

A person is seen from the back, wearing a black t-shirt with a white graphic of a hand with fingers spread. The background is a textured wall with a staircase railing in the foreground. The entire image has a red color cast.

sage Foundation

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Evaluation: 2018 – 2019

DEMONSTRATING PREVENTION IS AFFORDABLE AND EFFECTIVE

Corporate philanthropy keeping young people off the streets

**Report by
Ellie Mulcahy and Loic Menzies**

#placetocallhome

Introduction

By Debbie Wall, VP Sage Foundation

Youth homelessness is unacceptable. The physical harm, the terror and the destruction of lifelong potential should not be inflicted on any child. And yet, as a society we continue to fail to protect young people from this.

We prove in this report that young people can be protected from homelessness, and that prevention is not just affordable – it costs a fraction of the alternative.

- All 11 young people involved in our Newcastle pilot were supported into a safe situation. Seven are in their family home and four are in secure independent accommodation.
- If those 11 young people had become homeless, the cost to the state would have been around £110,000 per year.

We also prove that business has a role in keeping young people off the streets. By spending our own corporate funds, we can be nimble, we can apply our efficiency and speed to market processes; find the gaps in a system and create change.

We took a professional approach to the structure of this pilot, as we would with any Sage tech innovation. Sage recognises that

youth homelessness is a complex issue and like any business challenge we have taken the time to learn where our support was needed the most.

We developed this pilot, *A Place to Call Home*, because we could manage it independently, with a resolute focus on showing that funding prevention works.

Already this is having the right effect and Newcastle City Council is considering match funding our work.

Working with the education and youth 'think and action-tank' LKMco, we began by conducting research into the causes of homelessness to help us pinpoint how we could make a difference. We recognised that there was great work already taking place but why were young people still ending up on the streets?

We listened, we learned and quickly came to understand that prevention work does not happen early enough. We also learnt that charities and providers within the homeless sector could not always offer prevention work as funding is linked to outcomes and it is difficult to evidence that preventative interventions have worked.

So we decided to get the evidence. We commissioned an independent monitoring and evaluation report to prove that early intervention can prevent homelessness.

A great deal of research led us to the Barefoot Professional model delivered by Family Gateway. This model works because it employs and trains local parents who have experienced the same or similar issues – giving them the unique ability to earn a family's trust and respect, help a family identify their underlying issues, and then address them.

We funded Family Gateway's Barefoot Professionals who successfully intervened in the family life of 11 young people at risk of homelessness. We have extended the programme to help a further 13 families.

So, what next? There's plenty to do. A staggering number of young people comprise the hidden homeless in the UK: 255,000 with no guarantee about where they will sleep each night. This is in addition to 30,000 turned away by local authorities when they seek support, and the comparatively tiny number, 16,000, 16-to-24-year olds deemed statutorily homeless and given support – many of whom will be supported

temporarily and may find themselves back on the street. How many of these young people could have avoided this situation if help had been available earlier?

We want to share our learning with the business community in Newcastle, with the laser focus of expanding the role that Sage and our corporate partners can play in funding prevention work. We believe that communicating our commissioning model with Newcastle City Council as a local authority gives us the insight into what is truly needed to end youth homelessness and would ask you to join us in this action.

There is scope to joint fund further projects to continue to test the theory and provide further evidence that working this way makes a real change. We welcome any conversations about this.

We will continue our work. For us the ideal trajectory for the young people we are supporting is one of continued education, possibly an apprenticeship or higher education, and delivery into secure, rewarding work, with us or another responsible and supportive employer.

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2.

The pilot project: preventing youth homelessness with Family Gateway

In 2018-19 Sage Foundation funded the organisation – Family Gateway – to deliver an intervention to ten families to prevent at-risk young people from becoming homeless. This report examines the impact the Family Gateway pilot programme had on family relationships and the extent to which it prevented youth homelessness and supported young people if they became homeless.

Family Gateway was selected due to the planned intervention embodying all elements of good practice. Family Gateway uses a 'Barefoot Professional Model' in which community members who have previously experienced similar issues as those they support are trained to deliver a programme of whole-family support. Family Gateway provides tailored support to individual families. This often involves linking families to a range of other services, and providing family mediation and one-to-one support for parents and young people to help repair family relationships. This aim, to improve family relationships, is achieved by both removing stressors such as housing insecurity or overcrowding, and by providing mediation. Therefore, this report measures the improvement in family relationships

as a short-term outcome contributing towards the long-term goal of preventing homelessness.

