

# (Re)Connecting Youth

*Exchanging Global Lessons*

## FOSTER FOCUS

*York, United Kingdom*

### THE CHALLENGE

In the United States, 26,000 youth age out of foster care annually. More than a third never completed high school, with most ill-prepared for the job market. As a result, many wind up on the streets or in jail. A similar scenario prevails in the United Kingdom where **over 40 percent of former foster youth are not in education, training, or employment**. While a range of support services exist for foster youth, they often fail to consult with and incorporate the voices of those they serve—a key step to improving outcomes.

### THE INITIATIVE

Recognizing that youth with experience in the foster care system are uniquely equipped to inform efforts to address their needs, Luke Rodgers founded Foster Focus in 2014. A former foster youth himself, Luke believes amplifying youth voices is critical to transforming a system that he sees as largely deficit based and focused on young people as problems.

A social enterprise, Foster Focus operates as a youth-led consulting firm. Former foster youth receive training in public speaking, facilitation, and communication skills, and in turn, market their services as consultants and advisors to organizations engaged in the foster care system.

Since 2015, the organization has applied its consulting model to influence key stages of the foster care system—from improving how prospective foster parents are recruited to ensuring they have adequate support, from shifting how social workers assess youth in foster care to taking steps to ensure a smoother transition for young people aging out of the system.

At the heart of its mission, Foster Focus seeks to reframe the personal narratives that youth who have experienced foster care hold about themselves. At the same time, it works to dispel negative stereotypes perpetuated by society that such youth can't fit in.

### IMPACT

In 2016, Foster Focus-trained youth delivered over 120 speeches at conferences, seminars, and classes, reaching over 100,000 teachers, students, social workers, funders, and government officials.

To learn more, visit: [iyfreconnectingyouth.org](http://iyfreconnectingyouth.org)

“A lot of times, youth aren't consulted because people don't know how to engage them. We've developed a framework for involving young people in service delivery that's proving youth participation works.”

—**Luke Rodgers**

*Founder*

Foster Focus



Support  
provided by

Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation

