

Written evidence submitted by Career Matters

28th April 2021

Education Select Committee – Children’s Homes Inquiry

Re: Education outcomes and destinations of children in residential care

Career Matters Background:

Career Matters¹ is a career development, recruitment, and technology social enterprise established in 2016. We are committed to facilitating innovation and social mobility through career projects - collaborating with education establishments, employers and designing digital solutions.

Career Matters Advisory Board brings significant experience across social care, education, apprenticeships, health, diversity and inclusion and recruitment. Our ambassadors board is represented by people with 100% lived experience.

To date, Project Thrive has engaged with 350 employers; 4000+ care leavers; central/local government, including the Department for Education; Ofsted; and charitable, social enterprise and community groups to explore barriers to employment for care leavers and to design an innovative solution to improve opportunities.

Our career coaching service and our technology platform Thrive² supports children in care and care leavers to explore their career options and progress into fulfilling and successful futures. Our work is an evidence-based and solution-focused approach to improve the current destinations, career opportunities and career outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Career Matters actively campaigns and develops solutions to support children in care and care leavers across education, training and employment. We are a member of the National Care Leaver Consultative Forum for Ofsted which meets to support the children’s social care focus and provide support for the lived experience voices to be heard.

Our team are in regular communication with the Department for Education and met with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families Vicky Ford MP in February 2021.

Data

Project Thrive and its research and development activities over the past four years has looked in great detail at the public data available for children in care and care leavers across all areas of their life, including education, health, career options, IAG support and mental health. High quality data and real-time insight has the potential to positively impact children’s social care and education outcomes and achievement.

Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

¹ [About Career Matters - Career Services for the Future World of Work \(career-matters.org\)](https://www.career-matters.org)

² [Career Matters Thrive Platform improving outcomes for Care Leavers \(career-matters.org\)](https://www.career-matters.org)

The destinations and education/career progression of children in care and care leavers is worryingly low. The talent capitalisation potential of this group is not being realised – we know given the right support these young people can go onto successful futures in society.

- NEET figures stand at 39% for 19-21-year-olds compared to the national average of 11.6%.
- Only 17% gain 5 GCSEs compared to the national average of 60%.
- 6% of 18-21-year-olds go to University.
- There is currently no available data about academic levels or pathways of care leavers post 25 years of age.
- 2% of care leavers go into apprenticeships.
- 12% of care leavers whereabouts unknown.

Assessment and intervention

It is critical that children in care receive education suited to their academic needs and any wider support adaptations for specific learning difficulties (SpLD), special educational needs, disabilities (SEND), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and mental health. Too often mental health and SEND is overlooked and not identified. A child receiving early identification and specialist intervention is given the tools to thrive and the ability to engage in education which is an asset that will enable them to be a fully integrated and active member of society.

Children and young people who have been in local authority care are often labelled as having social, emotional and mental health difficulties without a full assessment from the health sector and educational psychologists. Frequently, we support care leavers to access educational psychology support assessments in later life and a diagnosis is identified. The reason for non or late diagnosis is often due to multiple moves which place the young person at the bottom of the waiting list in education or health in the new geographical area that they are placed into. These identified young people should be prioritised by services. The scientific evidence shows that the impact of Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs)⁶ on the children we support is life-long. The benefits of early identification through assessments and therapeutic support for both the individual and society are significant.

Career Matters Recommendations to improve destinations and outcomes for children in care and care leavers

1. **Children in care should receive career planning, person-centred guidance and pathways support based on their individual needs in KS3 and KS4** – increasing in support when approaching Option choices and GCSE, choosing post 16 provision, leaving care and ongoing into a professional pathway.
2. **National Career Offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers** - A structured programme, commitment, national offer to each child.
3. **The Education Act 2011** places a statutory duty on education provision to provide career education, information, advice and guidance from an **'impartial' Level 6 qualified career guidance practitioner**- this 'right' does not appear to be being implemented to those off roll, or in crisis with mental health or other circumstances affecting their school attendance.
4. **10 year plan for Education, Health and Social Care** – NHS 10 year plan⁷ is in progress, FED⁸ movement is gaining momentum and there now needs to be a focus on children's

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6220625/>

social care which can be complemented by the plans outlined in the integration and Innovation⁹ paper supporting the proposed Health and Care Bill.

5. **The Role of Anchor Institutions¹⁰** - NHS, Local Authorities and Schools.

Employment Outcomes

The education outcomes for children in care and care leavers need to be reviewed alongside the career outcomes and destinations when they leave statutory education. In recent years the support across Higher Education has been increasing. Progress is not being made in the Apprenticeship space with only 2% of care leavers going into apprenticeships. The reasons are many and the barriers include apprenticeship hourly pay rates which prevent children living independently from participating. Career Matters will be publishing our Impact Report in August 2021 highlighting our findings on vocational pathways, career destinations and the impact of digital technology to support children in care and care leavers.

Career Matters Existing Commitment to Improve Destination Outcomes

- **Ofsted** - A series of meetings are taking place between Career Matters and Ofsted to explore the outlined career guidance statutory duty and how it can be inspected.
- **Project Thrive¹¹** - Continued provision through Project Thrive to provide children in care and care leavers level 6 qualified information, advice and guidance support for referred young people.
- **Career Matters Impact Report August 2021** – publishing research and development to date.
- **NHS Lived Experience Charter** – Career Matters is commissioned lead for NHS England and NHS Improvement to design and deliver the Lived Experience Charter which is part of the NHS 10-year plan and the People Plan to create an open and inclusive workforce.
- **Parliament Workshops for Children in Care and Care Leavers** – to enable the lived experience perspective to be heard across Government and Parliament.
- **Department for Education & Ofsted communication.**
- **The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families Vicky Ford MP** – has requested a further meeting summer 2021 to update on progress from February 2021 meeting.
- **Tech for Good** – to further Career Matters research and development to date to support children in care and care leavers access qualified career guidance support and networks for a successful future supported by digital.

Conclusion

⁷ [NHS Long Term Plan](#)

⁸ [Fed Education – Foundation for education development.](#)

⁹ [Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [The NHS as an anchor institution | The Health Foundation](#)

¹¹ [Career Matters Thrive Platform improving outcomes for Care Leavers \(career-matters.org\)](#)

Our team welcome the Education Select Committee Inquiry into Children's Homes and the education outcomes and destinations of children in care and care leavers. We, society, are failing our children in care and particularly those in residential care, let alone those in unregulated placements whose numbers appear to be rising alarmingly. The capacity to change for the better is there but the will to do so is yet to be evidenced.

We would welcome a meeting and to continue to feed into the inquiry as it progresses. We believe it is important to hear the voices of those with lived experience of the residential care system. To ensure our work is relevant, fulfils the needs of the young people we serve we have an Ambassadors network of young people. Many of these young people have recent lived experience of residential homes and criminal justice who would like to be heard in the inquiry.

Hannah Kirkbride

Chief Executive Career Matters

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