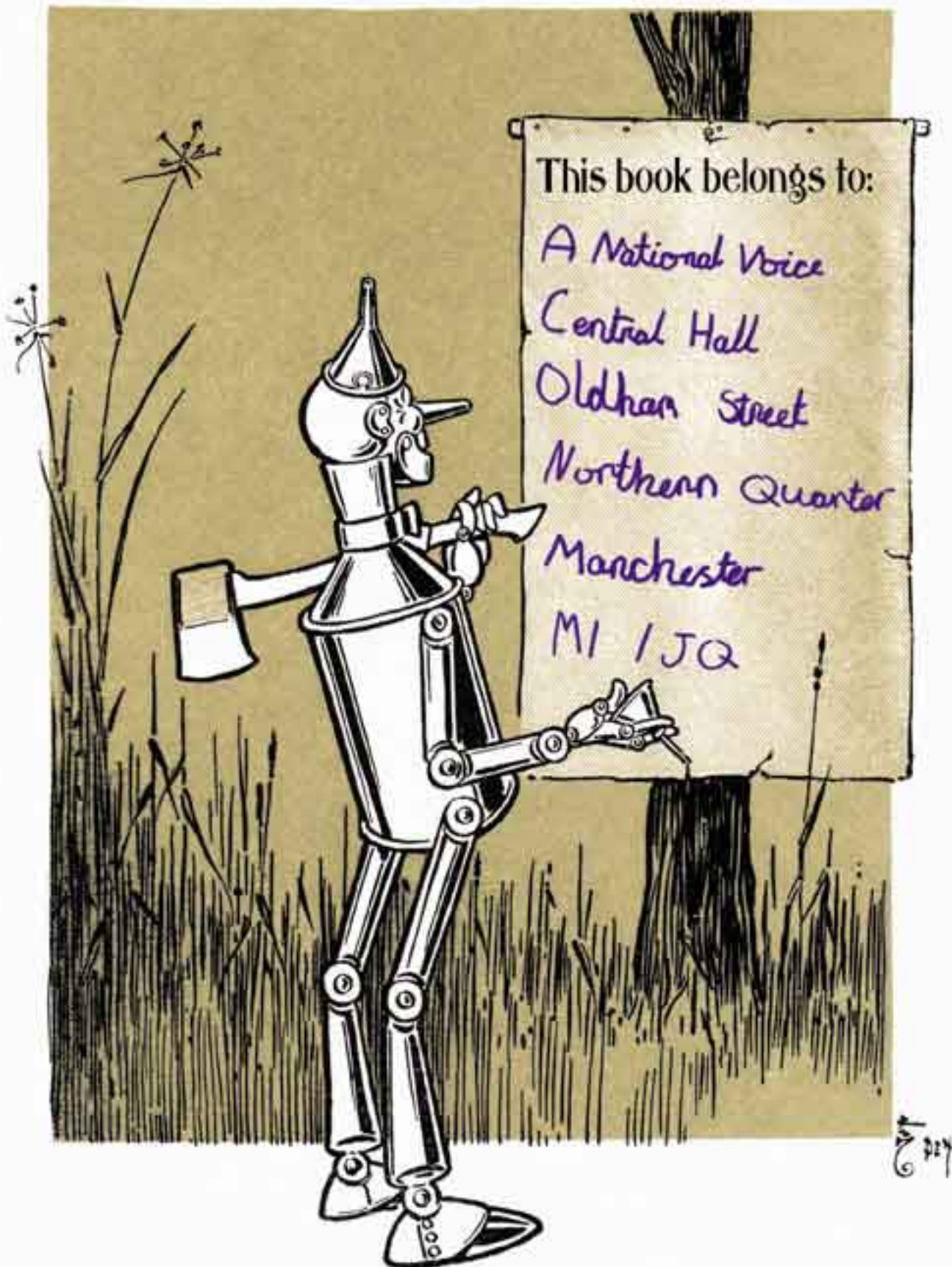


there's  
NO PLACE LIKE HOME

By

*A National Voice*




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“After growing up moving from family to family, school to school and social worker to social worker the most exciting thing for me was the thought of getting my own tenancy - having my own place for the first time. And if it wasn't for the support from nice people around me and many second chances I would not have managed with the money and the forms and the cooking type of stuff. It's taken me nearly 4 years of living alone to get things right but I still notice that my mates family still give him loads of emotional and financial support even though he is 22 like me.”

