

# ENABLING CARE LEAVERS TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL IN FURTHER EDUCATION

**PRIORITIES FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND  
RESEARCH**

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## PRIORITIES IN POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Evidence shows that young people who have been in local authority care achieve disproportionately poor outcomes at school, and in further and higher education, compared to their peers. This in turn has negative consequences which can affect care leavers' opportunities and experiences throughout their lives. However, NIACE's research and the experience of the Buttle UK Quality Mark demonstrates that with effective targeted support and encouragement, care leavers do succeed in further education and progress to higher education with similar success.

This short paper was developed from NIACE's work with Buttle UK, to disseminate good practice emerging from the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in the UK. NIACE is working to ensure that the learning and skills system and the wider support infrastructure enables young people who have been in local authority care to aim high, fulfil their potential and lead full and active adult lives. This paper presents a series of priorities for future action and work, which NIACE believes will make a difference in enabling all care leavers to achieve the outcomes they deserve.

## POLICY

### A. NATIONAL INQUIRY

Government should support and launch a national inquiry into post-16 learning transitions for care leavers. The inquiry should link closely with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children. The inquiry should collect and review a range of evidence and submissions including current practices, partnerships and collaboration; impact of effective practice on care leavers and other stakeholders; what works; and key challenges. The output of the inquiry should include a series of recommendations and actions to improve care leavers' transitions in post-16 learning.

### B. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICY FORUM FOR CARE LEAVERS' ACCESS TO LEARNING AND WORK

A cross-government and stakeholder forum should be established to consider ways in which national policy could be more effective in supporting care leavers to engage in learning and work and to drive forward policy change.

## PRACTICE

### C. DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING GOOD PRACTICE

All further education colleges should have access to targeted training and CPD opportunities to improve the support they offer to care leavers. This should be both in-house and external. It should involve networking with other providers and support agencies to build on and learn from existing good practice that has been

developed within the sector. We recommend that agencies such as the Education and Training Foundation include support for care leavers as part of their staff development strategies, and that other sector bodies, such as the Association of Colleges, take an active role in supporting colleges to learn from existing good practice and develop their own processes and policies in relation to care leavers.

#### **D. REGIONAL NETWORKS**

Government should support the establishment of networks to enable effective sharing of good practice and joined up work at regional level by a range of stakeholders, including FE colleges, local authorities, third sector agencies and other support services.

#### **E. TRANSITION PLANNING**

College staff and local authority personal advisers should meet with individual care leavers, on a regular basis, to ensure a smooth transition between a young person's Personal Education Plan and the formation of the Pathway Plan at 16, in terms of understanding options and planning for further education.

### **RESEARCH**

#### **F. VOCATIONAL LEARNING**

Research should be undertaken to understand care leavers' experiences of vocational learning options, such as apprenticeships and traineeships and to identify how this group can be effectively supported to follow successful vocational pathways.

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