



# Closing the Revolving Door: Preventing a new generation of people experiencing multiple disadvantage and exclusion

## Executive Summary

### Key Findings

The focus on young people is central to the legacy of WY-FI. Increasing social inequalities mean that more and more young children are at risk of experiencing multiple disadvantage and exclusions. We've noted the relatively small proportion of under 25 year-olds in our cohort (less than 10%). In our paper on *Future Demand (2020)* we identified an unexpectedly high proportion of beneficiaries who were parents. We started to explore possible future levels of need based on the number of children in services who may go on to develop unaddressed needs. Based on the findings of Bramley et al (Hard Edges, 2015) and the work of academics from a social work background such as Warren Larkin, on adverse childhood experiences, we're using this report to examine the needs and experiences of the under 25 year-olds in our data. We look into the learning around the children of parents experiencing multiple disadvantage and exclusions, given that they are likely to be going through some of the adverse childhood experiences that can lead to future multiple disadvantage and exclusion.

Between June 2014 and May 2020, WY-FI supported 823 individual beneficiaries across the five local authority districts in West Yorkshire. We collected consistent data for all beneficiaries during their Navigator support journey, covering demographics, needs, activities, assessments and outcomes. By dividing WY-FI beneficiaries into three groups, we can see the different influences, impacts and outcomes of beneficiary journeys. We will refer to these three groups as:

- **18-25 year-olds** (72 people), 20 people in this group are also parents, for the purposes of statistics we have kept these 20 in the 18-25 year olds group, although their experiences are reflected as both parents and 18-25 year olds in the deep dive into case notes
- **Parents** – these are defined as beneficiaries who claimed Child Tax Credits (238 people)
- **Mainstream** - all other mainstream beneficiaries (532 people).

In response to comments on the early findings from the data for this report, we've looked at the gender split in some of the analyses. We've also done a deep dive into the case notes of 18-25 year-olds who've been arrested (12 beneficiaries), in order to understand the nature of their offences.

**Journey Length** – Over half of **18-25 year-olds had a journey lasting less than a year**. This is reflected in the high proportion of 18-25 year-olds that had unplanned exits from WY-FI support. Parents had a substantially longer average journey length, with a much higher proportion having a one to three year WY-FI journey.

**Outcomes and Exits** - The experience of 18-25 year-olds is closer to the mainstream group, and in some aspects not as good. **More 18-25 year-olds left WY-FI with their exit unplanned**, either



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**refusing or not ready for the support available.** Like the mainstream group, around 10% left because they were imprisoned.

WY-FI has certainly been a success for the group of parents - with a much **greater proportion of planned exits** and much **higher improvements in the NDTA and HOS** scores than the other two groups. This is particularly the case for the cohort that stayed on the programme for between one and three years. What we'd like to infer is that this has **improved the chances for their children**, although the evidence for that is not in the data. Almost **half of all parents left WY-FI with external support networks in place** and a further 15% are described as having "gained independence", which means they either successfully exited from their other support services or at the very least they were proactively managing their involvement. People in the 18-25 year-old group were twice as likely as the mainstream group or parents to be assessed as "not ready for support" from WY-FI. They were also twice as likely as parents to refuse WY-FI support or exit WY-FI due to a custodial sentence.

**Refusals and Exclusions** from services **run at about a third of each of the Parent and 18-25-year-old** groups, with small variations between local authority districts. The mainstream group show a smaller proportion (around a fifth) of beneficiaries who refused support or have been excluded from services.

### Service Use by Category

**Housing: Evictions** affect approximately **10% more of parents and 18-25 year-olds** than the mainstream group. Access to housing is identified in the deep dive as a challenge, due to beneficiaries' **offending** histories. Sustaining accommodation has been a challenge. Beneficiaries under 25 **were often too chaotic to stay in the housing provided for them**. Some beneficiaries **didn't have the skills to be able to live alone**, as they've never lived independently before. Parents sometimes experienced a **shortfall in adult housing benefit** because services don't consider the children linked to beneficiaries' lives.

**Substance Use** - **84% of all parents were in contact with addiction services** and had a **significantly greater amount of contact with them** - double that of the other groups. There are very few incidences of detox and rehab service use, so we've not attempted to draw any general conclusions from these two service categories.

**Criminal Justice** - whilst arrests are almost 15% higher for parents and 18-25 year-olds, almost **double the number of parents were cautioned**. Court appearances were **more likely for both parents and 18-25 year-olds** than the mainstream group. Around 15% more in both groups were brought before Magistrates and there was a small increase in the proportion of 18-25 year-olds brought before the Crown Court. **Conviction rates were also higher** for these two groups: 6% for parents and 13% for 18-25 year-olds. **Prison** is the standout element of contact with the criminal justice system for the 18-25 year-old group, with 8% more than the mainstream group going to



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prison. What's significant is that **they spent longer in prison** on their WY-FI journey than either of the other groups - on average 30 days (around a third) longer.