**Young person from A National Voice**

“What decent ordinary parent would prepare their child to leave home at 16 and allow them to live in a bed and breakfast or a rough hostel? Why do corporate parents with all the resources and responsibilities of local authorities give so many of their young people such a rotten deal? This latest report from A National Voice rings with the authentic voices of Care Leavers and reflects the moderation of those who have learned not to expect too much. Plainly some decent work is taking place but there are huge holes everywhere that vulnerable young people fall through. We've all got to do a great deal better than this!”

**Hilton Dawson ...voting for children**

“For whatever reason children and young people come into public care it means that their parents have not been able to provide adequately for them. The state takes on the big responsibility of being a 'good parent' to help each one overcome these difficulties in their early lives and enable them to fulfil their true potential. Alas, too often young people leave care ill-equipped to cope, and with far too little continuing support. The reality is that often we expect the most in resourcefulness and survival skills from those with the least. 'A National Voice' does a wonderful job, on behalf of us all, in not only helping these young people at a time of critical importance but also in helping the rest of us understand better the experiences of these young people. We are indebted to them. This survey is an example of both their involvement with young people and messages for us all. The government's commitment to 'Every Child Matters' must surely be demonstrated in particular in support of young people who have been in public care.”

**Lord Laming**

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## ☒ INTRODUCTION ☒

**H**i there I'm Lucy and I am the Chair of the Management Committee for A National Voice. I am a Care Leaver and a young person.

Just to give you some background information, A National Voice is the only national organisation run by and run for young people and children from Care.

We exist to make positive changes to the care system in England by listening to those who are in or Leaving Care. We create campaigns, put on events and work to influence policy and decision makers.

According to the Office of National Statistics the average age of leaving home is 24. Care Leavers are expected to make the transition to independent adult life much younger than their peers, often without the ongoing support and contact they need.

Our most recent campaign - "There's No Place Like Home" is about highlighting the poor state of housing provision that is often given to Care Leavers in England. In order for A National Voice to establish what Care Leavers felt about the accommodation and support that is given to them, we wrote a survey asking them a variety of questions about their accommodation and support. For example, where it is located, its' condition, support on offer and many more questions

Similarly we wrote a survey especially for Housing Workers and Leaving Care Workers/Personal Advisors which asked them for their opinions about what they thought of the housing provision that is offered to Care Leavers in their local authority and how this could be better. They also told us about some examples of best practice and joint working.

In response to our hard work and effort, and the time given by all those who filled out the surveys, we were rewarded with some extremely useful feedback.

In total nearly 600 hundred people responded, almost 300 of these were from young people from Care (age 16 - 25), and the remaining from Housing Workers and Leaving Care Workers/Personal Advisors. These two groups of professionals have a major impact on the lives of Care Leavers yet rarely has there been a study into the views of both groups of professionals.

As a result of these insightful responses A National Voice has been able to drive our national campaign forward, by highlighting and raising awareness about the housing difficulties that many Care Leavers face today. Having said this, there are some positive findings too- it's not all bad!

As a reader you will find that this report not only gives you differing housing experiences from young people leaving Care, it also offers recommendations which aim to improve housing and support systems for the better.

After all we strongly believe that all young people from Care do deserve better, and should be given accommodation that is Safe, Secure, Comfortable and Affordable. Ultimately a place they can call home.

I hope you enjoy reading this report! A National Voice sincerely hopes that it will be the driving force in influencing positive changes in order to improve housing for thousands of Care Leavers each year.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to thank all those who have supported this Campaign and the work that A National Voice does. There are too many of you to mention you know who you are.

Enjoy the read, and lets hope that in the future, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz all Care Leavers will be able to proudly say "There's No Place Like Home".

