

## **MEDIA RELEASE DRAFT**

**Embargoed until 00.01 Wednesday 26 February 2020**

### **CARE SYSTEM IS FAILING VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE POST-18: NEW REPORT**

A lack of consistent and effective transition support for vulnerable young people when they turn 18 is leading to unacceptable poor outcomes, a new report has found.

Titled 'Destination Unknown', the Children's Services Development Group's (CSDG) report sets out the "cliff edge in support" care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face when they leave care or specialist education, and the huge detriment this can have to their life outcomes.

The report shows that vulnerable young people are being failed by a lack of joined up financial support, consistent and appropriate accommodation, and continued care and advice when they turn 18, despite the principles set out in government legislation. This means they face significant upheaval at this crucial point in their lives.

This comes at a considerable cost to the public purse, wasting the significant investment made by local authorities and service providers to put these young people in the best possible position before they turn 18.

Significant investment is made by local authorities and service providers to help the children in their care to be in the best position possible when they transition into adulthood. However, the quick disappearance of support post-18 means the value of this investment is not realised as young people struggle to access training, education and employment opportunities and live independently without the network of support all young adults need.

The report highlights the stark outcomes this is leading to, including:

- 53% of care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or their destination is unknown by local authorities – compared to only 12% of their peers.
- Only 6% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in higher education. In contrast 34% of 18-year olds in the UK gained a place at university in 2019.
- Fewer than 5% of 16-25 year olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan are undertaking supported internships, apprenticeships or traineeships.
- An estimated 24% of the prison population had spent some time in care during their lifetime. CSDG has estimated the cost of incarcerating these care leavers is £746 million per year.

CSDG has called for action to address these unacceptable outcomes and ensure vulnerable young people are given the support they deserve to live happy and fulfilling adult lives. Recommendations include:

- Legislation must be urgently updated to close existing loopholes and mandate local authorities to provide services to improve the everyday life chances of care leavers and young people with SEND after they turn 18.
- The government must create a centrally run 'Transitions Support Bank' to provide a single point of financial support to help care leavers and young people with EHC plans transition into independence, instead of the current fragmented and inconsistent system of support.

- Extend the government's proposal to ban the use of independent and semi-independent placements for children under the age of 16 to include vulnerable young people aged over 16.

A CSDG spokesperson said: *"Despite the increased political focus on transitions support, care leavers and young people with SEND are still struggling to achieve positive longer-term outcomes. Support is too frequently being limited after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in part thanks to stretched local authority budgets. This means many of these young people are not able to access education and employment, are falling into the criminal justice system, living on the streets and struggling with mental health difficulties.*

*"They deserve so much better and there is so much more we can do to improve their lives. CSDG's recommendations, if enacted, would help all young people to reach their full potential and we hope the government and sector will support them."*

Tim Loughton, Chair of the APPG for Children, added: *"CSDG's report highlights the devastating consequences of poor transitions support and demonstrates the government must do more to ensure that no young person is left behind. I urge the government to carefully consider the report's recommendations and take them forward as part of the reviews of SEND support and the wider care system."*

**-ENDS-**

Notes to editors:

1. For more information, please contact Lorna Russell on 020 3862 6794 or [lornarussell@wacomms.co.uk](mailto:lornarussell@wacomms.co.uk).
2. The report is available to read on the CSDG's website, <http://www.csdg.org.uk/>.
3. CSDG is a coalition of leading independent providers of care and specialist education services for children and young people with complex needs. Members include: Core Assets Group, Compass Community, Outcomes First Group, SENAD Group and Witherslack Group.

Members provide various settings and services, including special educational needs, residential care and fostering across all 152 local authorities in England with a children's services remit. As a collective voice for the independent sector, CSDG champions child-centred, meaningful, and outcomes-focused support for vulnerable children and young people in order to ensure their stable and successful transition into adulthood.

4. The statistics quoted in this press release and in the report have been sourced from official government data sets, including from the Department for Education and the Ministry of Justice, and are referenced in the main report. To calculate the annual cost to the public purse of incarcerating care leavers, we calculated that there were 19,864 care leavers in prison, and multiplied this by the average yearly cost of a prison place. The total figure is estimated at approximately £746 million per year.