It appears that WY-FI beneficiaries are **pursued further through the criminal justice system. This is because they've** been known to the system longer and have multiple (often lower level) offences, but **the system has run out of alternatives** to more restrictive community and custodial sentencing.

**Health and Mental Ill-Health** - this is the area of starkest contrast among the proportion of people affected and it's the area where **parents seem to be the most in need of services**. Typically, **double the proportion of parents used physical health services** (Accident and Emergency visits, hospital out-patients visits and hospital in-patient stays). Almost **half of parents were patients of Community Mental Health Teams** and on average they had **substantially more sessions** than the other two groups. Again, **proportionally more parents used counselling services**, however we see that **18-25 year-old patients had substantially longer courses of treatment**. On average, both parents and 18-25 year-olds spent more time as mental health in-patients than the mainstream group.

### Meaningful Activities and Non-“Service” Support

**Mentoring and befriending** - **peer mentoring was the most frequently accessed form of support**, and again, parents received more support from peer mentors than the mainstream group and the 18-25 year-olds overall. However, 25%-45% of the 18-25 year-olds group accessed a peer mentor across all districts except Kirklees.

**Education** - between **40% and 60% of parents accessed some form of training** - particularly in life skills. Around **25% of 18-25 year-olds attend either basic skills or life skills training**. Around 20% of parents undertake training leading to a qualification.

**Activities** - sports and arts/cultural activities were the most popular, with a **higher proportion of under 25's taking part in sports in particular**. Parents were more likely to participate in faith-based activities and worship. In the deep dive into case notes, it's clear that meaningful activities are needed by 18-25 year-olds.

**Volunteering** - around **20% of parents were volunteers** at some point, with a much smaller proportion of under 25's. A small proportion of the mainstream group (less than 10%) became volunteers.

### Deep Dive into the Case Notes

Further challenges identified in the deep dive into case notes indicate a series of non-service based issues and challenges that inhibited positive exits. These include **relationships** and problems with seeing children. Beneficiaries who were **disengaged from their children** when they were in chaos have found that **getting that relationship back in recovery is arduous**. Some parents were **brought up in care** themselves, others were dealing with the **death** of an ex-partner/partner and parent of



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their child/children. In some of the case notes beneficiaries **talked about their own parents** and the challenges they faced and posed.

### A Summary of Recommendations for Working with Young People and Closing the Revolving Door.

These recommendations are as a result of the research that has taken place by other agencies and authors referenced in appendix 1, WY-FI's own data and deep dive into the case notes of the Young People and Parent groups. In addition, these recommendations have come from the narratives we have explored in our own interviews and work carried out with Life Experience. We recognise the extensive work that services do to support young people with multiple disadvantage and exclusion and hope that these recommendations will be something services can use to improve their effectiveness and reduce the amount of young people growing up to have these experiences.

**Multi-agency, person-centred support needs to be co-ordinated around a person earlier in their journey.** This means that the co-ordination by district level groups to access care for this group needs to be drilled down to multi-disciplinary teams around the person at front-line worker level, as a pre-emptive measure not a reaction to crises whilst the beneficiary is on navigation.

Services also need to understand the **transition from child to adult services** and the extra support that might be needed for that individual.

This comes from **community based, preventative services** being put in place (or restored) on a district level to respond to the needs of both:

- A. Those young people who demonstrate multiple disadvantage from school age to 25 years as a result of particular adverse childhood experiences.
- B. Those young people at increased risk of experiencing multiple disadvantage based on their experiences of social inequalities and socially produced adverse childhood experience

We also recommend, that once the young person is in a service, **risk assessments take place that identify the vulnerability** of the young person, rather than their risk to others. This means that support planning can focus on mitigating or modifying behaviours that arise from those vulnerabilities, whilst managing, rather than trying to eliminate risk.

**Workforce development** plans for staff and services ensure the **trauma informed care** and **psychologically informed environments** can be adopted. With this, comes the routine enquiry about **childhood adversity** which can increase understanding of the **vulnerabilities and behaviours** shown by the young person.



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We also recommend that services understand the **importance of home for a young person**. Home ensures feeling secure and is a base for future development and social skills.

In addition, people aged 18 (and below) to 25 need a **flexible approach from services**. This means making a wider range of options available to those implementing frameworks that are tightly defined and helping to increase an understanding that more effective options that result in better outcomes for individuals.