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Corporate Parenting for young people in care - Making the difference?

catch
22



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Introduction

Young people in care and care leavers want to know that their corporate parents (the local authority, collectively with other relevant services) will care for them and do their best for them. In this, one of the largest peer research studies, we report if, and how, this is being achieved.

Key findings

Thirty six care experienced young people received training as peer researchers, carrying out interviews with 579 young people in and from care. This created a competent and enthusiastic team and produced a wealth of information on progress and perspectives on corporate parenting.

We found that:

- Young people believe that 'good parenting' is demonstrated through; being loved; listened to; supported; respected and kept safe.
- Effective corporate parenting needs a comprehensive strategy and joint working arrangements with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each service.
- Education providers and youth offending teams, were rated as the best corporate parents by children's services staff.
- Jobcentre Plus and adult mental health services were reported to be the worst corporate parents.

We examined three key areas:

Accommodation

- To young people, home meant safety, security, being part of a family and cared for, feeling comfortable, having somewhere to sleep and have their belongings around them, making the place their own and having freedom.
- Many young people's accommodation appeared successful, providing suitable homes that the majority were happy with.
- Care leavers were less likely to feel satisfied with accommodation.

Education, employment or training (EET)

- Educational success was the most important personal achievement cited, particularly when young people felt they had overcome difficulties to 'make it'.
- Instilling a sense of self-belief and confidence early on was a consistent message from young people and professionals on what engages young people in EET.
- Barriers to participation in education included lack of support, personal difficulties, the cost of tuition fees and a lack of financial resources.

Wellbeing

- A measure of subjective wellbeing suggested that young people were generally positive about their lives.
- The aspects they were least happy with were their family and the area they lived in.
- Care leavers reported a lower feeling of wellbeing than those in care.

Conclusions

For many young people, their corporate parents were getting it right. Many young people in and from care were doing well. Most were happy with where they were living, a relatively high proportion was in some form of education, and most reported a positive sense of overall wellbeing.

This was not the case for all, however, demonstrating a need for continued improvement, with all corporate parents being more pro-active in providing effective and sustained support to address a broad range of needs. This is particularly important for young people moving into adulthood where targeted, consistent and age-appropriate support is required.

Where to find more information

For more information please contact Susan.Kerr@biglotteryfund.org.uk or see the full report at www.catch-22.org.uk