

RESEARCH BRIEFING

**MOVING ON BUT STAYING CONNECTED:
AN EXPLORATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S
TRANSITIONS FROM BREAK AND THE ROLE
OF THE MOVING ON TEAM**



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WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?

All young people leaving care and making the transition to adulthood face many practical and psychological challenges. Young people moving on from residential care are more likely to have troubled histories and there may not be the same expectation of staying in touch as in foster care. Break, a voluntary organisation based in Norfolk, provides residential child care for 7-17 year olds in homes for up to a maximum of 4 children. Break wanted to ensure that young people leaving the organisation's care receive high quality support for as long as they needed it. In 2012 they received funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to develop a Transitions service for young people leaving their children's homes, with funding included for an evaluation by the CRCF. The Transitions team was developed to work alongside residential staff to provide continuity of care and relationships into adulthood. This study has provided an opportunity to reflect on the significant value of the support provided by the Transitions service. It also offered opportunities to learn lessons in the importance of nurturing care and continuity of relationships with residential staff.

AIMS OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study was to explore the following questions:

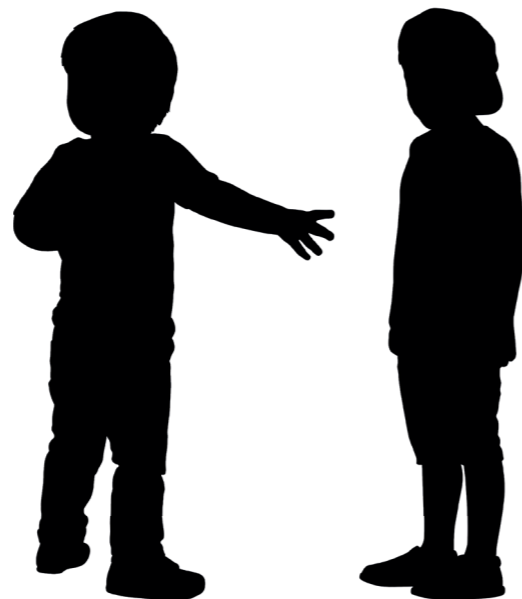
- How does Break prepare young people in their children's homes for leaving care and for the transition to adulthood?
- How do young people experience their transitions from Break residential care to adulthood and the support they have had from the Break transitions service?
- How do Break residential and transitions staff view their contribution to the care, preparation, and support for young people?

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

Interviews were carried out with 20 white British young people aged 17-26 who had left or were in the process of leaving Break's care. The interviews were analysed using narrative and thematic analysis. A focus group was conducted with residential staff from Break to explore their views on how the care of children within Break might contribute to good outcomes for children. Interviews were also undertaken with transitions workers to explore their experiences of supporting young people and the development of the transitions service.

KEY FINDINGS

- All young people in Break residential care had experienced significant losses and almost all of them had experienced abuse and neglect.
- Young people reported experiencing some very positive care and relationships with Break residential and transitions staff. These relationships were often explained in the language of family – with staff talked of as being 'motherly' and 'like a family'.
- Young people had different narratives to describe their lives from childhood to adulthood. In the context of positive relationships, those who were able to resolve their feelings of victimhood or being 'bad' children experienced a significant transformation of their self-esteem, confidence, and competence. Children with unresolved difficulties needed more intensive support into adulthood from a range of agencies.
- The Break transitions service provided a wide range of active relationship-based support, both practical and emotional, that enabled young people to manage their lives in the community while staying connected to Break. The service also promoted continuity of relationships with residential staff.
- The coherent experience of a secure base, that was available and sensitive to their needs, from the time of their arrival in the Break children's home through to a supported transition to adulthood, was beneficial to these young people, most of whom needed support in early adulthood.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

- Practitioners need to listen to the different underlying meanings to young people of their life narratives. It can be the first step in helping them to make sense of their childhood experiences and how and why they may be finding it difficult to accept help, form relationships and become more resilient.
- Residential care that is stable and nurturing has much to contribute to young people's lives and its role as 'last resort' needs to be reviewed by policy makers.
- Continuity of care and longer term commitment from residential and transitions staff is important. Often thought of as 'family', practitioners can enable young people to form a positive identity and develop resilience in the context of security and belonging.

STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Strengths

The use of narrative analysis gave a sense of the participants' whole identities and how their sense of self might have changed over time. A semi-structured format offered the young people the flexibility to tell their story in their own way but gave some structure and support. There was added value in hearing from professionals about their experience of this constructive approach to transitions.

Limitations

The sample was small and comprised of young people who were willing to engage in a research interview. However, although it cannot claim to be representative of all care leavers from this organisation it does show what is possible in terms of therapeutic residential care and transitions.

FIND OUT MORE

FULL REPORT goo.gl/ebm5zD

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