



Funding the journey from care

A landscape review of where funders can support care leavers
in Greater Manchester

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Introduction

Finding our feet as we step into adult life is one of the most daunting challenges many of us have to face. For young people who have grown up in the care system it is harder still. The absence of a parental figure to guide them, the disruption of moving from home to home, and the traumatic circumstances which led to them being in care in the first place all compound to mean care experienced young people often have a very different journey to independence to most young people in the UK.

NPC was commissioned by a Greater Manchester philanthropist in July 2021 to investigate the availability and effectiveness of charitable and statutory services for care experienced young people in Greater Manchester. We uncovered five broad areas where there are gaps in provision and where philanthropic funding could make a difference:

1. Relationships and support network
2. Mental health
3. Education and training
4. Achieving financial stability
5. Living independently

For each of these, the Greater Manchester voluntary and statutory sectors provide a range of support for care experienced young people. However, we heard that the quality and availability of this support can vary hugely from area to area. This applies to local government as much as charities. Interviewees spoke about how advocacy on behalf of care experienced young people to improve service provision across Greater Manchester would also be hugely valuable but is currently lacking. We believe the most important interventions to fund are:

- Mentoring
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment

It is clear that too often existing support is provided only at crisis-point, which limits its long-term effectiveness. Ensuring that support is pre-emptive, sustained, and in-depth could greatly improve outcomes for care experienced people in and around the care system in Greater Manchester. We believe these lessons apply to the rest of the UK as well.

We're publishing this research so that other funders can apply these lessons to helping even more young people in Greater Manchester and across the UK.

A care leaver's journey

The diagrams at the start of this report outline the typical 'journey' a young person takes from leaving care to becoming independent. Of course, every young person's journey is different, but we have attempted through our research to identify key steps which are common to many care experienced young people. We've used these to map the shape and breadth of service provision in the Greater Manchester area, as well as any issues or gaps with those services.

Terminology

We heard from the young people in our focus group how they are often mislabelled. Some recalled being mistakenly referred to as a young carer. In this report we use the following terms to refer to young people who have grown up in the care system:

- **Care experienced young people:** we use this term to refer to any young person who has ever been in care (often referred to as care leavers).
- **Looked after children:** we use this term to refer to young people currently living in care. The NSPCC defines 'looked after children' as children who are currently 'living with foster parents, living in a residential children's home or, living in residential settings like schools or secure units'.¹

¹ NSPCC, learning.nspcc.org.uk

Acknowledgements

This research was informed by a literature review, nine interviews with professionals who support care experienced young people in Manchester, and a focus group of care experienced young people from Cloud42 who shared their stories of services in the Greater Manchester area.

We would like to thank all of those who shared their time and thoughts to contribute to this research, particularly the Cloud42 peer researchers.

