term (up to 6 months) periods in local authority care (either under a care order, or on a voluntary basis).

⁷ See guidance note on setting review questions at the end of this form.

- Children and young people preparing to leave medium-term or long-term local authority care.

Outcomes

ECM outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing.

Government indicators of the above outcomes:

- National Indicator 147: Care leavers in suitable accommodation
- PSA 14: Increasing the number of young people on the path to success
- PSA16: Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training
- Specific LACYP definitions of safe and settled and how this might differ to be identified during the scope.

7. What will be the likely geographical scope of the searches?

(Work conducted in/including the following countries.)

- England only
- UK only
- Europe only
- Europe and other countries (English language)

NB: UK, Ireland, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (can't tick/cross the boxes).

8. Age range for children and young people (CYP):

13–25

9. Literature search dates

Start year

2000

10. Suggestions for keywords to be used for searching the literature

See Appendix 2 for complete list of search terms.

11. Suggestions for websites, databases, networks and experts to be searched or included as key sources.

National Children's Bureau (NCB) resources www.ncb.org.uk/

National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care

www.ncb.org.uk/page.asp?sve=934

Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care www.sircc.org.uk/

National Care Advisory Service, Rainer: www.nlcas.org/

Leavingcare.org www.leavingcare.org/

Shelter – preparing to leave care

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/finding_a_place_to_live/leaving_home/preparing_to_leave_care

Shelter – support on leaving care

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/homelessness/help_from_social_services/support_for_care_leavers

Children's Rights Director www.rights4me.org/reports.cfm

National Asylum Support Service (NASS)

www.asylumsupport.info/specialfeatures/children.htm

Fostering Network

BAAF

PSA 16 data on care leavers (October 2008)

Voice www.voiceyp.org/ngen_public/default.asp

12. Any key texts/books/seminal works that you wish to see included?

Mike Stein publication list

Barnardo's *What works for young people leaving care?*

National Care Advisory Service: www.nlcas.org/

www.leavingcare.org/ – series of reports on accommodation

www.leavingcare.org/professionals/research/leaving_care__accomodation

Quality Protects research briefings – MRC/RIP.

A National Voice (2005) *There's no place like home.*

What young people in, and formerly in, residential and foster care think about leaving care, 2006, Children's Rights Director.

Young people's views on leaving care, 2006, Children's Rights Directors

www.rights4me.org/reports.cfm.

DTLR, DH & Centrepont (2002) *Care leaving strategies: a good practice guide*.

CLG and DCSF (2008) Joint working between housing and children's services: preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people.

SEU, 2005, *Transitions: young adults with complex needs*.

13. Anything else that should be included or taken into account?

Receive housing and support up to 18 before passing into general housing system.

Focus on financial support.

Not in employment, education or training (NEETS).

Importance of fostering resilience to outcomes, see SCIE Resource guide 4.

The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) and Shelter are producing a good practice guide on accommodation for care leavers that will contain good practice examples and be backed up by resources on www.leavingcare.org.

Note on setting review questions

The review questions are important because the scoping team will use these to assess the available literature. Review questions need to be clear, specific and answerable. For example, the questions addressed in a scoping study on diversity in the early years might identify the following questions:

1. What is the evidence of different outcomes for children from diverse backgrounds and with different characteristics?
2. In what ways do early-learning environments impact on children's sense of identity and understating of diversity?
3. What is the evidence to support specific strategies that help children from all backgrounds and with diverse characteristics to access the curriculum and make good progress in the early years?

In addition to suggesting review questions, it is important to provide definitions of key terms and concepts (for example, for 'outcomes' 'diversity' 'early-learning environment' and 'early years' in the above example).

Appendix 4: National indicators and key data sources

National indicator (NI) number	NI detail	Source (published information)	Scale	Frequency of data collection	Latest data collection	First data collection	Link
Stay safe							
NI 61	Timeliness of placements of looked-after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1998	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml
NI 62	Stability of placements of looked-after children: number of placements	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1998	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml

NI 63	Stability of placements of looked-after children: length of placement	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1998	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml
Achieve economic wellbeing							
NI 147	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1998	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml
Demographics							
Additional indicators	Characteristics of looked-after children	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1998	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml

Appendix 5: Validated local practice process and assessment criteria

What is validated local practice?

Validated local practice examples describe how local authorities and their partners have successfully tackled key challenges and improved outcomes for children and young people. Their success in achieving improved outcomes has been assessed as being sufficiently well evidenced to merit inclusion within the review.

Collection methods

C4EO collected practice examples by sending invitations to local authorities and trusts to submit promising or proven practice examples to C4EO relevant to each theme after the knowledge workshops. The call for local practice examples was also advertised at the Vulnerable Children knowledge workshops and was placed on the C4EO website and publicised through various publications. Members of the Theme Advisory Group were also asked to use their own contacts and networks to publicise the call for practice examples. Respondents submitted examples in hard copy or via email.

