

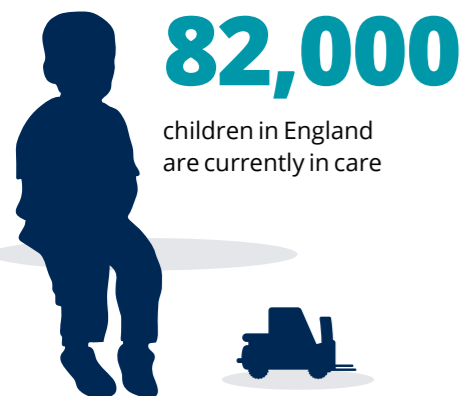
WHO CARES ABOUT CARE LEAVERS?

How to create a better future for care leavers and their children

A new study looks at the disadvantages that are passed down from care leavers to their children and examines how we can help to break this intergenerational cycle.¹



1 The current situation



Being placed in care can be traumatic for children because of:

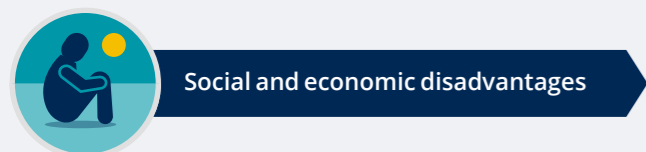
- the experiences that caused the placement
- separation from their family
- the experience and stigma of being in care

Our study explores what happens when these children grow up and become parents themselves.

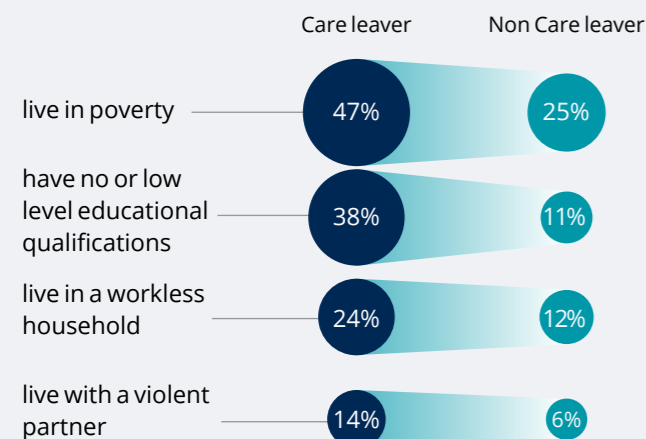
- How do they cope with being parents?
- Do their children suffer similar disadvantages?
- Is the government doing enough to support them?

2 What is life like for care leavers when they become parents?

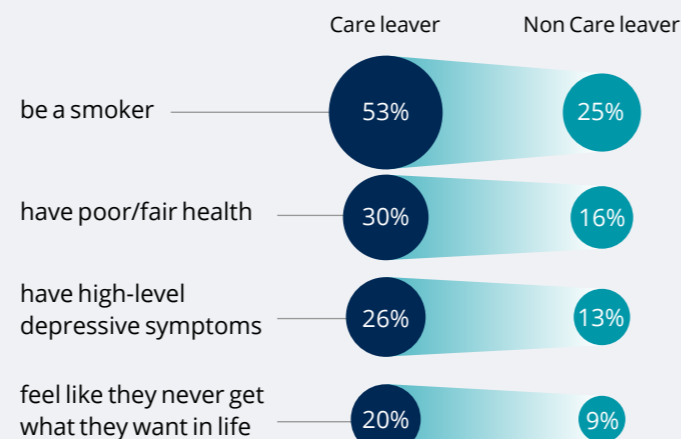
Care leavers suffer a range of disadvantages when they become parents



They are more likely to:



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3 The impact on the children of care leavers is complex

Educational disadvantages are not always observed, but mental health disadvantages are evident, suggesting prolonged and indirect emotional scarring

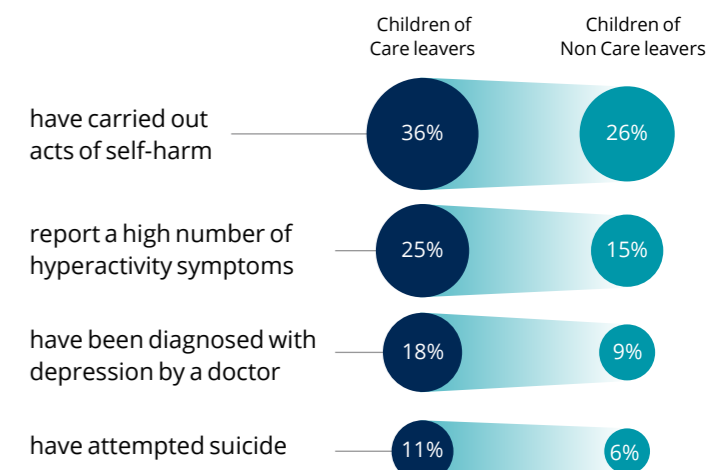


When comparing them to children from similar backgrounds whose parents did not spend time in care, children of care leavers are just as likely to:

- gain 5+GCSEs at Grade 4-9 at age 16
- be in education, employment or training post-16
- aspire to go to university and to have a professional occupation



However, mental health issues are still evident even after considering their socio-economic status and educational attainment. Compared to their peers with similar characteristics, the children of care leavers are more likely to:



4 How do some mothers beat the odds?

We need to learn from care leaver mothers who show resilience



of mothers with care experience show resilience, leading more well-adjusted adult lives

These resilient mothers were more likely than other care leaver mothers to:

- have experienced a stable foster care placement
- have achieved higher qualification levels
- live in more secure housing in less deprived areas
- be in employment

5 What needs to change?

The government can help all who have experienced care to have better lives by:

- extending the eligibility for state support beyond age 21, to enable care leavers to stay with their foster family or in state care for longer
- improving educational provision for children who are in care, and provide support for life-long learning for them and their children
- providing care leavers with safe and secure housing in neighbourhoods that are familiar to them
- offering access to ongoing mental health assessments and treatment, recognising that mental health issues can be passed from one generation to the next

¹ By care leavers, we are referring to any parent who has had experience of being in care during their childhood or adolescence.