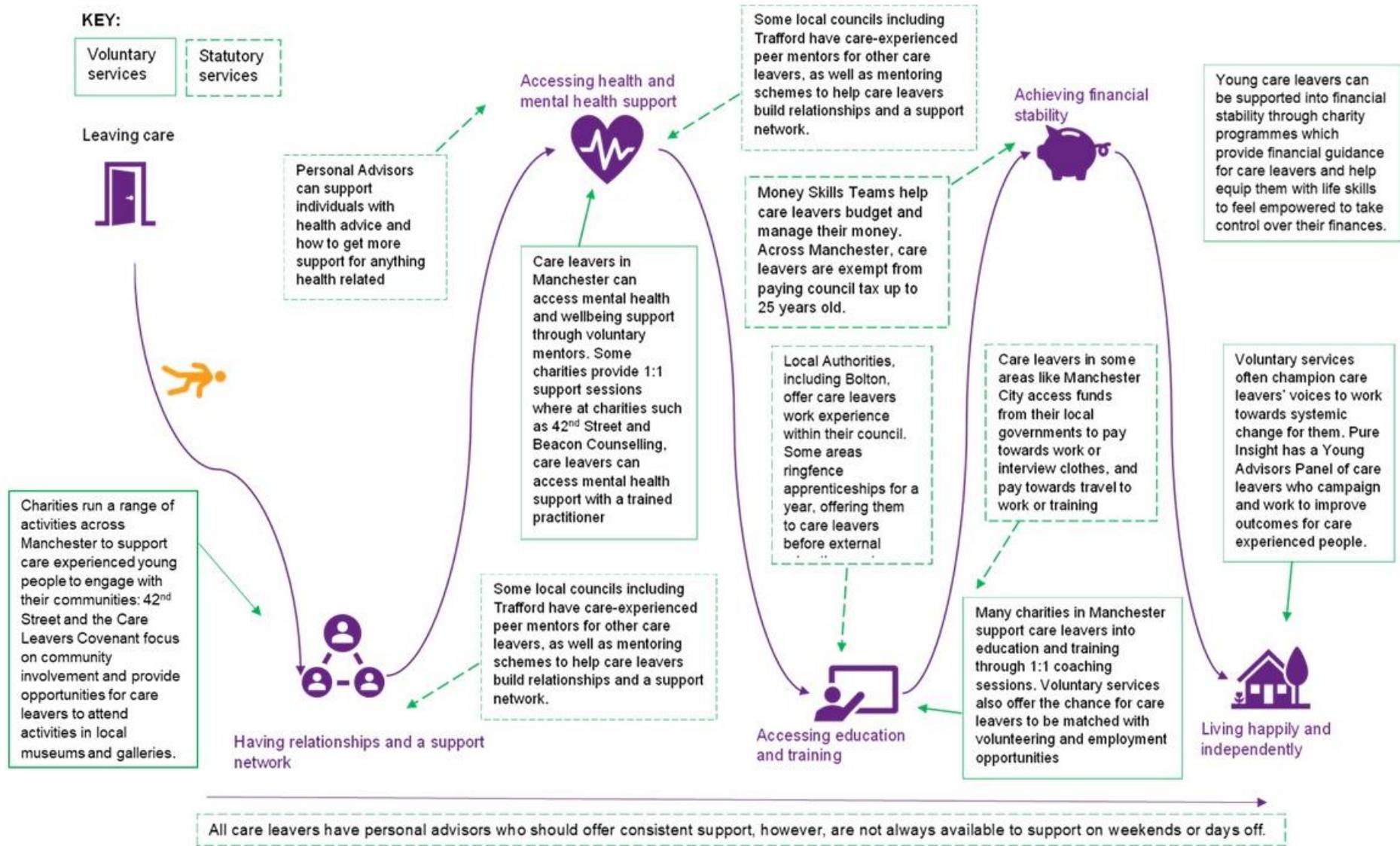
We hope the findings of this report will be useful for other people working to support care experienced young people in Greater Manchester and across the UK. If you have questions about this work or would like to explore further work in this area, please contact

Sarah.Denselow@thinkNPC.org or Lily.Meisner@thinkNPC.org.

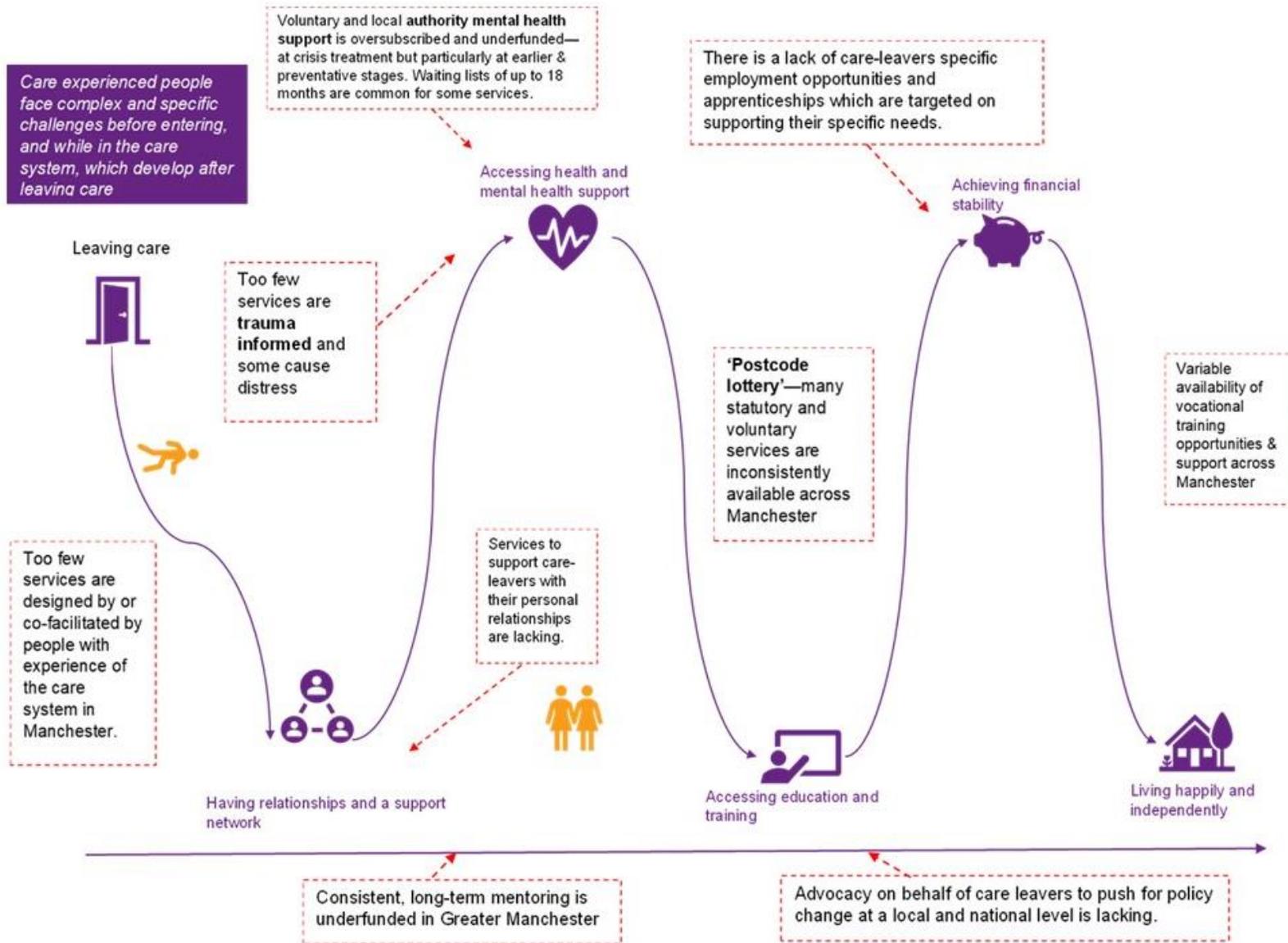
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Statutory and voluntary service provision in Greater Manchester