Evaluation of Family Gateway

Parents and young people assessed their family relationships at three time points throughout their time working with Family Gateway. Specifically, they assessed their relationships based on the following eight dimensions. These were selected based on factors frequently used in validated scales of family relationships, and the elements of relationships which the Family Gateway team believed to be important.

1. **Cohesion:** whether the family spent enjoyable time together
2. **Expressiveness:** whether the parent and child expressed their emotions to each other
3. **Dealing with conflict:** whether the parent and child were able to deal with disagreements without arguing
4. **Communication (listening):** whether the parent listened to the views and opinions of the child

5. **Encouragement:** whether the parent encouraged their child to achieve their goals
6. **Warmth:** whether the parent and child expressed affection for each other
7. **Rules and boundaries:** whether the parent and child felt that there were clear rules that were followed in the home
8. **Space:** whether the young person had their own space in the family home

Summary of impact on family relationships

Figure 1 illustrates the number of young people who increased their scores on these relationship factors between the start of the intervention and the end of their time working with Family Gateway (shown in blue). The number of young people who did not change their score as they gave positive responses initially is also shown (in grey).

For some outcomes, such as warmth, most young people gave positive responses initially, so there was less change in their scores after working with Family Gateway. However, against other outcomes, such

as emotional expressiveness, parental encouragement and observing rules and boundaries, most young people identified issues in these areas at the start of the intervention but improved their scores after working with Family Gateway. As one young person explained, working with Family Gateway had helped them express their emotions which had a positive impact on their relationships:

“It’s easier to talk to people about things than just bottle everything up...it makes you feel a lot better... [my Family Entrepreneur] took us out and we spoke about things. And everything we spoke about just like got everything sorted ...I sat down and talked about it with my mam ...we’ve just become like stronger since we started with gateway.”

FIGURE 1

Young people's (n=11) score change during their time working with Family Gateway.



Additionally, over half of young people also felt that family cohesion, their ability to deal with conflict and the extent to which they had their own space improved during their time working with Family Gateway.

Figure 2 represents parents' score changes in the same way: blue icons illustrate the number of parents who improved their score on each dimension, whilst grey icons show the number who did not change their score due to giving positive scores initially.

Parents were more likely than young people to give a positive score on relationship measures at the start of their time working with Family Gateway. This may have been due to some measures asking about parents' own behaviour, making it less likely that parents would be critical. It may also have been due to the social pressure felt by many adults to 'pretend that everything is okay'.

Parents were most likely to feel that there were improvements in their family's ability to deal with conflict and in familial warmth and affection. When parents discussed a reduction in conflict with their child, they often referenced communication strategies they had developed while working with their Family Entrepreneur.

“They’ve made us feel like to be more calm instead of like reacting quite quick and arguing with [my son] ...now I always listen to what they said and see if that works... I’ll let him have his say...so we get on better.”

For other outcomes, such as cohesion, involvement and whether the young person had their own space in the family home, some parents improved their scores while others gave positive scores at baseline. A few decreased their scores, most often from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘agree’. Regarding listening, most parents felt positively about this at baseline and did not improve their scores. This is in contrast to the high number of young people who felt that their parents were listening to them more by the end of the intervention (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 2

Parents’ score change during their time working with Family Gateway.



Summary of homelessness prevention

The programme's long-term goal is to prevent homelessness, ideally by keeping the young person in the family home. However, in some cases, the family home is neither the ideal nor a safe option for a young person. In these cases, preventing homelessness by arranging alternative accommodation for a young person to transition to is the 'best' option. Where young people do experience homelessness, Family Gateway aims to provide crisis support and support to the family to ensure that the young person returns home if this is safe and possible. It also seeks to prevent homelessness from reoccurring. Family Gateway worked with ten families and eleven young people (one family included twins).

Homelessness was prevented in seven of the ten families (for eight young people):

- Homelessness was prevented for five young people by keeping the young person in the family home. Each young person's risk of homelessness is now considered to be much reduced.
- Three young people (one from the same family as another young person who did not become homeless) were prevented from becoming homeless as they were supported by Family Gateway to transition into independent accommodation. The family home was not considered to be the best or a safe place for them.