Validation process

Local authorities and their partners were asked to submit their practice examples in a form that was designed to encourage them to fully describe their practice and to provide evidence of how it had improved outcomes. The forms were then assessed by a validation panel made up of a small group of sector specialists, professionals drawn from across the children's sector who have an expertise and a track record of achievement in vulnerable (looked-after) children. Two sector specialists assessed each example against the following validation criteria:

Adequacy of the information supplied. Is there enough to apply the validation process?

Strength of the rationale. Was the intervention/practice fit for purpose and based upon a clear and sound rationale? Was it based on prior and good quality evidence of need and what works in similar contexts?

Sufficiency of impact and outcome evidence. Is there sufficient external and/or internal evaluation evidence that the practice/intervention has made a difference and led to improved outcomes? Are there good practitioner, service user and other stakeholder views? Do others implementing the same or similar practice or strategy changes or interventions report similar findings?

Evidence of what has/has not worked and why. Is there some good guidance here that will be useful to others? What are the golden threads for what works? What barriers and ways of overcoming these have been documented?

Actual or potential for replication or transfer to other contexts and settings. What evidence is there that the practice has already been successfully transferred to different settings, or has the potential for replication? Which elements are especially transferable? What elements are non-negotiable, and which are open to adaptation to suit other contexts? What do people need to put in place to transfer the practice, without substantial loss of effect?

Where two sector specialists assessed an example as being strongly supported by practice experience and evidence or as describing promising practice along with a good rationale for the intervention and some evidence of success and potential to be replicated, the Theme Lead reviews the assessment. Only examples which are endorsed by the Theme Lead are validated.

This review has only drawn on two validated practice examples.

All the practice examples featured within the review, and those submitted and validated since the review was written, are available at www.c4eo.org.uk.

Appendix 6: Stakeholder data

The views of parents, young people and service providers were sought in four ways.

1. Parents and carers panel

First, the executive summary of the research review on increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation' was sent to the parents and carers panel organised by C4EO. Their views were sought on the following questions:

- What are your views on the main findings of the report?
Five parents, all mothers (including one who was also a foster carer) responded to this question.
- What skills and qualities do parents and carers need in preparing young people for adulthood?
Eight parents, all mothers, responded to this question.
- What training and support would be helpful to parents and carers in preparing young people for adulthood, and in supporting them after they move to their accommodation?
Eleven parents (nine mothers, one father, and one adoptive parent who was also a care leaver – not indicated whether mother or father) responded to this question.

2. Consultation with birth parents

Second, C4EO also organised a consultation event with a group of four birth parents who have, or have had, children in care. The group comprised two mothers and two fathers, including: a single father whose daughter had returned home from foster care; a mother whose five children had been in care since 2003, and whose 18 year-old-son had recently left care; a father whose children had been placed for adoption; and a mother whose son accessed respite care, and whose son-in-law was a care leaver.

The group met several times a year to advise their local authority on issues relating to children in care. In respect of increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation', the group's views were sought on:

- What support young people need when moving to independent living and how they could support young people in leaving care?

3. Young people's podcasting workshop

Third, a group of nine young people who were involved with two Action for Children's looked-after care projects spent two days together exploring issues raised by the C4EO research reviews, including increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'.

The young people were aged between 16 and 23 and had experience of being looked after in foster care, supported accommodation and a residential school. Their views were contained within a podcast.

They identified the skills, experiences and competences of their 'ideal carer'. Their views were also sought on the following questions in respect of accommodation:

- What does 'settled, safe accommodation' mean to you? How would you describe it?
- What makes it feel safer?
- What help would be good from carers to help you move into your own accommodation?
- What training and support do carers need to be able to do their job properly?

4. C4EO service provider workshops

Evidence has also been gathered from service providers during discussion groups held at C4EO knowledge workshops. Six events were held at which the authors presented the findings from the Vulnerable Children reviews. These were attended by senior managers and practitioners from statutory and voluntary agencies. The 'local challenges' discussed in the groups included:

- How do we manage when there is an insufficient range of accommodation choices to meet the wide range of needs of young people?
- How do partnerships within the children's trusts ensure that they meet the corporate parenting responsibilities in relation to housing and support needs?
- Providing a clear transparent process of transition to adulthood – requires good inter-agency relationships.
- The lack of appropriate suitable and affordable accommodation and relationships with housing providers.
- The lack of support to help the transition to adulthood/independent living including supporting emotional needs.
- Resources to meet the needs of young people with more challenging emotional, behavioural needs.
- The age of leaving care – what are the alternative options?
- Procuring sufficient safe, settled accommodation.
- Supporting young people into employment and training opportunities.

- General support for young people into transition.

SEPTEMBER 2010

This knowledge review tells us what works in increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'. It is based on a rapid review of the research literature involving systematic searching, analysis of key data, validated local practice examples and views from service users and providers. It summarises the best available evidence that will help service providers to improve services and, ultimately, outcomes for looked-after young people and their families.

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