Best Wishes,

Lucy Smith

(Chair - A National Voice MC)



# There's No Place Like Home

by  
A National Voice

# Executive Summary

## This report

- \* 581 people were surveyed in three target groups; 50% were Care Leavers (aged 16-25) and the other 50% consisted of housing professionals and Leaving Care Workers including personal advisors.
- \* The survey took the form of questionnaires and online questionnaires
- \* Areas covered in the survey included: Accommodation choice and transition planning. Emotional, financial and practical support. Access to education, training, employment and leisure. Participation and training for professionals. Evictions.
- \* Respondents came from across England and included county, metropolitan and unitary authorities.

## Key findings

### 1. Young people

- \* 55% felt they had no real choice in the accommodation offered to them
- \* 29% did not feel safe in their accommodation
- \* 32% felt their accommodation did not meet their needs
- \* 50% felt that housing departments were not aware of the particular needs and circumstances of young Care Leavers
- \* 11% were staying with friends
- \* 12% were living in a Bed & Breakfast or Hostel accommodation

### 2. Housing professionals

- \* 88% felt that young Care Leavers found it difficult to manage their rent and other finances
- \* 58% had not received any training or information on the needs of young Care Leavers
- \* 45% felt their own department did not provide enough support for young Care Leavers

### 3. Leaving care professionals and personal advisors

- \* 77% felt that young people were still leaving care at too young an age and within inadequate preparation
- \* 71% felt there was insufficient attention paid to emotional support for young Care Leavers
- \* 81% agreed that poverty had a negative impact on young Care Leavers – particularly the constraint it places on their ability to develop social networks or take part in activities
- \* 92% had experienced young Care Leavers being evicted or threatened with eviction and over half of these believed that lack of support had contributed to the situation

# Section Five: Recommendations

## 1. Government action

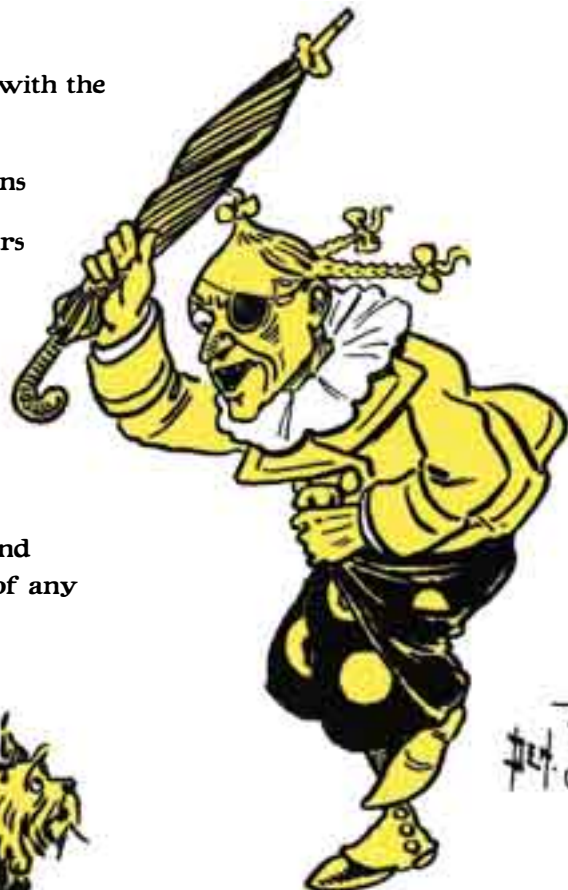
- \* Government should strengthen guidance for Local Authorities to ensure that young people stay in residential or foster care until at least 18 and beyond if necessary
- \* Government should provide ring fenced funding for the development of nationwide schemes of 'half way houses' and other supported accommodation for young Care Leavers; and encourage Local Authorities to extend floating support schemes for young people with their own tenancies
- \* Government should amend the guidance to Local Authorities to ensure that Personal Advisors are able to provide much greater personal contact and direct support
- \* Government should set a performance target for leaving care, based on a recognised national standard.