In the three other families, young people became technically homeless but were supported by Family Gateway to access safe accommodation and in some cases return to the family home:

- In one case, the young person moved in with their boyfriend, whilst in the other two cases Family Gateway arranged

temporary accommodation for the young person.

- In two of these three cases, Family Gateway continued to provide support and mediation to the family and the young person returned to the family home.
- In the one case where the young person did not return to the family home, Family Gateway continued to support them to arrange permanent, independent accommodation. Given the young person's highly complex home environment, and the ongoing challenges their parent faces, this outcome is not necessarily a negative one.

Young people and parents highlighted six key features of Family Gateway's practice which they felt was beneficial:

1. A clear distinction between Family Gateway and other official support services, in particular Social Services
2. The 'Barefoot Professional' model
3. Mediation
4. Acting as a hub linking families to other services
5. Early intervention
6. One to one support: 'A listening ear'

Working with 'Barefoot Professionals' rather than other official services was seen as particularly positive, as one parent explained:

"Because you can relate, you know they understand and they relate to you, you know what I mean? It makes a bit more comfortable to talk about because you know what they've gone

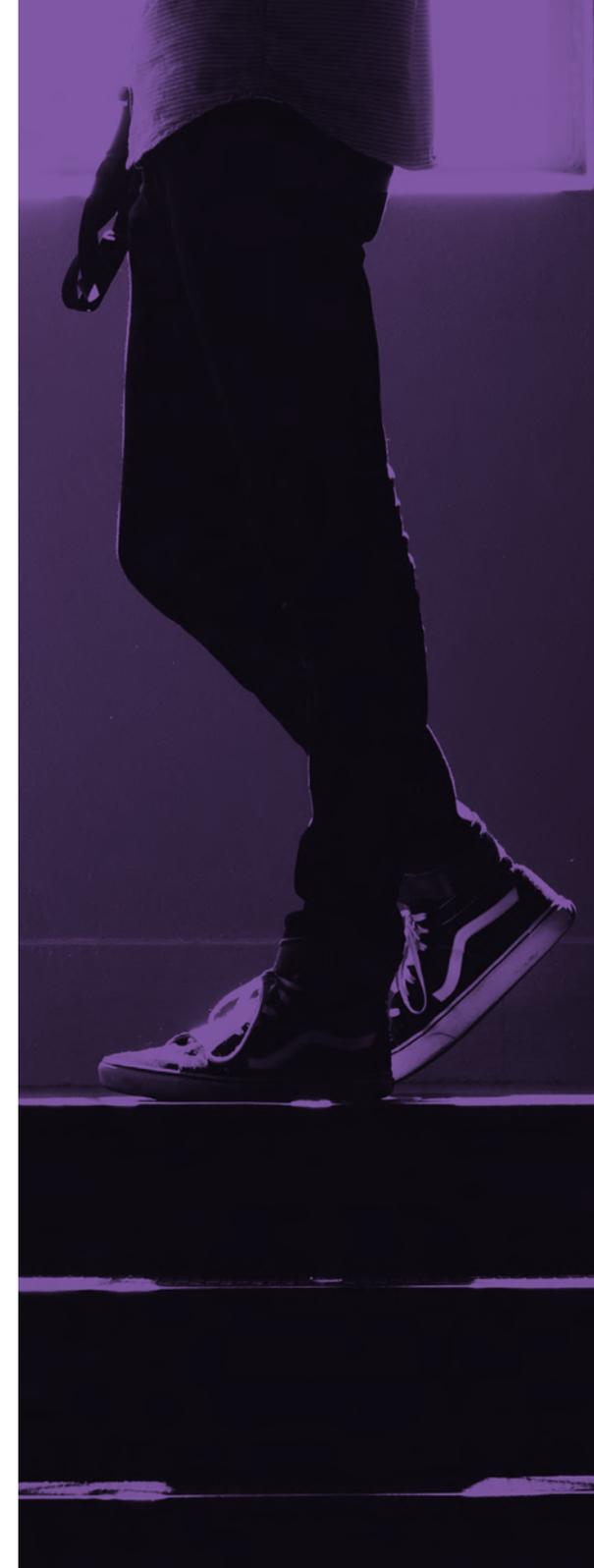
through and where they are now, and it kind of motivates you to want to be where they are."

