

Care Leavers utilisation of Supporting People Services

Supporting People (SP) is the main funding stream for housing related support in England. SP is managed and commissioned by local authorities. Communities and Local Government (CLG) collates SP data from local authorities and the client related information is published online¹.

There are two sources of Supporting People (SP) data on clients:

- the **client record form data** that is completed as the client enters an SP service and;
- the **client outcomes data** completed as a client leaves the service.

In this analysis we have looked at data for the last complete year (07/08) and the data covers England only.

Recording issues

When filling in these forms with the clients, workers must allocate one primary client group and up to three secondary client group(s). 'Young people leaving care' is one of these client groups. The primary client group should describe what is identified as the predominant need or circumstances of the client. It is therefore possible that care leavers are recorded under other categories if the worker and the client feel that this is more pertinent to them, e.g. 'Young people at risk', 'Single homeless' etc. It is not possible to do further analysis using the online datasets on those clients who were defined as care leavers in the secondary client group, but St Andrews University that manage the data may be able to do further analysis on this group.

In the guidance to the forms 'Young people leaving care' are defined as "young people leaving Local Authority care who have been looked after for a continuous period of at least 13 weeks after the age of 14." However, there is an element of subjectivity in completing these records and workers filling in the forms may classify clients as care leavers even though they are not a care leaver whom the Local Authority has a responsibility for under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. However, the Client record data shows that 70% of referrals, where care leavers are the primary client group, came from social services, which suggests that in many cases the SP service should be aware of the client's status.

It must also be noted that new records are completed each time a person enters or leaves an SP service. There is therefore also an element of double counting in these datasets, as someone who accessed several services or one service several times in the period would be recorded repeatedly.

¹ <http://www.spclientrecord.org.uk/webdata/>

Client records

In total out of the over 200,000 client records completed for clients entering services in 07/08, only around 3,200 (1.6%) were categorised as care leavers. In 1,781 records (56%) 'Young people leaving care' was the primary client group and in the rest (44%) it was a secondary client group. Although there were some care leavers in most SP categories (excluding older people categories, physical and sensory disability and people with HIV/AIDS). For those where 'Young people leaving care' was a secondary client group most were classified primarily as 'Single homeless with support needs' or 'Young people at risk'.

The online data only allows further cross-referencing using the primary client group (i.e. where being a care leaver has been identified as the predominant need or circumstances of the client). Therefore the information below is based on these 1,781 records (0.9% of all SP client records).

- 70% of referrals to SP services for care leavers came from social services, the rest primarily came from the voluntary sector/ local authority housing department, were nominated by the local housing authority or self-referred.
- Around half of the care leavers using SP services (47%) were accepted under the social services Care Management Framework. The Care Management Framework relates to adult social services, but it is possible that housing support workers filling in the data could have used this classification for anyone in contact with social services, including leaving care teams.
- One in six were classified as statutorily homeless.
- It is not possible to get a breakdown care leavers age online, but the data should be collected through the form and be available on request.

Accommodation provision

Table 1: Supporting People accommodation type

Accommodation type	Number of care leavers	% of care leavers
Supported housing	644	36.16
Residential care home	1	0.06
Supported lodgings	178	9.99
Womens refuge	8	0.45
Foyer	59	3.31
Teenage parent accommodation	3	0.17
Direct access	51	2.86
Floating support	800	44.92
Outreach service	13	0.73
Resettlement services	24	1.35

The majority of care leavers were either in supported housing (36%) or floating support (44%). Around 10% were living in supported lodgings.

When compared to 'Young people at risk', another SP client group, care leavers were more likely to be in receipt of floating support (45% as opposed to 32%) and less likely to be in supported accommodation (36% as opposed to 44%).

What is concerning is that 3% of care leavers were accessing direct access accommodation, suggesting a breakdown of earlier accommodation solutions. However, this is still low compared to 'Young people at risk', where one in ten are in direct access accommodation. This suggests that the preventative support available to care leavers is still better than what is available for other vulnerable young people.

Table 2: Previous accommodation before entering SP service

Primary Client Group	Number of care leavers	% of care leavers
(missing)	5	0.3%
Local authority general needs tenancy	255	14.3%
Housing association general needs tenant	67	3.8%
Private sector tenancy	92	5.2%
Supported housing	209	11.7%
Direct access hostel	31	1.7%
Sheltered housing or retirement housing	1	0.1%
Residential care home	21	1.2%
Hospital	3	0.2%
Prison	22	1.2%
Approved probation hostel	3	0.2%
Children's home/foster care	480	27.0%
Bed and breakfast	132	7.4%
Short life housing	11	0.6%
Living with family	155	8.7%
Living with friends	87	4.9%
Any other temp accommodation	87	4.9%
Rough sleeping	35	2.0%
Other	70	3.9%
Women's refuge	2	0.1%
Foyer	13	0.7%

These figures suggest that most care leavers do not enter SP services directly from being in care. Rather it is when other accommodation solutions end that they receive support. Around a quarter of the care leavers accessing SP were previously living in a Children's home or in foster care. 23% of care leavers previously had a private sector, local authority general needs or housing association general needs tenancy, suggesting that they may have needed additional support to maintain the tenancy or that they were not yet equipped for independent living.

