

**North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC)  
Information Use Project**

**Summary:**

The Information Use Project with North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) seeks to improve the ways information is collected about care leavers, by assembling more meaningful information from different sources, while ensuring that young people's and practitioners' voices are amplified throughout. The focus of the first phase will be on the following activities:

- Optimise the role of young people's voices in information use of and about care leavers, ensuring that decision-making can reflect young people's wishes and needs and that they feel valued and listened to.
- Bring together meaningful information from across different agencies and sources on eight topic areas: employment, education, housing, wellbeing, physical health, life management and risk.
- Develop meaningful aggregate outcomes for care leavers, to further inform the appropriate commissioning of services and service changes.

Forthcoming research activities (including focus groups, shadowing and case note analysis) with key stakeholders from the local authority, practitioners and young care leavers will be used to:

- Understand more about what information is currently collected, and how young people's and practitioners' voices are incorporated into everyday practices of information collection, collation and analysis.
- Identify the duplications and gaps in the existing information and examine potential new measures to be used.
- Facilitate sharing of practices that can enhance voice across the NYCC teams, with particular focus on the presence of youth voice within information systems.
- Maximise ways to aggregate the depth and breadth of information contained in young people's case notes, including through the use of digital technologies.

**IUP Vision:**

**1. Well specified in terms of the five practices**

**a. Data (including the collection, linking and analysis of statistics)**

- The IUP is focused on eight core outcome topics: Employment, Education, Housing, Relationships (including friends and social network), Wellbeing (happiness, hope, coping), Physical health (including dental health), Life management (including finance), and Risk. Part of the IUP will be to explore what information is currently collected in relation to these eight outcome topics, to bring together information from different sources, and to identify where there may be duplication and/or gaps for new indicators to be developed.

- At an aggregate level, the IUP will further explore how existing sources of individual level information may be used to inform service development and commissioning, through the identification of key ‘meaningful’ indicators for the eight topic areas.
- b. Voice (the views, perspectives and experiences of children, families, practitioners, professionals, and wider community organisations)**
- The IUP in NYCC has a core commitment to strengthening young people’s voices in information use and collection, as well as in the ongoing research and project design. Voice is central to the working practices in NYCC, with its emphasis on relational practice in which voice is central.
  - The initial phases of the IUP will examine how young people’s (and practitioners’) voices are already integrated into case notes and other information mechanisms, and how these may be enhanced further.
  - It will explore how to facilitate sharing of practices across NYCC teams to enhance youth voice in information systems and identify ways to integrate young people’s voices into the analysis, use and review of information.
  - Future phases will also maximise ways that the depth and quality of the information collected in case notes can be better utilised, through algorithmic semantic searches.
- c. Ethics (how principles of individual privacy, social justice and public good are applied to data and voice work)**
- The IUP will include engagement with young people, practitioners, and data analysts to discuss how information is recorded, used, and shared to make decisions and inform services.
  - Due to the focus of the IUP on care leavers, additional ethical consideration will be given to the involvement of the state in young people’s lives beyond the age of 18, as well as to the sharing of information and the use of algorithmic semantic searches to code free text within individuals’ case notes.
  - In later stages of the IUP, particular focus will be given to voices that are ‘silent’ or more difficult to engage, including harder to reach young people such as those involved in the criminal justice system.
- d. Information use (how information is used in practice to inform and shape policy and practice)**
- The Theory of Change for NYCC details two pathways through which the IUP will inform policy and practice at both **individual** and **aggregate** levels.
  - At the **individual** level, collection of meaningful information across the 8 topic areas will be discussed in meetings with the personal adviser (PA) and young person, which will inform the support offered by PA’s and enable them to better meet and respond to an individual’s needs.
  - At the **aggregate** level, the collection of meaningful information across the 8 topic areas will mean that NYCC will have a better understanding of the cohort’s needs, which can inform the commissioning of services and subsequently meet the needs of care leavers better.

**e. Learning (testing and evaluating how new initiatives are working)**

- The IUP evaluation will begin in Phase One, with a focus on establishing a baseline of meaningful measures.

