



PURE INSIGHT
connecting care leavers



Pure Insight

Evaluation Summary



May 2021
Dr. Claire Baker



Summary

Introducing Pure Insight

- Pure Insight is a charity based in North West England working with care leavers.
- It came about in response to continuing evidence of poor outcomes for many young people leaving care and the variability of service provision to support them.
- The central aim of Pure Insight is to meet the needs care leavers identify in their life and support young people to thrive.
- Core services it delivers include: mentoring, psychological well-being workers, support to care experienced parents and peer group and participation activities.

About the review: what we did

- Pure Insight commissioned Dr. Claire Baker to conduct an evaluation of its work. The evaluation took place between late November 2020 and March 2021.
- The main aim of the review was to explore people's views and experiences of working with Pure Insight. Those taking part were asked about their involvement, what works well, the challenges, impact and their ideas for the future.

The evaluation focused on two specific questions:

- 1 What do different people (care leavers, volunteers, local authority representatives and staff) think about the work of Pure Insight?
- 2 Does Pure Insight make things better for care leavers?

- A total of 26 interviews were conducted. The primary data collection was supplemented by a review of background information provided by Pure Insight staff. The review focused on Pure Insight activity over the last 2 years from April 2019 to March 2021 (including 1 year of delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic).
- This summary provides an overview of Pure Insight and the main findings from the evaluation (a full report is also available).

Findings: experiences and impact of Pure Insight

How people describe and understand the work of Pure Insight

People taking part in the discussions were asked how they would 'describe Pure Insight to someone who has not heard of it'. In their descriptions people emphasised a range of things:

- Firstly, lots of people emphasised the core elements of the organisation; that it was a charity, working with care leavers and local authorities and was based in the community.
- Pure Insight was described as working alongside the local authority to bridge gaps in support and offer additional support that was different to children's social care.
- Descriptions also highlighted that leaving care was a difficult time and that young people didn't always have the support or people they needed.
- One of the main things respondents stressed was that Pure Insight was there for any care leaver who needed support; they didn't have to meet eligibility criteria.
- The type of support available wasn't prescriptive but was dependent on each individual young person and what they said they needed help with. It delivered both practical and emotional support.
- Central to the provision of support were the relationships created. Many respondents talked about how Pure Insight focusses on lifelong connections and was not a one-off or short-term service.

What is Pure Insight trying to achieve?

- Improving the quality of care leavers' lives, on their terms, was described as the overarching aim of Pure Insight.
- Four interconnected aims were also identified: (1) ensuring care leavers have authentic and consistent relationships, (2) creating a sense of community, (3) ensuring care leavers have the support they identify they need and, (4) empowering young people to take control of their life.
- Interviewees were from different local authority areas, involved in different types of Pure Insight services and occupied different roles, yet they gave a remarkably cohesive narrative about the work of Pure Insight and what the organisation is trying to achieve.

Different types of Pure Insight activities

Mentoring: Key findings

- The mentoring service is premised on the belief that care leavers can benefit from a sustained one-to-one relationship with a volunteer who is neither family nor a professional worker.
- Over the last two years, the work of Pure Insight has resulted in: 144 mentors being approved and trained; 257 young people supported by a mentoring co-ordinator and 124 mentoring relationships matched and progressing. Twenty-two mentoring relationships experienced unplanned endings and so far 34 mentoring relationships have progressed past two years.
- Evidence suggests that Pure Insight has well-developed systems in place to deliver this service. Mentor selection, training, matching and support were all highly regarded. These were facilitated to a high standard by a staff team who demonstrated expertise, experience and warmth. The programme was perceived to prepare both volunteers and young people very well for the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring: Key findings (continued)

- Of central importance to Pure Insight's mentoring model, was the role of the mentoring co-ordinator. They provide support to both mentees and mentors. The structure provides flexibility for care leavers to 'stabilise' prior to matching with a mentor.
- Mentoring was described as offering care leavers a different kind of relationship. Care leavers valued this additional support; it provided practical help and advice, and emotional support.
- Many volunteers stated that their experiences echoed what had been emphasised in their training, namely that they needed to take things slowly and be guided by the young person's own pace.
- The evaluation found that mentors and mentees felt well supported by Pure Insight.
- Pure Insight was viewed as approachable, professional, experienced and effective and provided a mentoring service that those interviewed had confidence in. Things that helped the Pure Insight mentoring approach to work well were related to (1) the 'essence of mentoring'; the fact that mentors can offer one-to-one support, consistency and time. It provides care leavers with someone just for them; to talk to and help them pursue their goals. Trust and shared experiences underpinned successful relationships. The creation of this relationship was helped by the fact that: the mentor is a volunteer, not paid, wants to help and is separate to social care. It is something the young person chooses.
- Other factors that enabled the Pure Insight mentoring model to succeed were related to (2) specific elements of the Pure Insight model including (but not restricted to): rigorous recruitment of volunteers; good quality training; time taken to get to know everyone to aid matching; mentoring co-ordinator availability and specialist knowledge; being clear about length of commitment and strengths-based approach (such as not knowing young people's background).
- Not many challenges were cited in relation to mentoring; the main one related to mentors managing their own personal expectations of the pace of 'progress'.