Young people valued mediation in particular. In some cases in which a young person had left the family home, mediation helped them to repair relationships and return home.

"I didn't speak to me mam for a long time and then we just like sort of sat down Family Gateway helped like, set up a big like... meeting where we could all just talk to each other and that... It just helped get problems across and sorted."

Parents emphasised the value of early intervention by highlighting that working with Family Gateway had helped to avoid the situation worsening.

"If Family Gateway weren't there, I dread to think where we'd be. She could be in foster care, I could be fighting to get her back. But it didn't have to go that far. That's the thing with Family Gateway, it never has to go that far."



A group of people, including children and adults, are holding hands in a large circle. The image is overlaid with a dark teal color, making the scene appear monochromatic. The focus is on the hands and arms connecting in a supportive ring.

Summary of impact against outcomes

Cohesion: For some young people, working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which they felt they spent enjoyable time with their family. Their parents tended to agree at endpoint. However, some young people and parents still did not feel that this was the case after having worked with Family Gateway.

Discussions during focus groups and interviews showed that parents and young people felt that how families spend time together is an important factor in healthy family relationships. Some families felt that they did spend time together, and this helped repair relationships in difficult times. However, others did not. This appears to corroborate our survey findings. For one family, Family Gateway's support to help the young person move out of the family home allowed the family to become more cohesive and maintain beneficial, enjoyable relationships.

Expressiveness: At the start of their time working with Family Gateway, few young people felt that their families were emotionally expressive, though parents were more likely to think so than young people. For nine young people and six parents, working with Family Gateway increased the extent to which they felt their family was emotionally expressive. However, just under half of young people and parents still felt unsure (answering 'neither agree nor disagree') about whether the family was emotionally expressive at endpoint. This also came through in interviews with young people. Some highlighted that working with Family Gateway had allowed them to open up and begin to express their emotions – firstly with their Family Entrepreneur, and then with their parent – whilst other young people were still struggling with doing so.

Dealing with conflict: Working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which parents and young people felt able to deal with conflict. Before the Family Gateway intervention, most parents and young people felt that they were not able to disagree without arguing. After working with Family Gateway, over half of young people and nearly all parents felt their family was better at avoiding conflict. Parents highlighted that the strategies Family Gateway had supported them to develop were effective in avoiding conflict with their child. Young people felt that family mediation had supported them to reduce conflict with their parent, though some needed continued support in this area.

Communication (listening): For some young people, working with Family Gateway appeared to have a positive impact on the extent to which they felt their parents listened to them. Before working with Family Gateway, parents often did not recognise the problem their children identified with their communication and listening. After the intervention, however, parents' judgments of whether they listened to their children were more in line with their children's judgments, although some young people still felt that they were not listened to at the end of the project. Some parents and young people suggested that working with Family Gateway had given them strategies to improve their communication. In one case, this had allowed a young person to return to the family home after being homeless for a month.

Involvement and encouragement: After receiving support from Family Gateway, young people felt more encouraged, and parents' assessments of how encouragingly they behaved seemed more

in line with their children's perceptions. A parent involved in the focus group recognised that being more encouraging towards their children had improved their relationships.

Warmth: Most, but not all, parents and young people felt that they expressed affection to each other before working with Family Gateway. However, there was some disagreement within families between parents and their children about whether this was the case. At the end of their work with Family Gateway, more young people and parents felt they showed warmth and affection in their families. For the few that did not, both children and parents in that family recognised the issue. Young people valued warmth and affection in their family highly, and some felt that working with Family Gateway had helped to repair relationships and increase this warmth.

Rules, boundaries and behaviour with friends: Not following rules in the family seemed to be an issue for most families before they started working with Family Gateway. After their time working with a Family Entrepreneur, more young people and parents felt that they followed rules in their family. Where some still not did feel this was the case, there tended to be more consensus within the family that this was an issue. Some parents felt that working with Family Gateway had helped them to lay down rules and boundaries more firmly in their households, which, in some cases, had had a positive effect on young people's behaviour and family relationships in the longer term.

Young people's behaviour with their friends sometimes involved breaking rules, and this was identified as a source of conflict between parents and children.

