Preventing homelessness among youth leaving State Care

OECD November 2023

Looking at care leavers

- Avoid: 'Why are some people homelessness and remember: 'Why is there homelessness?'

- Avoid: seeing 'care' as itself the problem. We need to tackle its deficits, but for many children it is the solution.

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What homelessness in Care leavers tells us about homelessness

- Care Leavers are young
  - Vulnerability
  - Discrimination/queueing
- Lack of networks/safety nets
- Low income
- Accumulated Trauma
- Transitions or cliff-edges

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Irish Context

- Very strong protective legislation for children (until 18)
- Young people leave care on18th birthday
- Aftercare until 21 (or 23 if still in full-time education)
- Single state agency - Child and Family Agency (Tusla)
- Local municipalities responsible for housing
- Huge housing and homeless crisis
- National Youth Homeless Strategy

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Case Study: Waterford Service

- Housing-led service in South East Ireland
- Built around 22 properties dedicated to the service
- Operated using a Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) model and principles
- Utilises a 'rolling housing model' (shift from 'licence to long-term tenancy) to balance flexibility with stability
- Core housing is Focus Housing Association, but other options also used

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Case Study: What works?

- Early referral to commence building relationship
- Providing supports to young people who have chosen to move back in with family at 18
- If things go wrong and a young person needs to move the support stays in place
- Joint funding between Tusla and HSE social inclusion to allow for ongoing support when the young person no longer fits Tusla eligibility criteria.
- 95% sustainment rate so far into 2023
- Shared care protocols to bring together all relevant supports for the young people.
- Innovative 'Tusla CAS' funding model provides dedicated housing stock

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General lessons?

- There are no new lessons.
- Agencies must work together
- Maximise choice/agency: Minimise coercion/conditionality
- Provide a continuum through temporary 'failure'
- Retain core values but remain flexible
- Combine youth work practice with housing support practice
- Available housing is essential, but not sufficient
- Challenge is 'how' not 'what'

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Thank you

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