

Success – whose definition counts?

NWADCS webinar, 18th November 2025



nikki.luke@education.ox.ac.uk

Project details

- Commissioned by Become
- Funded by Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropies
- Undertaken by the Rees Centre
- Co-designed by the *Future of Care Young People's Design Group*

What does 'success' mean for care leavers?
How can we measure it?

Why might this be useful to you?

- Using a co-production approach
- Listening to care leavers
- Identifying gaps between what is important to care leavers and how professionals measure success
- Thinking about Pathway Plans – content and format

Does the information currently recorded in your Pathway Plans capture what matters to care leavers?

Co-production approach

- Future of Care Design Group
- 13 care-experienced young adults involved in each stage of the research
 - Questions, activities, analysis, writing up
- 5 of them also co-authored [an academic journal article](#)
- Hear more [on the TICS podcast](#)



Listening to care leavers

- First focus groups: 26 care- experienced young people told us what success means to them
- Design Group reviewed the themes and drafted a survey
- Second focus groups: 16 care- experienced young people gave us feedback on the survey
- Design Group amended the survey
- Survey piloted with 4 care leavers & PAs

Identifying gaps – professionals' views

Quotes from LA staff on national measures:

- “DfE and Ofsted measures are about the services, not about care leaver success. They are two very different things.”
- “I don't think it adequately captures what we as aspiring corporate parents wish for our young people.”
- “I think the problem with the 903 is it's an interesting kind of snapshot. It's an interesting point in time, but it doesn't capture the starting point for the individual young person or child... And what can be just astronomical achievements can't be captured because there's no relationship to where they started.”



Success: what is important?

- Success as a personal, evolving journey

Success isn't something you just 'do' and then it's finished. It's about making steps and goals – even if that goal is just to make your bed today.

There's no ruler you can use to measure how far a care leaver's come.



Success: what is important?

- No one size fits all: Rethinking success in education
- Rethinking career success for care leavers
- A place to call home: Redefining accommodation as a measure of success

Being able to decorate
your own home – putting
pictures up.

Having a washing
machine, being able to
do your own washing.

Success: what is it?

- Communities of connection, not isolation
- Everyday functioning and independence

Success is about being valued for who you are and not just what you've been through.

We used to do loads of stuff when we were in care – football, gym, youth club. Then we leave and it just stops. You're used to doing all this stuff and then suddenly there's nothing, unless you can pay for it yourself.

- Freedom, and expression
- Surviving, processing and healing
- Being yourself: Identity, authenticity, and letting go of expectations
- Health, leisure and daily life
- Parenthood and seeking asylum: Success within life-altering realities
- Stability: A foundation for growth across all areas of life



Success Survey & Pathway Plans – content

Topic areas:

Accommodation
Finances
Work
Education or training
Relationships x 3
Hobbies and
activities
Being yourself
Mental health
Living skills
Parenting
Seeking asylum

- Do your Pathway Plans cover these areas?
- Do they capture the things that are important to your young people?
- Do they acknowledge journeys from different starting points, over time, capturing personal successes and achievements?

Final section:

List up to 3 goals – for each:

- *How close are you to meeting this goal? (1-7)
- *What are the barriers to meeting this goal?
- *What support do you need from your PA to reach this goal?



Success Survey & Pathway Plans – format

The Success Survey uses different question formats throughout:

1. Scenarios – which one sounds most like you?

- A less intimidating way of starting the conversation as it asks the care leaver to align themselves with a particular story.
- Also useful for approaching difficult or abstract concepts.



Malik is feeling happy. They have little or no anxiety, and a balanced life. They have a positive sense of self-worth, good self-esteem and self-confidence, and are proud of their achievements. They have accepted or come to terms with their past, feel at peace and that they do not have to worry. They are able to enjoy life.

Cassidy is generally feeling quite positive. Any anxiety or depression is manageable. They have things and relationships they can enjoy. They often feel pride or self-worth.

Kofi has more good days than bad days, but still a mix of positive and negative. Anxiety or depression sometimes feels unmanageable, but they have some sense of hope. They are starting to see themselves more positively.

Bailey has more bad days than good days. They are often anxious or have a very low mood, with little hope for the future. They are struggling to come to terms with their past.

Alex is unhappy. They struggle with anxiety or depression every day. They might feel worthless or hopeless, and do not feel like life will get better. Their mental health is impacting day to day life.



Malik is feeling happy. They have little or no anxiety, and a balanced life. They have a positive sense of self-worth, good self-esteem and **self-confidence**, and are proud of their achievements. They have accepted or **come to terms with their past**, feel at peace and that they do not have to worry. They are able to enjoy life.

Cassidy is generally feeling quite positive. Any **anxiety or depression is manageable**. They have **things and relationships they can enjoy**. They often feel **pride or self-worth**.

Kofi has more good days than bad days, but still a mix of positive and negative. Anxiety or depression sometimes feels unmanageable, but they have some sense of hope. They are starting to see themselves more positively.

Bailey has **more bad days than good days**. They are often anxious or have a very low mood, with **little hope for the future**. They are struggling to come to terms with their past.

Alex is unhappy. They struggle with anxiety or depression every day. They might feel worthless or hopeless, and do not feel like life will get better. Their mental health is **impacting day to day life**.



Success Survey & Pathway Plans – format

2. A combination of self-report ratings and explanations (‘Care to elaborate?’)

A way of capturing the care leaver’s own views, as opposed to those of their PA

- How well do you think things are going for you in this area? (1–7)
- How does this compare to 6 months ago? (better, worse, same)
- How stable are things for you in this area? (1–7)
- How important is this area of life for you right now? (1–7)

Conclusion

- Do you know what is most important to your care leavers?
- Are you happy with the content and format of your Pathway Plans?
 - Do they reflect young people's voices and help them define and achieve success?
 - Have care leavers been involved in their design and review?
- Can the learning from our project help you with this?
 - [Read the full report](#)
 - Contact nikki.luke@education.ox.ac.uk for a free copy of the survey and find out how it might be useful – in whole or in part