Outcome monitoring

In this analysis we have focused on short-term Supporting People services, which generally support people to move towards independence.

For all short-term services, outcome information for individual service users is collected when the service user departs from or ceases to use the service, regardless if this departure is planned or unplanned.

Outcomes monitoring forms were completed for 1,004 care leaver who left supported people services in the period.

Service Type

The service types in the outcomes forms more or less mirrored the client records. Care leavers accessed mainly supported housing (40%) and floating support (43%).

Move-on Accommodation

When leaving Supporting People services, care leavers were only slightly more likely to have a planned move (63%) than 'Young people at risk' (61%). This means that 37% of care leavers move-on from SP service in a way which is not in line with their support plan. However, for 36% of the unplanned moves clients still moved into their own tenancy when leaving the SP service. 27% went on to live with friends and family. In 13% of cases the accommodation they moved onto was unknown.

In the majority of the 634 cases where moves were planned the move resulted in greater independence for the client (89%). Although it is difficult to make comparisons because of the small numbers accessing services, it appears that the planned move-on rates from services such as Supported Lodgings (72%) and Foyers (68%) is marginally higher than for Floating support (60%) and Supported Housing (64%).

However, there was a slight difference between the type of accommodation that care leavers and other young people moved into. 44% of the care leavers recorded (441) moved onto live in a local authority or housing association tenancy, as opposed to 37% of 'Young people at risk'. However, the proportion of care leavers that received floating support in this accommodation was roughly similar to the Young People at Risk that did (around 5.5%). This suggest that in some Local Authority areas, care leavers may find it easier to access social housing than other vulnerable young people. Care leavers were a little less likely to move to live with family than Young people at risk (11% versus 16%). A breakdown of the move-on accommodation of care leavers can be found in Table 3.

It is concerning that 7% of care leavers move into temporary accommodation (direct access hostels, short life housing, bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation) or rough sleeping when they leave SP services. A further 17% stay with family and friends, which may be unsuitable or overcrowded accommodation. Although living with family can be on both a temporary or settled basis, the 'living with friends' classification is only used when the accommodation is not subject to a tenancy. It is therefore necessarily insecure and temporary, as the person does not have the protection of a tenancy agreement.

Table 3: Move on accommodation of care leavers departing from Supporting people services