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I think by the nature that Pure Insight can offer one to one detailed and specific assistance, it's not possible for a local authority to do that, it's not got the resources to give one person all that time, so that's a massive benefit that Pure Insight can offer. (volunteer)

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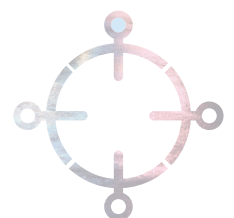
“

Me and my mentee are so close now but [young person] admitted at first she was hesitant. At first I'd check in and not push it and she liked that. (volunteer)

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Psychological Well-being service: key findings

- The psychological well-being service comprises of psychological well-being workers and fast-track trauma counselling. The work was seen as much needed. It helped to address the big gap in support available to support care leavers with their mental health needs.
- Over the last two years 166 young people worked with a Pure Insight psychological well-being worker and 116 young people worked with the fast-track trauma counselling service (Beacon counselling).
- Pure Insight offered a more 'out-reach' style of working. Care leavers valued this less formal and flexible approach. They could meet workers where they wanted, the service was not time-limited or restricted to certain types of intervention(s). Sessions were guided by the things young people wanted to work on.



- Relationships with workers were described as respectful and staff were pivotal to the success of the service. They were perceived to be: empathetic, non-judgemental, skilled and enthusiastic.
- Just two challenges were mentioned: ensuring there was sufficient capacity to meet demand for the service and occasional difficulty in finding appropriate places to meet.

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Nothing has been offered before, only usual mental health services with 6 month waiting list, but this counselling was great... straight away, no messing around. It was great for me. She is a trauma counsellor, all about things happened in my past – helped educate me why maybe I feel the way I do at the moment, so fact comes out to me, I don't think I'd go on my own. (care leaver)

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“

I'd given up so much hope in getting help, like in trusting anyone, but they've stuck around, there's no time limit, there's no "we've got to be done by this date", it's "we are here for as long as you need us", it's like reassurance. (care leaver)

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Supporting care experienced parents: key findings

- Becoming a parent is life changing and can be hard work. Many care leavers don't have their own family to rely on or offer help at this time. Pure Insight have developed two interconnected ways to offer more intensive support to care experienced parents: (1) parenting angel volunteers and (2) Pure Insight parenting workers.
- Over the last two years Pure Insight parenting worker(s) have supported 52 young people and as part of this, 85 children of care leavers. Ten young people were supported by parenting angels (NB: 36 care experienced parents have mentors)
- These services can offer a lot of practical and emotional support and guidance, in the absence of other help. Part of the offer is designed to be temporary and young people direct what help they want to get out of crisis or for new parents. Some support is long term such as childcare and short breaks for a parent
- Like other parts of the service what worked well was the ethos and approach of staff; they were described as very helpful, caring and unprejudiced.
- The main challenge related to supporting (the small number of) care leavers whose children were in formal safeguarding processes. Pure Insight helped parents during this time. Divergence in opinion (from the view of the local authority) of care leavers' parenting capacity were discussed by a small number of people as challenging on occasions.

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We go to some of statutory [safeguarding] meetings, able to articulate what's going on, share good stuff that is happening... keep an eye on the plan and where professional thinking at. It's about challenge and offering a different perspective. (staff)

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Helped me out massively with baby items, anything that I've needed it's been absolutely amazing, I've ended up with too much, so I've given to others. (care leaver)

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Peer groups and participation activities: key findings