Issues and gaps with service provision in Greater Manchester



1. Relationships and support network



Think back to when you left home. Do you remember the lessons you had to learn as you became independent? Lessons like how to find a house, how to set up the bills, how to understand your taxes, how to manage your money, how to cook, how to do the laundry, how to get a job. The list goes on. Now imagine trying to learn all of that with nobody to guide you through.

For care experienced young people, the absence of a parental figure can make the transition to independent adulthood daunting and difficult. Missing a rental payment can easily spiral into much bigger problems.

Most of us would have friends we could turn to in this situation. But if you've grown up with the bureaucracy of the care system, in which you've been reliant on form-filling just to go out with friends or stay over for a sleepover, and if you've continuously been uprooted from care home to care home, then you will probably find it harder to build a strong social network as an adult.

You will also have had to contend with the stigma of being in care. Some participants in our focus group told us how the parents of their peers were reluctant for their children to be friends with them.

All of this can have knock on effects later in life. It can even impact the next generation. Raising one's own children becomes so much harder without the guidance and support of family and friends normally leant upon by new parents.

'This is an issue for young parents in particular - how can they give that life experience they haven't been given by other family members?'

Manager, Lloyds Bank Foundation

What are local governments doing?

Many passionate and caring people work in the Greater Manchester care system. Each young person leaving care is allocated a 'personal adviser' (PA) whose role is to support the young person with a range of needs. This includes:

- Advice on finding a house and paying bills.

- Organising and advocating for specific adjustments young people might need at school or university. One example which came up in our interviews is that of a PA supporting a student at the University of Manchester who arranged for them to have access to a private room on campus so they could attend therapy sessions and still make it to their lectures on time.

Unfortunately, the British care system is severely strained. PAs are often so overworked with such large caseloads that they cannot dedicate enough time to each individual. Partly because of this, the PA's role diminishes when a care experienced young person turns 18.

Other limitations, such as PAs only being available within office hours, mean the system is no substitute for a real parental relationship. It's no surprise then that care experienced young people told us that the care system lacks emotional support and warmth.

One young person said:

'The system is so cold. It is a machine, and no child should be raised in a machine. They need love and freedom which just isn't available to children in foster care'

Ezra, Cloud42 peer member

Another said:

'Everything is paperwork, you never feel at home. All your problems have to go through a system, you can't bring anything up without it being written down.'

