

"On the road to our future", an Italian survey on leaving care

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"On the road to our future. Alternative care with the eyes of care leaver" is a survey that involved Italian care leaver between 16 and 25 years old. The questionnaire was built on the issues that emerged from focus groups that involved about 100 care leaver who took part in the Care Leavers Network Italia project between September 2016 and February 2017. This investigation is still ongoing, but the main results of the first two phases of the research will be presented here and took place from April to June 2017 and from October to December 2019. 373 questionnaires have been collected and deemed valid for the data analysis. It is not a representative sample of the population, because the participation was voluntary, however, it is a very significant sample that has no precedent in Italy. The main implication for social service practice concerns the testing of a participatory methodology for research and evaluation of services, including quantitative ones, in the field of child protection. The research shows that for 94 % of respondents the alternative care was an opportunity for change and according to 85 % it was a lifeline that made it possible to find people with whom build important bonds. However, 78% had a really difficult experience and 9% felt it was a negative experience overall, or one in which they felt badly treated (16%). Half of respondents (48 %) declares that they did not participate, or they did not know if they participated in the creation of the personalized educational project and for 53 % of respondents the alternative care did not help to improve relationships with the biological family. The results of this survey permit to understand the social profile, the child protection paths, the experiences and life expectancies of these subjects, providing operators with useful indications for the implementation of policies for them.