- Pure Insight facilitates a range of opportunities for care leavers to come together in peer groups and take part in different activities, including: (1). Peer group social opportunities (2) virtual groups and contact and (3) the Pure Insight young advisers panel which is part of the governance structure of the organisation
- Over the last two years, 144 young people have taken part and 292 young people are signed up to the Facebook groups.
- Care leavers emphasised that, generally, they really enjoyed taking part in these activities. They were fun, a change from their normal routine and a chance to relax away from home. They provided a chance to meet others and get to know the wider staff and volunteer team at Pure Insight.
- Closed social media groups were popular amongst care leavers. There were different ones to join (cooking, creative ideas, swap page etc). The groups were useful; they provided lots of information, helped prevent boredom, connected people and were an opportunity to support others.
- Respondents agreed that Pure Insight involved care leavers in the design and running of service. This worked well because it was part of the culture of the organisation; there was a clear expectation that this would happen, and mechanisms were in place to support this.
- Two main challenges were cited in relation to delivering peer group and participation activities: (1) difficult group dynamics which led to some young people not wanting to attend, and (2) accessibility, linked to individuals' other commitments (such as work or college).

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Meeting new people made my day cos normally I just sit in my flat on my own thinking 'I hate meeting new people' but it actually helped me build my confidence to meet new people... I got to admit the day was amazing don't think I've had a better day out in my life. (care leaver)

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“

Think it's really good, to have a sense of community and also introduces you to other people in same kind of boat, but also other people who work for Pure Insight, so able to know everyone, so just feel like one big community, so feels like quite calming for when go on other trips, quite reassuring and makes you look forward to it. (care leaver)

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All of Pure Insight have Facebook pages so makes it a lot easier to message as well, they can see when you are online, and they are online, makes it a lot less formal so makes it more accessible. (care leaver)

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“

Got really good outcomes... been a really good relationship, really good offer for our care leavers. (local authority representative)

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The Building Blocks of Success: what helps Pure Insight to work well?

- In the view of those that took part in the evaluation Pure Insight have got it right in terms of (1) what they offer, (2) how they do this and, (3) who they have as part of the organisation.
- Learning from the evaluation suggests that the ingredients for success relate to:
 - ▶ The configuration of the organisation: the fact it is separate to the local authority, is independent and a charity.
 - ▶ The breadth and range of services offered; each was equally valued for the contribution they made. Responses to young people's needs were not constrained by role or service. Young people genuinely felt Pure Insight could help them in lots of different areas of their lives. The cross-cutting nature of support meant care leavers could easily move between components. It also helped people forge a sense of community.
 - ▶ Cutting across all the service components was a shared value base. At the centre of this was (1) the importance of developing quality relationships including: showing genuine interest, being strengths-based, empathetic and non-judgemental, ensuring consistency and an explicit emphasis on creating lifelong connections. Within the culture of the organisation there was an expectation that (2) 'lived experience' steered the design and running of the service.
 - ▶ Pure Insight worked well because of the practice model. Working in ways that were: unprejudiced, created availability and offered time, led by what young people identified as important, demonstrated flexibility in approach and nurtured partnerships.
 - ▶ It was, people felt, a flexible and responsive organisation. It worked with young people on their terms. There were no eligibility criteria to be met or pre-conceptions about what each individual needed. It adapted provision in response to what care leavers said worked for them.
 - ▶ Partnership working was valued and prioritised: co-location of Pure Insight staff with local authority colleagues, investment in development of relationships with Personal Advisers and partner organisations, attendance at team meetings, explicit recognition of Pure Insight work in local authority strategy documents and regular liaison with senior management.
 - ▶ Ultimately, what was seen as contributing to success, was the people at Pure Insight (staff and volunteers) they were the most important aspect in making the service work so well, their attitudes, knowledge and skills. They showed understanding, empathy and care. Senior leadership was described as impressive and trusted.

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I think the model they have got having mentors and having young people always close to the heart of the organisation is a good one. They look for mentor representatives on the organising committee and have got care leavers on it too and I think that a good central foundation (volunteer)

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“

She's never spoken down to me, never looked at me like I'm anything other than another human being and that's what they're all like, even something which might seem like that, quite small, it's really important. (care leaver)

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- Pure Insight was held in high regard by those who took part in this evaluation; everyone agreed it was an organisation they would recommend to others.
- Most felt Pure Insight offered something different, yet complimentary, to statutory leaving care support. A different type and quality of relationship was described. As described elsewhere, it was less formal, more relational and natural. It offered more time and flexibility. It focused on the support young people wanted, not what services had decided care leavers were entitled to. It was less constrained by rules or age-led cut off points. The premise for the service was different; it was something young people chose, and it was independent. However, for Pure Insight to work well there needed to be close partnership working with the local authority.