Daniel, Cloud42 peer member

Mentors can provide young people with an alternative source of support to the PAs, aiming to build less formal and more individual relationships. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has an employment, education, and skills 'pledge' to provide a mentor for every care experienced young person who wants one.² They also work with Greater Manchester Higher to provide mentors for looked after children of all ages, and have a group of care experienced role models to reach out to young care leavers.

² GMCA 'Care leavers receive major employment boost with the launch of Greater Manchester Guarantee', [greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

What are charities doing?

Charities play an important role in bridging gaps in statutory care and support. Our interviewees said a specific area where charities add value is in building trusting and meaningful relationships which are often more difficult for care experienced young people to find.

Charities' independence from statutory services is an asset here. Some charities pride themselves in offering support that is available whenever and wherever an individual needs it, in contrast to support provided by the PAs which is only really available during office hours. The [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#) funds charities in Greater Manchester to help care leavers develop strong relationships. The foundation takes a 'cohort' approach, focusing on funding a smaller number of charities in a deeper way, through a combination of grants, capacity-building, and learning support. This includes conference-style events and smaller thematic groupings where charities can support one another and share what they're learning.

Our focus group of care experienced young people said mentoring can be effective for developing relationships, one peer mentioned:

'The young people who get that support find it really helpful, but it isn't available to many people'

Neelam, Cloud42 peer member

The charities we spoke with also mentioned the value of mentoring, one funder we spoke to commented:

'You don't want to get to the point where all the relationships that a young person has are professional.'

Hannah Lim, Funding Manager, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

[Lifelong Links](#) by the charity [Family Rights Group](#) could provide useful lessons here. Care leavers are assigned a coordinator to identify all long-term important relationships in their life. This could be anyone from a sibling to a teacher or a football coach. This worker then uses family group conferencing methods to try to build relationships and work out who should be supporting the young person with their needs. Lifelong Links is currently offered to children and young people across the UK in 23 local authorities, including Stockport in Greater Manchester.

Charities also provide valuable mentoring support. Mentoring can be valuable for accessing education and employment, overcoming personal or household difficulties, and even dealing with mental health. The in-depth and holistic nature of mentoring that charities provide is a real asset, particularly when delivered one-to-one.

When well delivered, mentoring can give a young person the wide range of support they need when navigating the journey to independence. Pure Insight's mentoring offer is an example of this in Greater Manchester. Their volunteer mentors provide one-to-one tailored emotional and practical support to young people for a minimum of two years. The charity's peer support groups for mentors offer a place for mentors to share knowledge, skills and experience and improve the quality of their provision.

Where should you give to?

Relational work and mentoring is underfunded across Greater Manchester, and the in-depth mentoring we describe above is rarely available when and where young people need it. Some one-to-one mentoring provision exists, but it is not enough and services vary from area to area. Mentoring can support young people at all stages of their journey, such as with relationships, in education and employment, housing, and more.

2. Mental health



Mental health was the most common problem raised in our research. Funders told us it was the biggest issue that their grantees deal with day to day.

The nature of the care system imposes particular mental health challenges upon care experienced young people. The lack of a strong support network and the increased incidence of childhood trauma (not least the trauma often associated with first entering care) is sometimes not realised until adulthood.

Young people's mental health as a whole declined throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This was arguably even more the case for care experienced young people.³

What are local governments doing?

Care experienced young people use the NHS in the same way as any other young person. Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust services in Trafford, Salford and Manchester City offer both group and individual psychological interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Family Interventions.

The transition from Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) to adult mental health services upon turning 18 can be very jarring. Young people often fall through the cracks in support at this point. To get around this, Bolton, Salford, Trafford, and the City of Manchester have Community Mental Health Teams, which offer services to people from 16-70 with diagnosed functional mental health problems. The problem though, as we heard in interviews, is that care leavers often struggle to get mental health issues diagnosed in the first place, due to a lack of awareness and limited access to pre-emptive support services early on.

Both adult and young people's mental health services nationwide have long waiting lists, and Greater Manchester is no different. Some local councils attempt to get around this by making care leavers a priority at health services. Bolton's local offer for example states that care leavers will be

³ Cloud42, 'The Mental Health of Care Experienced Young People in Greater Manchester: A study on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on health, wellbeing, and received support' 42ndstreet.org.uk

prioritised at Parallel Youth Health Centre.⁴ Despite this, care experienced young people still told us that waiting 12-18 months was not unusual.

