

# Young people and Become boldly reimagine what 'leaving care' should look like

- Young people leaving care, often on their 18th birthday, are expected to become fully independent overnight – at a much younger age than their peers and without the support that every young person needs to thrive.
- Become, together with young care leavers, coined the 'Care Cliff' to describe how placements and support abruptly stop at a crucial time in a young person's life when they need stability the most.

Become's Sky's the Limit project brought together 11 young people as a design team to boldly reimagine 'leaving care', design a new approach to support them to have happy, positive starts to adulthood, and implore government to [#EndTheCareCliff](#).

What would leaving care look like though if care-experienced young people designed it? That's Become's Sky's the Limit project, a blank canvas upon which 11 young people - Alice, Emily, George, Jada, Jasmine, Jordan, Kim, Louis, Marthad, Becca and Samuel - shared their knowledge, memories, hopes and dreams to create a vision where care didn't abruptly end but continued to help them reach their potential and lead happy, successful lives.

"I'd just moved into college accommodation to live independently – on my actual 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. My social worker came to see me to explain how to fill out a benefits form under a lamp post in the rain before she left. I felt like 'OK, this is going to be difficult'."

"It takes so long for us to work everything out that we're hitting 30 by the time we're getting it. And that's a real shame. It's trial and error and we fail a lot before getting it right."

Sky's the Limit identified five key areas that need to change:

1. **An end to the care cliff:** understanding that a positive start to adulthood is built on a continuation of important relationships and places.
2. **Individualised support:** recognising and celebrating young people to plan their own unique futures rather than putting 'care leavers' into a single box.
3. **Consistency:** an end to the 'postcode lottery' of care and one system that delivers fair and evidence-led support for all.
4. **Accountability:** to prevent bad practice and to ensure care-experienced people get what they need and deserve.
5. **Equity:** recognising that some groups, such as those with a disability or who are Black or from a minority community, face additional challenges to that of the care experience.

The Sky's the Limit team produced a 'design brief' which was sent to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care team to influence their thinking ahead of publication. It has also been shared

with the Department of Education, parliamentarians, and local authorities, to influence the upcoming reforms to the care system.

George Downing, a member of the Sky's the Limit design group, says:

"The report is important because it demonstrates the views and ideas of people with real-life experience of leaving care. We are the experts and know what needs to be changed. It is us the government should be listening to, and our thoughts and words are in this document. Our corporate parent has a responsibility to uplift care leavers and bring the positive change that is needed."

**Katharine Sacks-Jones, CEO of Become, the national charity for children in care and young care leavers, says:**

"The experiences of young people leaving care are, at times, at risk of being overlooked – but listening to their voices and recognising and addressing the challenges they face is crucial to ensuring a positive start to adulthood. This is increasingly important as the number of young people in and leaving care continues to rise.

"Sky's the Limit is packed full of valuable, first-hand insight from young care leavers themselves. It contains robust ideas and strong recommendations of what loving support, care, and guidance looks like, so they don't see struggle ahead of them – now made far worse by the cost-of-living crisis – but hope, fulfilment, and happiness.

"Following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, we continue to call on the Government to [#EndTheCareCliff](#) so that no young person has to leave care before they're ready and to ensure that all young care leavers are provided with the support they need to fulfil their hopes and aspirations."

**To read the Sky's the Limit full report and two-page summary, visit [www.BecomeCharity.org.uk/STL](http://www.BecomeCharity.org.uk/STL)**

## **ENDS**

Katharine Sacks-Jones and young people involved in Sky's the Limit are available for interview

For more information and images contact Become's Press & Media Officer,  
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### **About Become**

Become is the national charity for children in care and young care leavers. For 30 years, the charity has stood shoulder to shoulder with care-experienced young people, helping them get the support they need right now and changing the system for future generations.

### **About Sky's the Limit**

The Sky's the Limit research design group consists of 11 young care leavers aged 18-27. The design sessions – themed REFLECT, DREAM, and CREATE – were facilitated by Become staff with support from members of Become's Care Review Policy Group. Each session featured activities which supported individuals or groups to create something – an image, a drawing, a model, some writing – which captured something important to take forward into the design brief.