

# Care Leavers not in Employment, Education or Training

## Key information

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## Introduction

The Economy, Culture and Skills Committee is investigating the experiences and challenges of care leavers trying to access employment and what work the Mayor is doing to support care leavers into employment.

## Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

The investigation will seek to understand:

- The experiences of care-experienced young people aged 16-24 in trying to access employment, education or training.
- The reasons care-experienced young people aged 16-24 in London find themselves not in employment, training or education (NEET).
- The adequacy of current programmes aimed at helping young people with care experience progress into employment, education or training.
- Which interventions have proven effective at supporting young people with care experience into employment, education or training and why.
- What actions the Mayor, local and central government can take to support care-experienced young people into employment, education or training.

## Key issues

- Care leavers are more likely to be NEET than the population average. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care in 2022, commissioned by the last government, shows that young people aged 19-21 in England with experiences of the care system were three and a half times more likely than all other children to be NEET, with the latest figures indicating a NEET rate of 38 per cent. Only two per cent are undertaking an apprenticeship.
- Research from 2023 found that the vast majority of care leavers who are NEET were economically inactive, either due to disability, including mental health issues, or due to caring responsibilities. A separate 2023 survey identified a lack of formal qualifications, housing and financial instability as additional barriers.
- While a quarter of care leavers are able to access higher education or stable work by the time they are 21, the majority relies on benefits or precarious work. Care-experienced students are also 38 per cent more likely to withdraw from their studies, with common reasons being mental health difficulties and financial difficulties.
- Care leavers are approximately four times more likely to have a mental health disorder than children who grew up with their birth families. Employability organisations cite mental health as the key obstacle to progressing into employment, education or training.
- A 2012 survey found that young people are significantly less likely to become NEET if they experience four or more contacts with employers before they leave school.
- Research by the Health Foundation suggests many employers are hesitant about hiring young people, citing a lack of experience and skills as key obstacles. In addition to these obstacles, care-experienced applicants are also likely to be negatively affected by stigma.
- A 2024 report by London Councils criticises London's skills system for being "fragmented". The report stresses that an integrated offering, including employers and health services would particularly benefit care-experienced young people.

## Key questions

- What are the key factors contributing to the greater likelihood of care-experienced young becoming NEET, compared to the overall population?
- For those young people with care experience who are in work, how does their pay, conditions and progression opportunities compare to the general population?
- What are the main interventions currently in place and how effective are they at helping young care-experienced people progress into employment, education or training?
- What can the Mayor, local and central government do to prevent young care-experienced people in London from becoming NEET and help those who are NEET to progress into employment, education or training?
- How are care leavers impacted by intersectionality with other issues such as ethnicity, disability and special educational needs?

## Call for Evidence

As part of this investigation, the Committee issued a Call for Evidence.

**This Call for Evidence has now closed.**

[Read the written evidence in response](#)

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