As a result, NHS support usually focuses on people at crisis point. Low level and preventative support is particularly lacking, so issues which may have been quickly resolved if tackled early on worsen and persist into adulthood. That said, all local authorities across Greater Manchester state that Personal Advisors (PAs) can offer emotional support. They also offer free gym memberships to care leavers to promote healthy wellbeing.

Locating the right service is not always easy. Young people are often sent back and forth between different services without gaining what they need. One interviewee described Manchester's mental health services as 'all under resourced, oversubscribed and not trauma-informed'. Young people we spoke to expressed frustration at the lack of joined-up working between services, which forces them to repeatedly relive traumatic and triggering experiences as they tell their story again and again.

'Care leavers need a flexible, responsive, trauma informed offer to meet their mental health needs. An outreach service that goes to them rather than them being signposted to death trying to find the right support'

Sarah Sturmeay, CEO, Pure Insight

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) plans to give mental health training to PAs and is working to increase the low-level mental health support it provides to care experienced young people. The experience of Covid-19 has prompted Greater Manchester's Mental Health Reform Board to work with young people to identify what changes are needed. It is also attempting to address the 'postcode lottery' of service provision through developing a new 'integrated care system' which brings health and social care services together with communities through place-based partnerships. Making services more connected should help prevent young care leavers from getting lost in the system if they move from one local authority to another.

What are charities doing?

Charities run a series of mental health programmes for young people. There is limited one-to-one support though. Charities such as 42nd Street offer a range of information and support, group work,

⁴ Bolton Council, 'Bolton Care Leavers offer', www.bolton.gov.uk

peer research and advocacy. Young people we spoke to expressed frustration that support is often in group settings only, with little or no one-to-one provision for those who need it.

Charities faces barriers in providing mental health support to care experienced young people:

- Funding is inconsistent, as demonstrated by NPC's [Where are England's Charities?](#) research. This contributes to the 'postcode lottery' of services from the charity sector as well as in statutory provision.
- Charities are not always able to train their staff to provide mental health support professionally, so they often support day-to-day wellbeing rather than providing in-depth mental health support for young people in crisis. There is also a risk that if charities are not adequately trained, for example in trauma-informed approaches, then services which do not understand or address a young person's needs properly could even do harm.
- As with statutory services, charities can have very long waiting lists of over a year, particularly those who do have mental health specialists.

We must also remember that many charity staff have struggled with their own mental health throughout the pandemic, with reports of staff being signed off due to stress.

Where should you give to?

'As soon as you're in the care system there needs to be support around mental health, but there is no support when you enter care... things that happened as a child, [are] not addressed and came back 10-fold 20 years later'

Neelam, Cloud42 peer researcher

Mental health services need more funding at almost every level. Early stage and low-level support (non-crisis) is particularly lacking for care experienced young people. There is also a lack of care leaver specific mental health support in which service providers are well versed in likely needs, and where those delivering the programme also come from a care experienced background.

A trauma-informed approach is an important marker of quality services.⁵ Young people who have been in care have much higher rates of trauma and mental health difficulties than the general

⁵ NPC, 'Trauma-informed approaches: What they are and how to introduce them', www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/trauma-informed-approaches/

population. Almost half meet the criteria for a psychiatric disorder compared to just 10% of the general population.⁶ Despite this, we heard that many services are not equipped to support young people who have trauma in their background. Furthermore the lack of joined up working between services means young people are forced to repeatedly explain traumatic and triggering memories, causing significant distress. Training charity staff to develop skills and understanding in dealing with trauma could improve the quality of provision for care experienced young people.

Finally, our research showed that there is not enough coordination between the voluntary sector and statutory sector in relation to mental health. One interviewee suggested a funder may find it useful to pilot a partnership service supporting care leavers' mental health at an early stage, with better referral pathways in place, which if successful could be scaled across Greater Manchester.

⁶ Mental Health Foundation, 'The Mental Health of Looked-After Children', [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

3. Education and training



Settling into a new school is tough for any child. Having to do so again and again is even more difficult, yet this is the hard reality for many young people in the care system, who are often forced to move homes repeatedly throughout their childhood. Such a transient life can disrupt education and exams, which makes it harder to gain qualifications and training.

Digital exclusion became an even bigger barrier during lockdown, as care experienced young people were often less likely than their peers to have the technology necessary for learning.

What are local governments doing?

Educational institutions, such as schools, universities, or colleges, are often the main sources of pastoral support for care experienced young people. In most cases though the young person must proactively seek support, and not everyone will feel confident enough to do so.

