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Using philosophical inquiry to support vulnerable young people's identities and transitions

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This paper shares initial findings from a Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) project offered to young people within a secure residential setting in order that they might develop the confidence and skills that will be useful to their lives and that will be transferable to the wider community on leaving the Centre. Secure residential settings such as the Centre where the study takes place are reserved for young people who have committed serious crimes. The outcomes for individuals leaving secure care are extremely poor. Addressing such difficulties whilst in secure care is complex and requires a range of interventions.

In this project, CoPI is used as a unique approach to augment other strategies used in the Centre in helping to address complex needs such as emotional and physical neglect and/or abuse, trauma, and personal behaviour that have placed the young people and others at considerable risk. Evidence will demonstrate whether participation supports them to communicate more effectively and build better relationships with others. These aspects are often acutely limited for young people who have been placed in secure accommodation and CoPI offers them opportunities to think about their own wellbeing, including issues of safety and risk. Given the vulnerability of the young people, there is increasing pressure on staff in such settings to operate from evidence-based practice and it is hoped that this project supports their work.