



Whatever Next?

YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Up to a quarter of all looked after young people may be disabled in some way but many could be left out in plans to change the leaving care system.

Research shows that many disabled children spend time living away from home but that they face an uncertain future as they grow up.

Young disabled people who live away from home have many similar experiences to other care leavers but they do not always benefit from leaving care services.

Issues to do with housing, education, employment, money, family contact, social support and sexuality also affect dis-

abled young people in different ways.

National guidelines on leaving care, and government plans to change the system do not include young disabled people.

A new partnership project in Bradford will explore young disabled people's experiences of leaving care and help to develop good practice guidelines.

The project involves First Key (the national leaving care advisory service), Bradford Social Services and the Disability Research Unit at the University of Leeds.

This project is funded by a grant from the National Lottery Charities Board.

NEWS! **Government will legislate soon on care leavers**

On 18 November, the **Children (Leaving Care) Bill** was introduced in the House of Lords.

Based on the consultation paper ***Me, Survive Out There?***, the Bill sets out government plans for new arrangements in the leaving care system.

Health Minister, John Hutton, promised that the new Bill would ensure 'a better deal' for care leavers. However, there is no mention of disabled young people and it is unclear how many will benefit.

The focus of the Bill is on 16 and 17 year olds, yet many young disabled people remain in care until they are older.

Young people living in hospitals, voluntary sector homes and boarding schools may be eligible for more support but those using respite care may be left out.

Young Persons Advisers will be an important part of the process but will they have the skills to work with young disabled people?

The Bill is due for a second reading on 7 December and it is important that the needs of disabled care leavers are represented.

*Read more about these issues in **Community Care**, 11-17 November 1999, p. 29*