The in-process programme evaluation of the initiative Brückensteine Careleaver

Support programme of the DROSOS Foundation

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Leaving Care

Care receiver are young people who grow up in forms of inpatient educational support (HzE) in accordance with SGB VIII, such as residential groups or foster families. As a rule, the young people are discharged from these at the age of 18 - 21 and are then care leaver. From now on, they are expected to lead as independent a life as possible as young adults. Compared to their peers, they have to make the transition to adulthood earlier, faster and more irreversibly. They often lack family and social support. (cf. Stein 2012; Köngeter et. al. 2012).
At the time the help ends, educational and vocational qualifications are often not yet complete, they are confronted with existential risks and the transition is usually experienced as a difficult turning point (cf. Thomas 2013; Ehlke 2013). The young adults experience a feeling of psychological homelessness and loneliness (cf. Jones 2014; Dresser 1985).



Projects such as the Brückensteine initiative support young people during this phase. They advocate for their individual circumstances and for improved transitions for care leaver.

Evaluation questions

1. Do the participating care leavers perceive the activities as relevant and helpful and do they have a positive influence on their personal development?
2. Where and by what means does the initiative have an 'impact' on the target group?
3. Are there gaps in the transition for care leavers for which solutions need to be developed?
4. Does the collective impact approach result in added value for the target group and the cooperation partners themselves? What role does the backbone organisation play?
5. Are there effects on the sustainability of the initiative?
6. Does it have an impact on society and stakeholders?

Results

1. Do the participating care leavers find the activities relevant and helpful and do they have a positive influence on their personal development?

Despite some deviations, project activities are predominantly perceived as relevant and helpful. Positive influences on individual development are also confirmed.

- As a rule, 90% or more of respondents rated the services they perceived as rather and very helpful - e.g. individual counselling or workshops.
- In individual counselling, 66% of respondents experience influence on their personal development.
- The seminars/workshops influenced 57% of respondents' personal development.

2. Where and by what means does the initiative achieve "impact ' on the target group?

What is relevant is not individual highlights or spectacular moments, but rather relationship work, trust and everyday relevance.

"So now, for example, she helps me a bit with these everyday things, completing this independent life so that there are fewer problems and everything. She helps me with that. And that has always worked well so far." (Int. 3; l. 30-33)

- 'Social embedding' of practical help is necessary (e.g. buying a mattress together for the first home of one's own).
- Reduction of negative stereotypes, such as 'institutionalised child', through greater awareness.

3. Are there gaps in the transition for care leavers for which solutions need to be developed?

Yes, e.g. the promotion of networking among the target group, addressing carereceivers, greater consideration of intersectionality, material appreciation and consideration of experiences of loneliness.

'And it's really always [...] much more about how the grievances are about care leavers as individuals, not actually this intersectionality, [...] that it's not just care leavers, but perhaps care leavers who are of Muslim origin - for example - or people of colour' (Int. 2, l. 384-389).

"Sometimes I feel a bit exploited because I do things for 300 euros a year, so many things that you just don't get paid for. [...] Where I sometimes think why, I thought you wanted to change things and do things differently?" (gbc-Int. 4, l. 110-114).

4. Does the collective impact approach create added value for the target group and the cooperation partners themselves? What role does the backbone organisation play?

Added value in some cases: e.g. joint social media presence or major events
Development needs: lack of mindset within the association, inadequate cooperation structures, no uniform understanding of cooperation

'Somehow everyone ends up cooking their own soup' (B3, lines 222 - 223). & '(...) I think we are also relatively successful. So why do I need this large organisation?" (B2, l. 206 - 207).

Backbone organisation: overarching management activities

- Lack of specialised conceptual and political orientation as well as a uniform understanding

5. Are there any effects on the sustainability of the network?

The individual projects and the network are fundamentally strengthened - but...

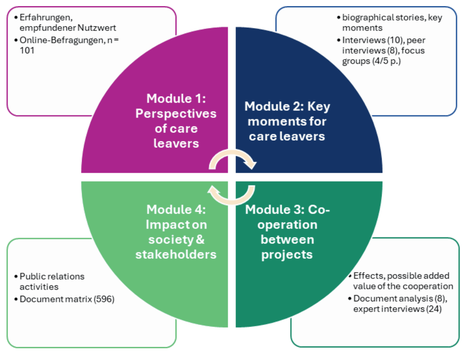
- Clear development requirements: joint applications, statements, specialised publications, initiatives, more transparent strategy on the part of the main funding body.
- Critical: Uncertainties due to reform processes at the main funding organisation, unclear funding perspectives and some personnel changes

6. Is there any impact on society and stakeholders?

Approximately 600 documented relevant public-relevant activities:

- 50 % are self-organised measures (e.g. workshops or specialist events).
- Less represented are, for example, press work, participation in specialist events or specialist publications.
- Strongly varying activity behaviour in the individual projects.

Methods & research interest



Recommendations for action

Key recommendations for action include:

- Maintaining and further promoting relationships, trust and everyday relevance in working with care leavers
- Utilising diversity in the initiative
- Consideration of intersectionality
- Formulate strategic and operational goals in the initiative

Outlook

Demands on support concepts: scientific basis, sustainability, more comprehensive and socially embedded support

According to Nüsken and James 2023, particularly critical areas of life are Education and work - Financial and household management - Housing and accommodation - Emotional support - Liaising with carers - Health promotion

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