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MENTAL HEALTH

# Study finds 'shocking' lack of support for young people leaving care

Children's charity Barnardo's finds 65% of young care leavers with mental health

News

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Two thirds of young people leaving care with mental health problems are not getting any help at all from a statutory service, according to a new study by Barnardo's.

The children's charity report lays bare the scale of the struggles faced by young people as they set out on their own in the adult world.

The new research indicates almost half of England's 26,340 care leavers are suffering from at least one mental health issue.

With one in four facing a mental health crisis after leaving care, charity bosses say the shortfall in appropriate support has become striking.

"Our research shows a shocking picture of care leavers in need with no access to suitable mental health support," said Barnardo's chief executive Javed Khan.

***“The Government must ensure these vulnerable young people receive the support they so desperately need”***

Many looked after youngsters in local authority care leave at 18, though some stay with foster families until the age of 21.

Khan said care leavers experience problems ranging from anxiety to the trauma of dealing with a legacy of abuse or neglect.

"The Government must ensure these vulnerable young people receive the support they so desperately need when it honours its pledge to improve children's mental health," he said.

Barnardo's is calling on the government to invest some of the £1.4 billion earmarked to improve children's mental health on youngsters leaving the care system.

The charity wants a mental health worker working within every local authority leaving care team, extra training for all care services staff, and specific services tailored to people into their early 20s.

Councillor Richard Watts, who chairs the young people board for the Local Government Association, said “councils are working hard to help those that need care and support to receive it.”

Watts said it was Whitehall’s responsibility to release more money for the system.

“Government must support this vital work by ensuring that the promised £250 million for (local authority) mental health and wellbeing services is released in full, with greater transparency in how mental health funding is spent,” he said

Watts also called on the government to plug the growing funding gap for wider children’s services, projected to reach £2 billion by 2020.

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