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They don't have a set-in stone thing they do before they meet a new person in the care system, it's like we'll meet you and we'll take it from there, no plan before. From my point of view...everything is very specific for each person, they do things different for every person, the things they help me with, is probably very different with someone else who might need more boundaries or don't understand the concept of boundaries... I suppose actually getting to know the people not the numbers on the pages, is what is different. (care leaver)

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“

Just get this whole new life, whole new bond with people, it's a massive group, they building every day, getting new local authorities, getting staff, and getting care leavers involved as staff members... it's amazing, it's hard to explain until you're involved you don't understand how much there is going on, I know about the café, not done that yet and the outdoor [activities] I've done a bit, but can't wait to do more, there's loads. (care leaver)

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What are the challenges and barriers Pure Insight faces?

- The main challenges facing Pure Insight identified through the evaluation discussions, broadly fell into three themes:
- Firstly, there were different practical barriers. Some issues related to the current reach of Pure Insight; making sure all care leavers knew about the service and locating them in areas that everyone could access. Others were linked to making sure the organisation continued to recruit high quality staff and volunteers and secure sufficient funds.
- Secondly, some difficulties in partnership working were identified. There could be challenges when working with different partner organisations that had different cultures and systems. There was a need to strike the right balance in terms of information sharing and demarcation of role and responsibilities. A critical factor to the success of Pure Insight was whether the partner local authority was receptive to the way Pure Insight worked.
- Finally, the wider context in which Pure Insight operated was not easy; care leavers experienced structural and societal barriers related to poverty, poor housing and stigma.

Does Pure Insight make a difference?

Everyone was asked for their views on the impact of Pure Insight's work.

These were examined in relation to 3 main areas: ① impact on individual care leavers taking part, ② impact on volunteers and ③ impact on local authority.

① Pure Insight impact on care leavers

- All those interviewed were able to identify advantages and changes in care leavers' lives which they attributed (at least in part) to working alongside Pure Insight. Whilst the detail of these varied depending upon the individual, there were ten common areas:
 - ▶ improvements in well-being and mental health
 - ▶ shift towards employability and increased engagement in education or work
 - ▶ improved self-confidence and self-efficacy
 - ▶ more stability in housing
 - ▶ expanded number of people in life and reduced isolation
 - ▶ improved life skills, such as ability to manage money
 - ▶ feeling more optimistic about the future
 - ▶ improved confidence in parenting
 - ▶ preventing issues escalating and problems spiralling
 - ▶ impact on whole life, so feel happier.
- Several of those interviewed were keen to acknowledge that Pure Insight helped to kickstart, accelerate and support these changes and improvements in care leavers' lives, but it was young people themselves who were pivotal to making them happen.

② Pure Insight impact on volunteers

- All volunteers identified the impact working with Pure Insight had had on their lives. The main things related to changes in their own attitude or value-base and the benefit they got from feeling they were making a difference. Other things mentioned, by one or two people, were increased knowledge about care leavers, increase in own self-confidence, gaining friendship and positive influence on career.

③ Pure Insight impact on local authority

- Interviewees shared their views on the impact Pure Insight brought to local authority support services for care leavers. The discussions centred on five main areas. Pure Insight added value by: (1) providing extra services and resources to the ones commissioned, (2) sharing skills and expertise with local authority colleagues, (3) enhanced support delivered 'out of hours' and more frequently which gave reassurance to local authorities, (4) money and time were saved (linked to positive outcomes for care leavers) and (5) care leavers who the local authority did not work with could receive support.

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Having Pure Insight allowed me to have structure back in my life, helped me to meet new people, come out of my shell, speak to people and build relationships with others, best thing could have asked for. (care leaver)

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“

They, I don't know how to explain it, they make you feel like you're somebody and not just some care leaver person. (care leaver)

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Pure Insight in a time of Covid

- Many appreciated the efforts from Pure Insight to continue to deliver support and to increase and adapt the services offered during the Covid-19 restrictions.

Looking to the future

- Views were sought on 'the future vision' for Pure Insight; how would people like to see the organisation develop in the coming years? The main areas discussed were: (1) sustainability (ensuring Pure Insight continued to secure sufficient funds to deliver quality services) and (2) consider expansion of services offered in areas already worked in and into new areas. Though many urged, this should not dilute the quality of the work already offered.
- Other future vision ideas for Pure Insight included:
 - Work to establish Pure Insight as a centre for excellence in supporting care leavers and share experience and expertise with other organisations.
 - Work to raise awareness of Pure Insight services amongst the public – some wanted Pure Insight to be a charity name that everyone knew about.