Interviewees told us that social services often encourage young people to go to university to gain qualifications, which of course can be very positive. Care experienced young people are often eligible for bursaries to support their learning. As with all support though, the availability of bursaries can vary significantly between local areas.

Some of the young people we spoke to felt that they received less social services support if they were studying at university, perhaps because people assume they are in less need. But our interviewee at the University of Manchester explained how navigating the transition to adulthood and independence when starting university can be more difficult for care leavers than for other students. It's likely that they will have recently moved out from a housing placement, so continued support will give them the best chance of success. The transition to adulthood may also be the time when care experienced young people begin to contact their birth families.

As well as university, we also heard how government apprenticeships can support social mobility by being an effective route into vocational training and work. Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships works to ensure that groups of under-represented learners across Manchester, including care experienced young people, can access apprenticeship opportunities. For young people leaving care, GMCA are working across local

authorities to ensure there is a consistent offer to care leavers around apprenticeships. For example, Bolton currently offers work experience and apprenticeships within the council that are ringfenced for care leavers, whereas Rochdale don't offer this.⁷ Indeed, apprenticeships often provide a living wage and on-the-job learning, but care experienced young people are not always aware of the opportunities available.

What are charities doing?

Charities offer a wide range of skills and education support for care leavers. Below are some prominent examples operating in Greater Manchester:

- Gorse Hill Studios is an example of a charity which provides creative opportunities and activities for 8-25 year olds who may be underserved and facing exclusion from mainstream education across Manchester City, Salford City and Trafford. Gorse Hill's programme ACE (Alternative Creative Education) includes a 6 month initiative for care experienced people aged 16-21 who are not in education, employment or training, offering them a bespoke learning program around core subjects such as maths and English, the arts, and skills for personal development.⁸
- Several larger charities such as Catch22 and Nacro run national programmes (including in Greater Manchester) to support care experienced young people with their education and skills. The Catch-22 College offers young people aged 16-19 bespoke learning and training opportunities, in a smaller, supportive environment.⁹ Nacro runs personalised Study Programmes and vocational courses, involving group activities, workshops and traineeships to allow young people to try out different subject areas and find their interests.¹⁰
- The Care Leavers Covenant works with universities across Manchester and the UK to improve the offer for care experienced young people at universities so they can engage at every stage. In Greater Manchester, the Care Leavers Covenant involves young care leavers in community initiatives such as activities run by Manchester Museum within the University of

⁷ Bolton Borough Council, 'Care leaver local offer', careleaveroffer.co.uk

⁸ Gorse Hill Studios, www.gorsehillstudios.co.uk/ace

⁹ Catch-22, catch-22.org.uk

¹⁰ Nacro, www.nacro.org.uk/education/courses/

Manchester, provides employment opportunities, and promotes Greater Manchester as a place where care experienced young people belong and play a valuable part.

- Other charities such as Break and Antz Junction run programmes to help young people to overcome barriers to employment and community engagement through work experience and employment pathways.
- Greater Manchester Youth Network matches care experienced young people with volunteering and employment opportunities.
- Pure Insight has a Care Leaver Employment Support initiative, where care experienced young people can access one-to-one tailored support from an employment specialist.
- The charity Become supports care experienced students in Greater Manchester and around the country to access higher education, with information, advice, and a searchable database of education opportunities.

Where should you give to?

To thrive in education you need a basic foundation of mental health support, housing, and relationships so you can focus on your studies. Charities helping care experienced young people in education and training therefore tend to focus on practical and emotional support and guidance.

Greater Manchester Higher recently reviewed the pre-entry support for care experienced students in Greater Manchester, recommending to practitioners that they provide more opportunities for engagement in activities and events to help care experienced young people explore different subjects and identify areas of interest. They also suggested more sustained support for learners at all stages of their education through outreach staff and support staff, to help level the playing field for young care experienced people in higher education.

4. Achieving financial stability



Getting your first job is a big step for anyone, but it is one of the biggest challenges for care experienced young people as they often lack the support network to help them develop professional connections. The disruption to their childhood and education which comes from continually moving home means that even if they do succeed in school, they may not have been able to find the work experience, internships, and opportunities which their peers with strong networks will have enjoyed.

‘For the majority of young people, they receive support from their parents, also can build up social networks and gain work experience through their connections. There are a lack of connections for care leavers, and their horizons are limited because of their circumstances.’

Educational and work researcher

We heard from interviewees that care experienced young people often need intense one-to-one mentoring and support to help them hone the skills necessary to find a job. Sadly, such initiatives are often expensive and hard to find.