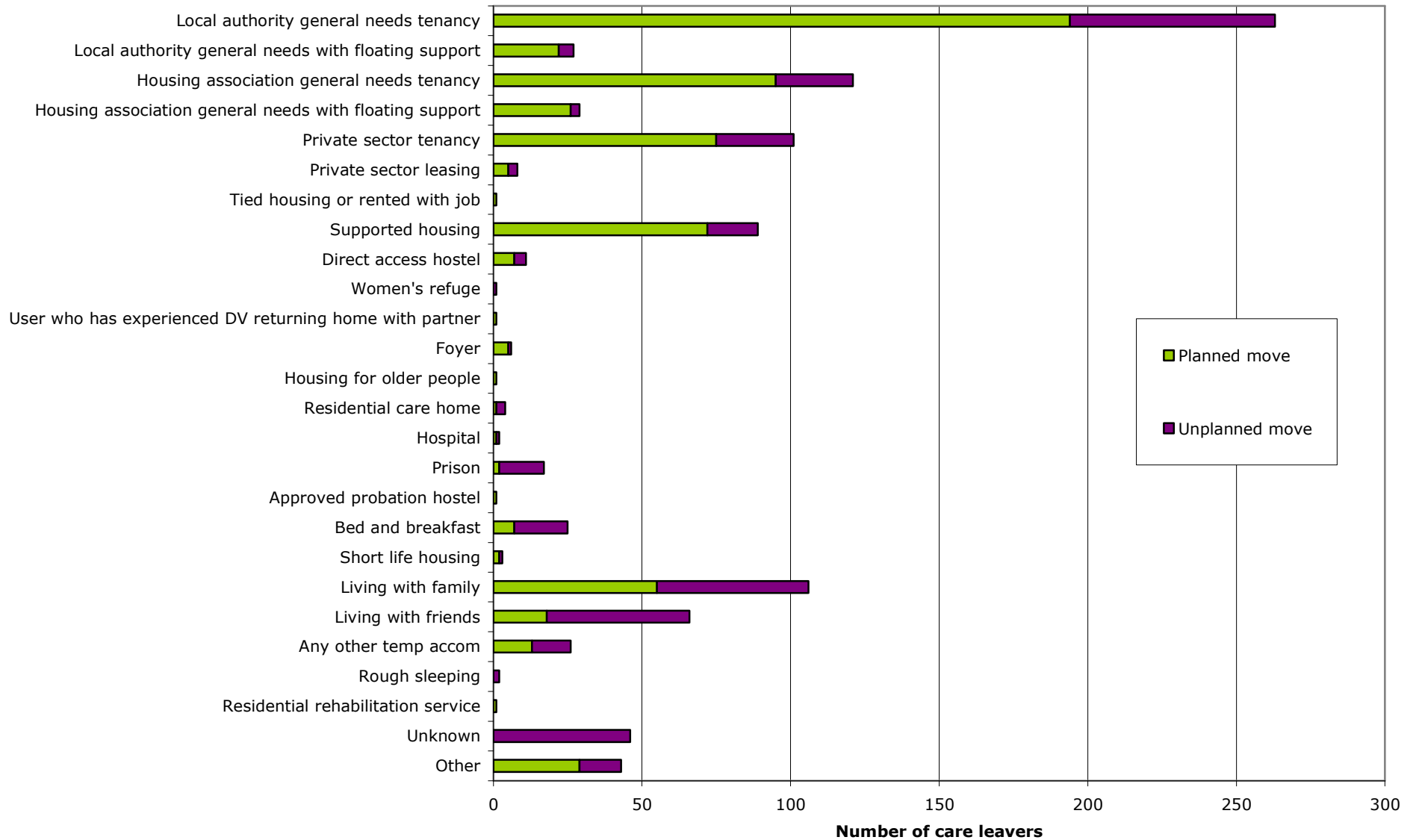


Table 4: Comparison of the outcomes for Care Leavers (CL) and Young people at risk (YPR) leaving Supporting People services

Outcome for which support was required	% of CL needing support with outcome	% of CL needing support achieving the outcome	% of YPR needing support with outcome	% of YPR needing support achieving outcome
Economic Wellbeing				
Maximising income	76%	86%	83%	87%
Reducing debt	38%	64%	41%	64%
Obtain paid work	37%		36%	
(i) Currently employed		31%		33%
(ii) In paid work whilst in service		49%		47%
Enjoy and Achieve				
Participate in training/education	63%		55%	
(i) participated in training/education		69%		65%
(ii) Achieve applicable qualification		28%		22%
Participate in leisure/faith/informal learning activities	25%	80%	25%	78%
Participate in work-like activities/voluntary/work experience	29%	68%	22%	62%
Establish contact with external services/groups/friends/family	52%		54%	
Established contact with external services groups		83%		82%
Established contact with friends/family		71%		75%
Be healthy				
Better manage physical health	36%	75%	31%	78%
Better manage mental health	25%	65%	24%	70%
Better manage substance misuse	22%	47%	20%	51%
Require assertive technology	2%	95%	2%	80%
Stay Safe				
Maintain accommodation and avoid eviction	72%	64%	67%	65%
Comply with statutory orders relating to offending behaviour	14%	70%	12%	70%
Better manage self harm	11%	74%	9%	70%
Avoid causing harm to others	10%	67%	9%	63%
Minimise harm/risk of harm from others	19%	69%	17%	73%
Making a positive contribution				
Develop confidence and ability to have greater choice/control/involvement	60%	83%	61%	81%

Outcomes

The Supporting People outcome data mirror the five outcomes in Every Child Matters:

- Achieve Economic Wellbeing
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Be Health
- Stay Safe
- Make a Positive contribution

Table 4 gives an overview of the outcomes recorded for care leavers and young people at risk leaving SP services. As the table illustrates, there are no great differences between the support needs of care leavers and other vulnerable young people in SP services, nor does there generally seem to be any great variation in the outcomes achieved.

It is important to note that an outcome whether positive or negative is only recorded if it is identified as an area requiring support in the support plan. Therefore, if obtaining paid work was not seen as an area a care leaver required support for, but they became employed whilst in the service, this would not be recorded on the outcomes form. The Short Term Outcomes Form should be completed based on all the support needs identified in all the support plans developed for the client whilst in the service.

The two areas that relate to Public Service Agreement (PSA) 16 are the outcomes relating to employment, training and education and those relating to settled accommodation. Whilst the percentage of those care leavers requiring support to achieve either paid work or education and training are 37% and 63% respectively, when combined they could indicate that care leavers are identifying either employment or education as a support need. However, these two needs are not necessarily mutually exclusive and there is no combined figure available in SP as there is in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) statistics. If we look at the DCSF figures on the status of 19 year-old care leavers, 29% were not in education, training or employment.²

It is concerning that only 37% of care leavers required employment related support, with only 31% of being in paid work when leaving SP services, even though 49% were in employment whilst accessing the SP service. This could suggest that there is an issue with the sustainability of the work that care leavers obtain, or that they move into accommodation where rent levels are prohibitive to work.