**2. Has relevance and traction locally**

NYCC emphasise relationship-based practice across their service, underpinned by their ‘Strength in relationship’ Practice Model that defines its core purpose for those in care and leaving care as: ‘To support positive change that continues after we no longer need to be involved. We will create conditions that allow relationships to flourish’. A range of existing mechanisms are currently used to listen to young people’s experiences, both within the Leaving Care team but also in other teams (e.g., surveys, Mind of My Own App, Housing Star). The focus of the NYCC IUP on young people’s and practitioners’ voices has been developed within this context, with the IUP outcomes at both individual and aggregate levels focused on ensuring young people feel valued and listened to.

Practice models within the Leaving Care Team already utilise a strength-based approach. Staff have done Signs of Safety training, Systemic Working in Practice training and some Restorative Solutions training. The emphasis on relationship-based practice within NYCC reflects a national shift in the direction of both children’s safeguarding and work with children in care. In NYCC, this shift is considered to be particularly applicable in the area of care leavers to ensure the best possible outcomes and life chances. The approach of the IUP further aligns with the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022) to strengthen children and young people’s voices through practice.

**3. Has feasible impact on lives and experiences**

The activities of the IUP, bringing together meaningful information (at both individual and aggregate levels) and maximising young people’s voices, are anticipated to lead to improved outcomes in the key topic areas. These, in turn, are understood as necessary to enhance young people’s readiness to lead independent lives in which they feel valued and hopeful. Specifically, the IUP will enhance individual-level and service-level support for care leavers. This will support them, for example, to find and engage in suitable employment and education; to feel safe in appropriate accommodation; to foster positive relationships; to access appropriate services that support them to enhance their wellbeing and physical health; and to have the skills, resources, and confidence to manage daily life and finances, as well as to feel supported to take acceptable levels of risk. These attributes are seen as core for those with care experience to leading independent lives in which they can flourish, and they can decide when to leave the service at the time that is right for them. Developing meaningful indicators of these outcomes will help to ensure that the support care leavers receive meets with their specific needs and those of the whole cohort.

**4. Stable and deliverable**

Key team members from across NYCC have been involved in the project since the outset. A core project team based in NYCC (include Sam Clayton, Maggie Allen, Nicki Watkinson, Iain Pick and Chris Houghton) meets monthly with members of the research team (Prof Lisa Holmes, Dr Perpetua Kirby and Dr Caitlin Shaughnessy, all at the University of Sussex). This group then reports into NYCC Senior Leadership team on a quarterly basis.

## **5. Includes improved information relative to a baseline**

During the IUP the research team will work with NYCC to establish a baseline of meaningful indicators as appropriate through the 8 topic areas. These will be developed in Phase 1, using newly identified measures in Spring 2023.

## **6. Of wider policy interest**

The IUP fits within the national context of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, in particular the emphasis on amplifying children and young people's voice on decision-making in care. It is anticipated that this IUP will provide insights into how to collect more meaningful information for care leavers and provide a model for how to ensure young people's and practitioners' voices are central to developing new processes of collecting and sharing information. This will help to improve the long-term quality of life for young people with care experience and help them to get the support they need in more responsive and meaningful ways.

## **7. Having a whole child approach**

The eight topic areas identified by NYCC provide a holistic view of young people's lives, considering the importance of relationships and wellbeing; they go beyond many of the existing national reporting requirements that do not reflect the daily lives of young people with care experience. Phase One will further explore information possibilities on how the Single View of Child system could be replicated for care leavers, bringing together different sources and types of information.

## **8. Has plans in place for substantial development for the enhanced pilot to follow**

Phase One of the NYCC IUP will be comprised of two parts:

The first will be an extension of the mapping undertaken in the initial Discovery Phase. It will focus gaining a deeper understanding of current information collection/collation practices to design revisions to the information system.

The second stage will implement the new design to the information system and explore how young people can become more involved in the latter stages of the pathway, where judgements and decisions are made about the analysis, use and review of information.

Research methods include

- **'Day in the life' shadowing** of Personal Advisers (PAs). The focus will be on understanding what information is recorded and how this incorporates young people's voices, as well as staff voices and those of other stakeholders (e.g., wider professionals, family, friends, etc.).
- **Focus groups:** with PAs, Multi Agency and Data teams.
- **Case note analysis:** to establish the range of information collected from young people, and the relationship between the guidance and practice of recording case notes.
- **Exploratory aggregate data analysis:** exploring available data and opportunities to code free text to create a regular aggregate analysis.