What are local governments doing?

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s (GMCA) support for care experienced young people focuses on bridging gaps between schools and employers. GMCA tries to arrange meaningful encounters between care experienced young people and employers so they can develop their own networks.

Apprenticeships are one way that the government supports care leavers into employment, but the schemes have been criticised for being underfunded and poorly publicised. Care experienced young people are not always aware of the opportunities available and may have misconceptions about what the schemes involve.

What are charities doing?

Our interviewees told us that charities which were locally rooted, with strong connections with both care experienced young people and with employers, tend to offer the most impressive employment programmes. Successful programmes often bring networks of employers together with young people, brokering relationships and giving young people crucial exposure to the world of work which they may struggle to access.

Financial education can also be beneficial. The charity MyBnk works in Manchester and elsewhere to provide young people (including those with experience of care) with financial training and awareness programmes, helping young people develop the skills to manage their own money.

Where should you give to?

As with education, holistic support such as mentoring to help care experienced young people make the step into employment is an area where additional funding could have an impact. Ensuring young people have a mentor or other support can help them find and access training opportunities or successfully navigate an application or interview process.

Our research highlighted how important it is to raise awareness of different employment options for care experienced young people. Having a trained career adviser, for example, who can speak to young people about opportunities, correct any misunderstandings, and support young people with their ambitions would be an important contribution.

5. Living independently



As in much of Britain, finding a home you can afford in Greater Manchester can be difficult for any young person, not least care experienced young people. High rents are a problem across the city, with developers buying more and more property around central Manchester, pushing young people, but also charities, out of the city and into surrounding areas. This makes it difficult for care experienced young people to live independently.

We heard how young people who want to be independent and are ready to move out of care often cannot because of the lack of housing. This creates a double problem, as it obviously causes a blockage for another young person who needs to move into care.

Once they find a home, the transition from care home to one's own home can be difficult. Interviewees told us that care experienced young people are not always prepared for the range of day-to-day tasks which living independently entails, from rent and bills to housework and taxes, as they have missed out on the parental support and guidance in these areas that most young people benefit from.

What are local governments doing?

After leaving care, young people often move to 'transitional homes', which are intended to help them transition to independent living. However, interviewees told us that staff in such homes are often under-resourced and therefore unable to provide the support young people really need, and that communication between care workers and those in transitional homes can be poor.

Catch-22 produced a thematic report with the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, cross-analysing a range of Local Authorities' local offers for care leavers, and providing a toolkit for members to improve their own local offer. It mentions Stockport as a promising example of Local Authority support for young people to live independently. Through the Stockport Local Assistance Scheme, for example, Stockport provides a white goods starter pack worth £1000, and those in crisis can apply for help including access to household support funds.

What are charities doing?

Our interviewees argued that one strategic advantage of charities is that their independence from the formal care system can make them well placed to offer the holistic support needed for the transition to independent living. There are many small and locally rooted organisations in Greater Manchester who have strong relationships with care experienced young people who are the first port of call for support. For example:

- Antz Junction aims to improve outcomes for people from disaffected communities, empowering them to overcome barriers through community engagement. The charity runs a holistic mentoring programme in Greater Manchester and London. It brings hard-to-reach communities together through social action initiatives, encouraging people who may be at risk of social exclusion to gain confidence and have positive life-changing experiences.
- Bolton Lads and Girls Club has a holistic mentoring initiative whereby care experienced young people are matched with a Youth Support Worker who can provide them with support with anything from mental health and employability to life skills and travel to develop the confidence and skills for independence.

Where should you give to?

There are many ways to support young people to independence. Mentoring and holistic support programmes run by charities for care-experienced young people across Greater Manchester all need more funding to support more young people with the day-to-day difficulties of becoming independent.

At the other end of the spectrum, one interviewee suggested that a valuable contribution by an ambitious funder may be to invest in a property which a trusted and effective charity can use as a halfway house. This would support care experienced young people, whilst also creating an asset for the charity which would give them a level of sustainability and security into the future.