Training and education outcomes fare better, with 69% of those with a support need participating in some form of training or education. However only 28% of those will be able to evidence this with a formal qualification. The lack of formal qualifications could also be affecting the outcomes of

² <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/final-sfr-tables.xls> Note for 5% of the 29% this is owing to illness or disability affecting their ability to work or train.

care leavers in moving into employment, as they may be restricted to low skilled, temporary employment opportunities in an increasingly competitive job market.

The other area of importance to PSA 16 is the proportion of care leavers who need support to maintain their accommodation and avoid eviction. 72% of those leaving care required support in this area and 64% of those had a positive outcome.

Floating support services, who provide tenancy support to clients in their own accommodation, helped clients maintain accommodation in 74% of cases where this was needed. This still suggests that a quarter of those who needed support were unprepared for independent living, even with support, or were not receiving a high enough level of support to help them maintain their accommodation.

Further analysis

It is possible to drill down further into the outcomes and client record data using the online reporting system. However, in some areas the numbers of care leavers may not be large enough to give conclusive results. For example, when analysing by service type 'supporting lodgings' appear to record more positive outcomes in supporting care leavers to obtain paid employment, than other forms of provision (e.g. 'supported housing', 'foyers' and 'floating support'). Yet the numbers accessing supported lodgings are much lower than for floating support or supported housing, which may skew the data.

It is possible to break down the data by region, administering authority or by the type of service. It may be useful to look at outcomes and client records for 'hotspot' areas identified as having low performance on the PSA 16 targets.

Comparison with DCSF data

The difficulty with comparing SP and DCSF data lies in the lack of a complete figure for all care leavers that local authorities still have responsibility for. We do know that in 2007/08 8,300 young people over 16 left care³ and there were 5,800 19 year-olds who were looked after on 1 April 2004, then aged 16⁴. Data for the last five years is available and we do know that in this period 39,200 young people over the age of 16 left care. However, given the different ages that young people may leave care, and the different ages that care leavers cease to be the responsibility of their local authority, this does not correspond to the overall total of care leavers. Local authorities would be able to give this information at a local level.

Even bearing in mind that not all these young people would remain care leavers under the statutory definition the 3,196 recorded care leavers

³ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/final-sfr-tables.xls#'G1'!A1>

⁴ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/final-sfr-tables.xls>

(bearing in mind potential double counting), who entered SP services in 2007/08, seems very low compared to the whole possible cohort of care leavers. However, the data does not allow us to determine whether this is because care leavers are not identified as such in SP services, or because they are not accessing them.

We must also bear in mind that Children Services are responsible for providing 16 and 17 year old care leavers with accommodation and maintenance, and they would only live in SP services if these claim back the support cost from Children's services or if services are jointly commissioned by Children's and SP Services. The online client record data does not allow us to pull of the age of care leavers or the details of jointly commissioned services. However, the outcomes data suggests that overall 23% of care leavers' SP placements are jointly commissioned. Again, more detail could be obtained from individual Local Authorities.

Conclusion

Because of the way client groups are assigned and definitions used it is not possible to get information on all the care leavers accessing Supporting People services in the online client records and outcome reports. However, the dataset is still large enough to give us a good picture of some of the issues faced by care leavers in SP services. It is also possible to use the data to make a rough comparison with other Young people at risk.

The Supporting People data reflects many of the issues that we know can affect care leavers: 7% entering services are in contact with probation or youth offending teams and 16% are statutorily homeless. The outcomes data shows that a quarter of care leavers in SP services have mental health support needs and over half need help to:

- Maximise their income
- Participate in education and training
- Establish contact with external services, groups, friends and family
- Maintain accommodation and avoid eviction
- Develop confidence and ability to have greater choice and control.

However, given the difficulties care leavers face, it is perhaps surprising that the numbers accessing SP services are so low. It would be interesting to explore the relationship between Supporting People and Children's Services further and to look at information available at the local level in more detail. It would also be worthwhile to explore the barriers that Children's service feel there are to accessing Supporting People funded schemes and to look at the level of unmet need for housing related support for this group.

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About us

The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) is the national advice, support and development service for children in and from care (age 13-25) and those who work with them. We work at local, regional, national and European levels to develop solutions based on good corporate parenting that include and empower young people, professionals and policy-makers to continually improve service quality and outcomes. Our aims are

- To promote improvement in outcomes for older children in care and care leavers by supporting work at a national, regional and local levels.
- To support the specific implementation of the Care Matters agenda across the country.
- To support local authorities to empower young people to be fully involved in the design, development and delivery of successful services.

The National Care Advisory Service is supported by Rainer Crime Concern, the national charity for under-supported young people