

Exploring Innovations in Transition to adulthood study (EXIT)

By the [University of Warwick](#)

The EXIT Study, led by the University of Warwick, **investigates the challenges and opportunities in scaling practices designed to support care leavers as they transition to adulthood.** While numerous ideas are trialled, few progress beyond their initial pilots or local contexts. The study aims to understand the factors that enable innovations to become sustainable, scalable, and integrated into widespread practice.

The study seeks to:

- Map existing innovations across the UK aimed at supporting young people leaving care.
- Identify factors that help or hinder the implementation of innovations in practice.
- Develop strategies to promote the wider adoption of impactful innovations.
- Evaluate outcomes of innovation in four key areas: How innovation spreads, how it is adapted, its impact on care leavers and implementation costs.
- Trace the journey of innovation, examining adaptations necessary for its growth and the resulting outcomes for care leavers.

At the core of the EXIT Study is a series of six case studies conducted over two years in diverse geographical and organisational contexts across the UK. Using a co-production methodology, the EXIT team collaborates closely with host organisations to examine and improve their processes for implementing innovation.

The study aims to compare findings across these case studies to uncover common challenges, successful strategies, and lessons about how innovation can become sustainable and achieve broader impact.

The **six case study sites** are drawn from a variety of contexts, including local authorities, charity organisations, and collaborative partnerships. Each provides a unique lens through which to examine the processes of innovation and scale-up.

1 Commissioned Service: Local Authority and Children's Trust Collaboration

This case focuses on two innovations:

- A city-wide initiative addressing the needs of vulnerable young people, including care leavers.
- A therapeutic intervention for care-experienced parents at risk of losing their children to adoption.

The study explores the barriers and enablers to implementing these innovations within a complex partnership between a city council and an independently operating Children's Trust.

2 Collaborative Partnership: Local Authority and NHS Trust

This case examines how a partnership between a city council and an NHS Trust has improved healthcare services for care leavers transitioning to adulthood. The study highlights healthcare as a critical but often overlooked area of transition compared to other domains, such as housing or education.

3 Charity Sector: Established National Charity

A long-established charity places care leavers at the centre of its innovation process. This case demonstrates how empowering care leavers to design, pilot, and scale innovations can drive meaningful and impactful change, rather than having innovations imposed on them.

4 Charity Sector: Emerging National Charity

This case explores a newer charity that successfully scaled an initial innovation to multiple locations across the UK. By examining this success story, the EXIT team seeks to understand the factors that contribute to sustainable growth and broader dissemination of innovations.

5 and 6. Local Authority Context: In-House Innovation

- The final two case studies focus on local authorities in the North of England that are developing in-house innovations to improve care leaver outcomes. These innovations are often less publicised and attract limited funding, yet they play a crucial role in enhancing local services. The study investigates what supports or hinders these efforts within the local authority setting.

The EXIT Study asks critical questions about the lifecycle of innovation:

- Why do so many innovations fail to sustain or scale beyond their pilot stages?
- What practices and processes enable innovations to thrive, adapt, and spread?
- How can innovation be better supported to ensure long-term benefits for care leavers?

By exploring diverse organisational contexts and comparing case study findings, **the EXIT Study aims to provide actionable insights into:**

- Effective strategies for scaling innovation in care leaver services.
- The importance of co-production and stakeholder collaboration.
- Practical recommendations for funders, practitioners, and policymakers to better support innovation.

Ultimately, the study seeks to improve the transition to adulthood for care leavers by fostering sustainable, impactful innovations that address their unique needs and challenges.

See more: What is the EXploring Innovation in Transition (EXIT) Study and what are we doing?