Recommendations

What to fund

- Helping care experienced young people to build relationships is fundamental. Mentoring can be a good way to do this and can help with every aspect of a young person's journey. The GMCA aims to address this in time through its care leaver pledge, but we heard through our research that mentoring provision across Greater Manchester remains patchy. Additional funding could bridge gaps in provision.
- In addition to mentoring there is a need for better information and resources specifically targeted at care experienced young people, for example on education, employment or apprenticeships, finance and life skills. Care experienced young people also need better information on care leaver specific services in Greater Manchester to make sure young people are aware of opportunities on offer.
- Mental health is often an issue for care experienced young people, yet the NHS is usually so overworked it can only focus on crises. Funders could make a difference by funding mental health provision specifically targeted at care experienced young people, with services publicised to that group and service providers adequately trained in the needs and experiences of young people leaving care. Examples of this could be funding the salaries of clinical practitioners, general mental health training for charity staff, or care leaver specific services to support low-level mental health problems. Services should be available to all and last for as long as young people need them.
- The mental health study published by the Cloud42 researchers interviewed as part of this work contains several other valuable recommendations for how to improve mental health provision for care experienced young people in Greater Manchester.¹¹
- Finally, employers, education providers and the government need to be more aware of the specific circumstances and needs faced by those with experience of the care system. The most impactful awareness-raising and campaigning is often that with care experienced

¹¹ Cloud42, 'The Mental Health of Care Experienced Young People in Greater Manchester', [42ndstreet.org.uk](https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk)

voices at the centre, so fund charities which support young people to advocate and raise awareness of the complexity of their circumstances.

How to fund

Our usual advice on good funding practice is just as important when giving to support those with experience of care. The charitable funders we spoke to for this research gave several key pieces of advice for supporting care leavers in Manchester:

- **Give multi-year grants wherever possible.** Long-term funding enables charities to plan and think more strategically. It allows them to spend less time fundraising and more time doing. For care experienced young people, there are obvious benefits to the continuity and sustained support which funding over a longer period provides.
- **Give core and unrestricted grants.** Funders we spoke to described the importance of giving core and unrestricted funding to allow charities to cover their overheads, respond flexibly to emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic, and meet new needs when they arise. We heard from Lloyds Bank Foundation that giving restricted and project-based grants risked limiting the scope of how a grant can be used and made it harder to pivot quickly when circumstances require. The complexity of the situation for care leavers in Manchester makes it important for charities to be able to set the agenda for how grants are spent, as they are best placed to decide where they can be most effective.

‘More funders need to give core funding and trust charities to spend it wisely, because they will do their work.’

Patrick O’Kelly, Learning and Development Manager, The Clothworkers’ Foundation

- **Collaborate with peers.** Funders we spoke to told us they are increasingly working in partnership with their peers since the pandemic, a trend they wish to continue. Networks such as the Greater Manchester Funders Forum provide a vehicle for collaboration which can help funders get to know one another and share ideas. Young people in our focus group lamented the lack of communication and collaboration between services in Manchester, which is something that greater collaboration between funders of those services could begin to address.

‘The future is collaboration – working with other funders.’

Patrick O’Kelly, Learning and Development Manager, The Clothworkers’ Foundation

- **Make sure services are trauma informed.** Funders should ensure that services funded are equipped to support those with experience of trauma. Even staff not directly providing mental health support should be able to identify where mental health may be an issue for a young person and signpost to the right help.
- **Put care experienced young people's voices at the heart of all you do.** Many of the challenges identified during our research were caused by people not understanding the needs of care experienced young people. Those best placed to articulate those needs are surely those young people themselves, and the best charitable initiatives are often those which hand decision making power to young people to shape their own solutions.

Appendix

Our interviewees

- Fran Slater, 42nd Street Mental Health Practitioner and Group Lead for Cloud42 peer work group
- Ezra, Cloud42 peer group member
- Daniel, Cloud42 peer group member
- Neelam, Cloud42 peer group member
- Hannah Lim, Funding Manager and Social Change sector lead at Esmee Fairbairn
- Nicola Aylward, Head of Learning for Young People at the Learning and Work Institute
- Adrian Ball, Manchester Settlement chief executive
- Sarah Sturmeay, Founder and CEO of Pure Insight
- Patrick O’Kelly, Learning and Development Manager and Acting Head of Grants at the Clothworkers’ Foundation
- Ella Sips, Northwest Manager at the Lloyds Bank Foundation
- Emma Lewis-Kalubowila, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Office at the University of Manchester
- Nicole Allen, Project and Policy Support Officer in the Education, Skills, and Work Directorate at GMCA
- Stewart Tod, Programme Manager for the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Programme at GMCA
- Nic Hutchins, Principal for Apprenticeships and Technical Education at GMCA
- Karen Clarke, Project Manager for Children and Young People at GMCA

- Michelle Wheeler, Enterprise and Careers Co-ordinator at GMCA

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