
Accelerate to Independence: 'Aftercare guarantee' in Youth Care

“Analysis of after care policies and practices
and results of focus groups ...”

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Erasmus + Partners Partners

- **Flemish agency for youth welfare:** lead partner
- Department 4 of Social Affairs in Carinthia, (Austria)
- Azienda Speciale Brescia Ovest
- Dutch ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports
- **ENSA**, the European Network for Social Authorities
- **FEANTSA**, European Federation of National organisations working with the homeless

Project Aims

- Understanding “**aftercare**” concept and increase awareness on the **importance of aftercare mechanisms**
- Defining what needs to be done in order to support **young people leaving care** and prevent homelessness situations
- **Involve all “youth” levels in this process:** from policy makers, to front line staff (youth and social workers) and final beneficiaries
- **Identifying and testing possible concrete solutions** (for example “personal budget scheme”)

Basic Concepts

Aftercare

- Process of **preparation and support for leaving care and moving to independent living** for young people who are/ have been in care.
- Includes **Residential care/ Foster care**
- **Provision of advice, guidance and assistance ...**
- Process **driven by the young person**

Personal Budget Scheme

- Personal Development Plan establishing life objectives
- Personal budget is allocated to young person to accomplish those goals.

Analysis of after care policies and practices

- ❑ **Feantsa: desk / literature research:**
National and Regional Analysis
- ❑ **Fill in Questionnaires** by participating partners to collect evidences and also from Feantsa Board & ENSA (Youth Platform)
- ❑ Take the **most innovative and effective programs**, strategies and approaches to build an **Aftercare model**

Arrange Focus Groups

- Feantsa prepared **guidelines** on how to conduct them, number of the participants, the characteristics of the facilitators, etc.
- Different **questionnaires** were developed by Feantsa, including key subjects we would like to address in the different groups.
- Feantsa asked for a report in English of every focus group to analyse and include the main findings in the report

Run Focus Groups

- Groups of Young people of different ages:
 - Young people (18-25)
 - Young people (16-18)
- Groups of experts:
 - Professionals from different areas: Youth care system but others youth care: health, employment, housing, training, education(...)
 - Government officials from different policy areas and different levels of administration.

Run Pilot “Personal Budget Scheme”

- A ‘Personal Development Plan’ was analysed with three young people and former counsellors
- The young people map out their objectives and aspirations supported by a coach
- Once the objectives established, they found out material resources and services to fulfil their needs
- The young people could effectively acquire those resources and services with a “Personal budget”

Final Report

1. The project: Rationale/ Relevant activities/ partners and their roles
2. From youth care to homelessness
 - Youth Guarantee for vulnerable youth?
3. Overview of schemes/ policies EU (aftercare)
4. Focus groups
5. Personal Development Plan (Personal Budget)
6. Conclusions
7. Policy Recommendations

Main Conclusions: Country Analysis

- In most countries some kind of aftercare policy has been developed
- If not, at least different services have been introduced to address the needs of care leavers
- Differences in the effective and real implementation of these measures (National / Regional level)
- The Irish aftercare model has been an inspiration: “Statutory right to aftercare”

Country/ Regional Analysis: some examples

- **Ireland:** Child Care Act 2015: place a statutory duty on the authorities to prepare an aftercare plan
- **Scotland:** Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014:
 - 16 year olds who have been in care can decide to stay in care placement until 21
 - Once they leave care, they will receive advice and support until 26
- **Finland:** The Child Welfare Act includes Youth aftercare. Duty of a municipality to provide aftercare finishes at 21.

Main Conclusions: Country Analysis

- Models that are working better have a combined approach to the issue:
 - General policies addressing all young people
 - Specific approaches for vulnerable young
- An Integrated response system is essential: prevention/ emergency services / long term accommodation
- A Multidimensional approach integrating all the policy areas involved in aftercare is needed

Conclusions: Country Analysis

- The necessary measures for independence must be in place at the different stages:
 - Preparation for leaving care. (16)
 - An Aftercare worker should be named
 - Leaving care: before (18)
 - Prepare Aftercare Support plan
 - Aftercare (18-25)
 - Develop the Aftercare measures/ Review annually and modify if needed

Conclusions: Focus Groups (1)

- An Aftercare worker is needed to support the young person
- Possibility to practise independent living through to internal and external assisted living, transition apartments, etc.
- Help with practical aspects of life: shopping, washing, budget control, etc.
- Emotional support is as important as practical staff. Addressing loneliness and how to cope with it is vital

Conclusions: Focus Groups (2)

- Building networks around the young person is key
- Bigger emphasis on working with the family / extended family (uncles, grandparents, etc.)
- Encouraging and supporting young people in care to finish secondary studies should be a priority
- Possibility to extend care in certain situations after 18 (Belgium, Austria, etc)

Conclusions: Focus Groups 3

- Before leaving care, an aftercare plan is needed. Need to Include financial provisions
- Support services can be specific (sectorial) and general public services. Need to adapt general services to young people's needs
- Once a young person leaves the care `system`, (foster care, institutional care) no longer eligible to return. Need for some flexibility to come back

Thanks for your attention!

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