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The Experiences of Young Care Leavers

The aims of the project relate to developing an understanding of the experiences of young people exiting care through the conceptual/theoretical frameworks of youth transitions (see Henderson et al, 2007) and social exclusion (e.g. MacDonald, 2008). The research will examine the factors that promote or inhibit the transitions (e.g. education; employment; housing; etc.) of young people exiting care. Given that this group have experienced restricted forms of social participation and involvement whilst in care (see Stein, 2006; 2015), this research would provide a useful means of examining issues of youth transitions with this specific context. In particular, the study, following current debates within youth transitions studies (see Heinz, 2009), would aim to analyse the intersection between structural contexts, institutional frameworks and young peoples' choice/agency as they progress from care. Equally, the research would be valuable in providing a space for the voices of a particularly marginalised and underrepresented group to be heard.

It is anticipated that the study will adopt a primarily qualitative approach, and will utilise semi-structured interviews as the chief method of data collection. This approach is emphasised as the research privileges the views and directs experiences of those involved in the process of exiting care in order to inform an understanding of key issues of relevance (see Parry and Weatherhead, 2014). Intended participants are young adults that have made the transition from care to adulthood. It is also possible that relevant staff/practitioners working in this area may be included as participants; for example, social care practitioners, aftercare workers, social workers, etc. Given the potential sensitivities and vulnerabilities of some of the participants and issues the research may work with, strict ethical protocols will be followed in relation to ensuring participation is voluntary and participants are protected from and safeguarded against harm.

It is hoped that the study could provide substantive evidence to support recommendations for future practice and policy in relation to the provision of relevant services relating to residential care and aftercare.