Parents were more likely than young people at the beginning of the project to feel that their children were susceptible to peer pressure. However, after working with Family Gateway, parents were less likely to think this was a severe issue, and some young people reported finding it easier to resist peer pressure. After working with Family Gateway, parents and young people were both less likely to report that a young person's behaviour with their friends was a source of tension and conflict.

Space: Overall, working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that a young person would feel that they had their own respected space in the home, as well as the likelihood that their parents would agree. For those young people who, at the end of their time working with Family Gateway, still did not agree that they had a space in the home, the parent acknowledged that this was the case.

Knowledge of and access to support services: Working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that young people and parents would know where to access support when things went wrong in their family relationships. Participants were also more likely to feel comfortable to do so. Before working with Family Gateway, most young people and parents said they did not know where to seek support and did not feel comfortable to do so. After the intervention, all parents and over two thirds of young people knew where to get help, and felt able to ask for support. Two young people still felt unsure, and one young person said that they did not know where to access support. This suggests that some young people may benefit from continued work with Family Gateway, focussing on highlighting support services that they can work with.

3.

The families and the support provided by Family Gateway

The following section describes three of the ten families that Family Gateway supported as part of this project. It details the main issues they faced which led to their referral to Family Gateway, the support Family Gateway provided, and the family's circumstances at the end of the project. In doing so, it highlights the extent to which the young person was at risk of homelessness and whether the work with Family Gateway prevented this or supported the young person if they did become homeless.

It is important to note that, while the main aim of the project was to prevent homelessness, the family home is not always

the best or the safest place for a young person. Therefore, in some circumstances, a young person leaving the family home (with the support of Family Gateway) can be considered a positive outcome, especially where it allows a young person to maintain positive relationships with their family, and therefore to continue to access a support network. This sample of three stories demonstrates the range of different outcomes that a family can experience when working with Family Gateway, all of which constitute homelessness prevention. The other seven stories can be found in the long version of this report.

Note: all names are pseudonyms



Kayden and his mother

Kayden was raised by his grandfather as his mother was not able to look after him when he was a child. At 16 years old, his behaviour deteriorated and his grandfather felt he was no longer able to house him. Consequently, Kayden moved in with his mother and two younger brothers, both of whom have special educational needs. Kayden's mother found his behaviour difficult to deal with, and struggled to lay down rules and boundaries due to feeling 'more like a sister' than a mother to Kayden. The family was referred to the Family Entrepreneurs through another project in the community. Kayden was thought to be at high risk of becoming homeless due to escalating tensions in his family relationships. His mother was reluctant to have him stay in her home as she felt he was disrupting routines for her younger sons.

Kayden was reluctant to engage with the project, and was initially very reserved during interventions and mediation. His Family Entrepreneur focussed on building a relationship with him to allow him to trust and engage. Kayden's mother struggled to show affection for him. This contributed to Kayden acting out, and also made him reluctant to raise issues with his mother about how he felt, leading instead to more poor behaviour. Kayden's mother continued to struggle to house and support him financially. Kayden was 17, and Family

Gateway recognised that, if he became homeless aged 18, he would struggle to get support. They therefore made arrangements for Kayden to move into supported living in order to ensure a controlled and supportive move, rather than a chaotic transition into homelessness.

As Kayden began to build trust with Family Gateway, he started to engage in family mediation. Through this mediation between Kayden and his mother, their problems around boundaries, communication and expressing affection were addressed. His mother was also given support to develop communication strategies and ways of avoiding conflict.

Living independently has been a positive move for Kayden, and this distance has drastically improved his relationship with his mother. They now speak every day, are "much closer", and see each other regularly. Kayden's mother feels that she has more strategies to avoid conflict as she now listens to Kayden, encourages him more, and feels that she can set boundaries in her home now that he has his own space. Kayden is now planning to start a motor mechanics course, followed by an apprenticeship. Despite not staying in the family home, Kayden was prevented from becoming homeless and now has a positive and supportive relationship with his family.

Connor and his parents

Connor was 17 years old when his mother self-referred to Family Gateway due to his challenging behaviour. Connor lives with both of his parents, and two of his younger siblings. Connor's older sister had previously been homeless. The family had been struggling with money as Connor's mum had to reduce her working hours for medical reasons, and the family had been relying on food banks.

