



# Aftercare for Care Leavers: Learning lessons from across Europe

## Conference Questions & Answers – written responses

1. Can we talk about the care leavers situation in Romania? Housing, Health services, ID situation, the pandemic and many more?
  - **Prof Mike Stein: I have been working closely with a Romanian academic who is an expert on social policy. If you email me ([mike.stein@york.ac.uk](mailto:mike.stein@york.ac.uk)) I will introduce you.**
  - **MEP Dragos Pislaru: We (Renew Europe and USR PLUS in particular in Romania) propose a new social protection system, based on integrated counter-poverty policies, with the following priorities:**
    1. Interventions aimed at the poorest Romanians, at those **who risk being left out of the social system**.
    2. **Activating people in vulnerable situations** by facilitating their **integration into work and social life**, focusing the intervention on their fulfilment potential, not only on the need for survival.
    3. Ensuring a **decent standard of living for all children** in Romania and breaking the vicious circle that perpetuates poverty from one generation to another;
    4. **Radical change** in the approach followed by **public education and social protection systems**, with the prioritization of **prevention** instead of correction and emergency intervention only.

**MEP Dragos Pislaru:** To ensure that these priorities are implemented, we need to focus on specific and practical measures:

- Continue the plan to **close large residential centres**, with a focus on streamlining the process by **developing more child-friendly alternatives in the system**, such as community support services, providing the necessary number of professional foster carers and investing in the construction of nursing homes;
- In the adoption cases, there is a need to introduce a **centralized, transparent and efficient system for monitoring the performance of duties by case managers**. Although the law provides for certain deadlines, in practice, their observance is not strictly followed, which means that many children are deprived of the presence of a permanent family in their lives for long periods of time, making them difficult to adopt. Sometimes, the children remain non-adopted until the age of majority, without justified reasons;
- In order to allow investments specifically targeted at children's education and health in the pre-adoption period, **the introduction of specific financial support measures for foster carers and foster families** (e.g. allowances, vouchers) to prevent the accumulation of development/educational gaps and the chronicity of certain health problems of the children in their care;
- Initiating **training programs for foster carers** to **ensure competent** care of children in the special protection system;

**Revision of the contracting and partnership system**, as well as of the cost standards for private operators providing social services for children in the special protection system.



Of course, the topic is very broad – how do we make new options available in the pandemic-world?

MEP Dragos Pislaru and his team would be keen to continue this with anyone, and they encourage interested participants to write to us at: [dragos.pislaru@ro.plus](mailto:dragos.pislaru@ro.plus); [dragos.pislaru@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:dragos.pislaru@europarl.europa.eu)

2. Do you think lack of sufficient support for kinship carers indicates public authorities abdicating their responsibilities? The children have the same needs?

**Prof Mike Stein: The evidence from the UK is that local authorities (LA's) vary in both the recruitment and the support they give to kinship carers. A very informative and important evidenced based report on kinship care was published in 2019: see: Special Guardianship: international research on kinship care, Nuffield Foundation (visit: [www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk](http://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk))**

3. For Prof Stein: is there any documentation which one go through in relation to the process for children living in small based community homes to keep residing there as future tenants?

**Prof Mike Stein: Since I completed the survey informing my presentation, I found out that there is a very innovative housing project in England which adopts similar principles and has also pioneered care leavers participation in the process. It is called the House Project and has an excellent website containing detailed documentation (see: [thehouseproject.org](http://thehouseproject.org)).**

4. What do the panellists suggest can be done to increase the power of care experienced children and young people themselves which is more than just consultation?

**Prof Mike Stein: There has to be (1) a strong legal framework rooted within the UNCRC (2) clear, transparent policies spelling out how young people are involved both individually in decisions which shape their lives, and collectively in making policy – drawing on a typology which identifies the levels of participation (3) having a regular review of the policy and practice framework and how it is responding to the needs of different groups of care leavers – involving independent care experienced young people's rights groups (4) mentoring: to empower young people and (5) training for staff and elected representatives responsible and accountable for services. In short, to go beyond consultation requires a cultural and structural shift. Some of these points – but not all – were included in the New Belongings project which was introduced to ensure local authorities involved care leavers in decision making and service planning (visit: [coramvoice.org.uk](http://coramvoice.org.uk))**

5. What are your thoughts on the role the EU can play to drive change here?

**Prof Mike Stein: I think the EU should have an active role in 'levelling-up' leaving care services by collecting and disseminating 'best policy and practice' examples, working in partnership with Eurochild and other organisation representing and progressing the rights of children and young people**



6. What support is available for children and adolescents leaving juvenile justice institutions? This is our biggest challenge?

**Prof Mike Stein: In England there was the 'Laming Review', 'In Care, Out of Trouble' (2016) which explored this important issue. The summary report which contains detailed recommendations is available free download from the Prison Reform Trust (visit: [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk))**

7. Hi Professor Stein, nice to hear your presentation and your continuous engagement for young people leaving care. I was wondering whether you could give examples of good practices in terms of housing?

**Prof Mike Stein: In England, the DFE is currently funding a number of evaluations of innovative projects for care leavers – these should be completed and on their website during 2021. One project, operating in different locations, that is being evaluated is the House project - and this has an excellent website containing detailed documentation (see: [thehouseproject.org](http://thehouseproject.org)). Also, in 2011, I completed a review of 'good practice' issues and these are outlined in chapters 4-6 of my 2012 book: *Young People Leaving Care, Supporting Pathways to Adulthood*, JKP.**

8. Do you think enough is being done at present, with young people in care, to prepare them for the transition of leaving the care system?

**Prof Mike Stein: The evidence suggests that in the UK some young people are very well prepared and supported by leaving care services – in a holistic way (practical skills, social development and emotional support) but others less so. It is critical that young people wherever they are living, or whatever their needs, are well prepared by having effective central government policies to level-up services.**

9. I believe what we need as a care leavers in order to freely be a part of this continuous development besides all the aftercare support you can think, I do think sometimes we find ourselves with overloaded caregiver or supporter who even if they want can't give as much assistance as they would. What do you think need to be done to enlighten the amount of work they have to face in order to really provide a quality aftercare service?

**Prof Mike Stein: Providing a 'quality aftercare service' means involving care experienced young people in the development of leaving care services. In England, the New Belongings project was introduced to ensure local authorities involved care leavers in decision making and service planning (visit: [coramvoice.org.uk](http://coramvoice.org.uk))**