## 2. A National Voice

- \* A National Voice should work with the Government and organisations such as the ADSS to seek funding for the development of a national leaving care standard informed by young people.
- \* A National Voice should seek funding to develop a self assessment tool kit to enable young people to assess their own readiness – emotionally, practically and financially – to leave care

## 3. Corporate parents

- \* Local Authorities should develop better 'out of hours' support systems for young Care Leavers. In the main, current EDT systems deal only with 'life and limb' situations and are often unable to provide direct intervention for young Care Leavers unless there is significant risk. Young people felt that help line or drop in centres would be particularly useful. Smaller or neighbouring authorities should consider a joint system or reciprocal arrangements
- \* All Local Authorities should be required to develop protocols with the relevant housing authorities. These protocols should include:
  - ☼ formal arrangements for priority accommodation allocations
  - ☼ formal arrangements for reporting difficulties – rent arrears etc – at an early stage and strategies for supporting young people through these problems
  - ☼ programmes for awareness raising for Housing Workers on the needs of young Care Leavers and joint housing/social services training where necessary
  - ☼ protocols for the systematic involvement of young people in evaluating the services they receive from both housing and social services; and for involving them in the development of any new accommodation services



## 4. Leaving care support

- \* Statutory reviews should more rigorously monitor preparation for independent living and the 'lead in time' before leaving care should be considerably longer
- \* Pathway plans should include contingency and 'fall back' plans when a young person first moves into independent accommodation and these should be framed so as to not jeopardise any future tenancy rights. This would provide a clear message of acknowledgement that young people may well make mistakes and will be given opportunities to learn from these, rather than being seen to 'burn their bridges'.
- \* Pathway plans should be clearer about the support to be given to enable young people to integrate with their local communities, take up activities and leisure opportunities and maintain contact with the significant people in their lives
- \* Children's services departments should actively seek other support mechanisms for young Care Leavers, such as the use of mentoring or the development of peer support mechanisms.
- \* Young people should be empowered and supported to enable them to deliver training to professionals
- \* The Leaving Care Grant varies enormously across English Authorities and this should be addressed. We recommend a minimum of £2000 to set up home.

Finally, all Corporate Parents should fulfill their duties under the Leaving Care Act and routinely ask themselves "would this be good enough for my own son or daughter?"

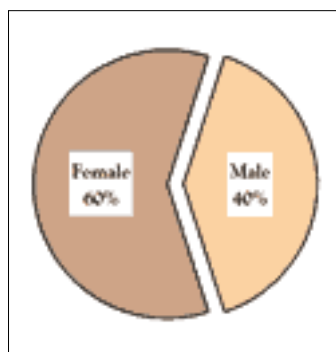


# Appendix

## Methodology

This report is based on 3 questionnaire surveys aimed at 3 target groups. Participants were able to complete the survey on line or complete and return by post, fax, or email. Young people who returned their questionnaire were entitled to enter a prize draw.

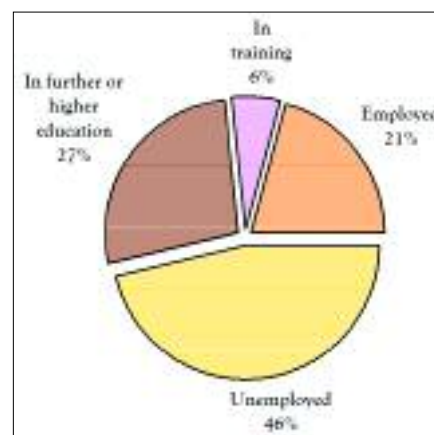
### Characteristics of the Sample



In total 271 Care Leavers (aged 16-25) returned questionnaire responses.