Connor's behaviour deteriorated over a period of months where he stopped attending college, started taking drugs and became involved in crime (including violent crime), resulting in the police becoming involved. Communication in the family had broken down and Connor initially refused to engage with Family Gateway, who provided support for his mother and other siblings. Following a serious argument, Connor's mother asked him to leave the family home. Family Gateway acted as a link to a social worker and housing services in the council to support Connor while he was homeless. Initially, Connor would not engage with these services and spent time on the streets and sofa surfing. Family Gateway eventually succeeded in securing hostel accommodation for Connor, where he lived for a month whilst beginning to engage with Family Entrepreneurs.

Family Gateway continued to work with Connor and his family during the time for which he was homeless and not speaking with his parents. The Family Entrepreneur was able to facilitate family mediation between Connor and his mother in which they addressed an early trauma which Connor had suffered outside of the family home. Connor's mother also felt supported to put in place more rules and discipline for Connor, and, as a result of this and the mediation, Connor's behaviour improved, and he returned to the family home. Connor was also able to engage with a Family Entrepreneur and access counselling. Connor is now enjoying taking part in the Prince's Trust programme, and plans to get a job once he has finished. Connor explains:

"It's helped my mam because it's taught her how to deal with things and that... it's just really helped her understand why things happen. Aye, it's made us happier. Aye, I think it's been positive and it's helped me to stay positive and that, just knowing that there's someone to listen and that. There's always advice if you're stuck and making a choice."

Abby and her parents

Abby is 14 years old and lives with her mother, father and younger sister. Her family were referred to Family Gateway by Abby's school because Abby was frequently truanting and absconding from home. When Family Gateway approached the family, Abby's mother was initially very resistant to engaging with support. Abby's mother later revealed that her reluctance to engage was due to a deep fear of official services and a concern that she would be 'judged' as a parent. Therefore, the focus of Family Gateway's work initially was building a relationship with all family members to allow them to engage and work through their fear of seeking support. Their Family Entrepreneur explained:

"Both parents were initially very aggressive and reluctant to engage. Their family had had bad experiences with services in the past and this fear showed as aggression. There was a lot of trust building to do and it was important to follow through."

There was frequent conflict between Abby and her parents, sometimes resulting in Abby absconding from home and engaging in risky behaviours. As Family Gateway built trust with the family, they acted as a neutral point of contact during conflicts and crises. Through one-to-one conversations with Abby, it became clear that issues such

as Abby's parents frequently comparing her negatively to her younger sister were impacting on her self-esteem, thus causing her to act out. Family Gateway used family mediation to address and work through these issues between Abby and her parents.

Family Gateway also provided Abby with a wide range of support, such as access to contraception (as she was sexually active) and ensuring that she began to attend school regularly. Simultaneously, the Family Entrepreneur supported Abby's parents to develop strategies to address conflict, as well as Abby's behaviour.

As a result of mediation and support, Abby's relationship with her parents and her younger sister has improved. She has stopped absconding from home; her behaviour and communication with her parents has improved; and Abby did not become homeless. Her mother noted that they "don't know where they would be" if not for Family Gateway's support.



Ellie Mulcahy is a Head of Research at LKMco and holds a PGCE with a specialism in the early years. She previously worked as a reception teacher having joined the founding cohort of the Teach First Early Years programme. Ellie has worked alongside Teach First to develop the Early Years Programme and as a freelance researcher for Teach First and the Behavioural Insights Team. At LKMco she has carried out research into the national speech, language and communication landscape, youth homelessness and the impact of literacy interventions in prisons. She is the co-author of a series of three reports on inequalities in higher education with King's College London's Widening Participation department.



Loic Menzies is Chief Executive of LKMco. He has worked in education research, evaluation and policy for nearly ten years. Before that, he was a teacher, youth worker and tutor for Canterbury Christ Church's Faculty of Education. Loic has authored numerous high-profile reports on issues ranging from youth homelessness to teacher recruitment, all based on detailed qualitative and quantitative research. He works closely with practitioners and policy makers to communicate research's implications, for example presenting to the Education Select Committee on White Working Class Underachievement or working with civil servants to tackle the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. He is currently editing LKMco's first book, for Routledge entitled "Young People on the Margins."



This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

www.lkmco.org.uk / [@LKMco](https://twitter.com/LKMco)
info@lkmco.org

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