Concluding thoughts

- The evaluation tells the story of an organisation about which care leavers, volunteers, staff and external stakeholders were enthusiastic and supportive. It provides evidence of a well-managed and motivated service. All of the core components were highly praised. Services were valued for helping young people with practical and emotional issues. A strength of Pure Insight's service was its focus upon the needs of young person and flexibility in meeting these needs.
- The importance of authentic and consistent relationships permeated the evaluation findings; they were very important to young people's quality of life and well-being. Supportive and caring relationships with Pure Insight helped care leavers in many ways.
- Leaving care remains a challenging time, young people are coping with the transition to adulthood, often without consistent support from their families. Pure Insight offers young people enhanced support which makes a difference to their lives. The challenge facing Pure Insight going forward appears to be: how can they share the success of their practice and increase the reach of their services, so more care leavers benefit from their successful model whilst maintaining the high quality of their offer?

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Think it makes me feel hopeful – there's someone there I can talk to; someone to support me but also hopeful for other care leavers as well...that there is Pure Insight there for them if they need it. (care leaver)

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“

Very, very, very, very good to try to keep you engaged...They won't give up even if it takes them months, they are relentless. They try their best to do whatever, go the extra mile all the time, they are relentless, don't pressure you, remind you that it's there if you need it, waiting till you are ready. (care leaver)

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“

If I didn't have Pure Insight, I've no idea which way my life would have gone, I don't think it would have gone well. They've motivated me to see that there is a life there for me. (care leaver)

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“

There's been countless times when I've sworn, shouted, done everything and they've not thrown me away. (care leaver)

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About Pure Insight

Who?

Pure Insight is a charity founded in 2013. It focuses its work on supporting care leavers¹. The service works with young people from age 16 up to around 28. At the time of this evaluation, it operated across 4 local authority areas in the North West of England. There were around 20 staff and 250 volunteers (as of March 2021). Many staff, members of the leadership team and board have lived experience of growing up in care or overcoming other challenges in life (such as homelessness or mental health problems).

The central aim of the work is to:

Provide opportunities for care leavers to stabilise, prevent crisis and progress to a life that isn't just about surviving. In short, Pure Insight wants to enable care leavers to flourish.

Why?

Pure Insight came about in response to continuing evidence of poor outcomes for many young people leaving care and the variability of service provision to support them. Care leavers are expected to make the transition to independence at a young age. Many do not feel ready or prepared for this. The quality of the planning and preparation they receive can be inadequate.

After care life is often challenging. Care leavers say it is a time marked by financial and housing worries, anxiety about the future and loneliness. Some care leavers experience a rise in mental health problems. But evidence suggests support with these issues is not always readily available and does not meet the specific needs of individual care leavers.

Many care leavers report a gap between the reality of their life and their hopes and plans. Young people say that coping with transition to adulthood is easier when they have people to rely on and go to for help and emotional support. In reality, care leavers experience diminishing or lost support networks upon leaving care. Care leavers want people in their lives who 'have their back', are available, show genuine concern and support, given in a way that is not perceived as contractual. (Atkinson and Hyde², 2019; Baker, 2017³).

What?

Pure Insight offers a range of core services including, but not restricted to:

- Mentoring service
- Psychological well-being service
- Support to care experienced parents
- Peer groups and participation activities.

These activities are the focus for this review. Pure Insight is funded through a mix of voluntary grants (e.g. National Lottery) and commissioned work, primarily from children's social care in local authorities.

Over the last two years (April 2019 to March 2021) Pure Insight have worked with:

458

individual care leavers
(and 81 of their children)

How?

Pure Insight services are designed to provide "a mixture of genuine love and care, in addition to practical help and support" to meet the gaps highlighted by young people in their lives. The organisation works in partnership with statutory leaving care services.

Pure Insight's work is underpinned by a set of values:

- **Belonging** – places to belong and people to belong to
- **Courage** – telling the story of who we are, our way
- **Integrity** – choosing courage over comfort, choosing what's right and practising our values.

¹ Care leavers are young adults who have spent some of their childhood in the care of a local authority, for example, in foster care or a children's home. Some care leavers are entitled to support from the local authority that looked after them, and that support can continue until they are 25 years old.

² https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/85570984/Hyde_and_Atkinson_2019.pdf

³ <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Care-Leaver-Rapid-Review-24.10.17-final-proof-2.pdf>

Acknowledgements

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The full evaluation is available from the Pure Insight website.

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