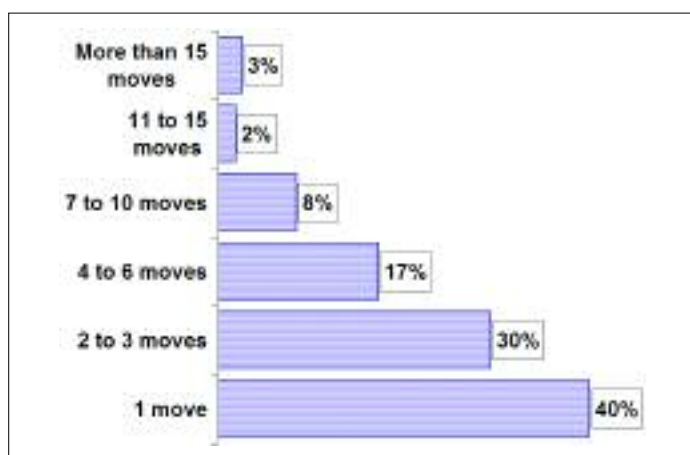
Of these 110 were male (40%) and 161 were female (60%).

46% told us they were unemployed and 21% were in work. 27% were in further or higher education and 6% in training. By comparison less than 11% of their non-Care peers (aged 18 to 24) are unemployed and 70% are employed, according to Office of National Statistics



85% of Care Leavers told us they were single with 14% living with a partner and less than 1% married.

16% of respondents said they were parents and 6% were expecting a child.



87% of respondents described themselves as White, 4% as Black or Black British, 3% as of mixed ethnic background, less than 1% as Asian or Asian British and 4% as 'other'.

60% of respondents had experienced more than one move since leaving care. Of those 30% had moved 2 or 3 times, 17% had moved 4 to 6 times, 8% had moved between 7 and 10 times and 5% had experienced upwards of 11 moves.

16% of respondents described themselves as having special needs.

## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to everyone who took the time to complete our questionnaires. Thanks to those who helped publicise the survey and support our campaign to improve the housing support for Care Leavers in England. Special thanks to all those Care Leavers who made this report possible including Tommy Foley for creating the survey questions. Thanks also to Lucy Smith (ANV Chair), James Cathcart, Ena Fry and Pam Hibbert for your continued help and support. Special thanks to John Dotchin (from ReSurv) for providing on-line facilities and continuous support to ANV.



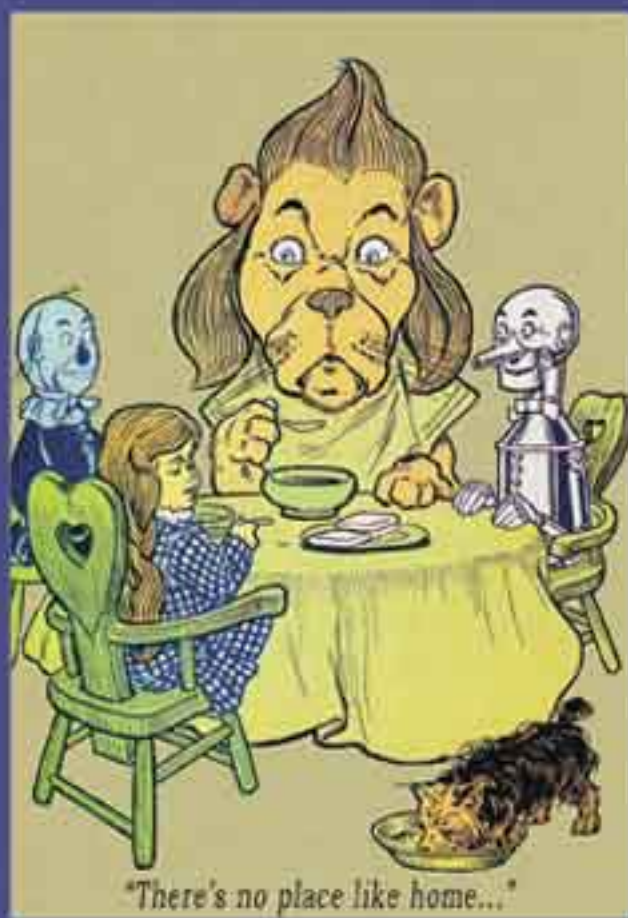
there's  
no place like home

Published in 2005



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This report is available in PDF format from  
[www.anationalvoice.org](http://www.anationalvoice.org)



*"There's no place like home..."*