

SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE IN COLLEGES
ACHIEVING THE BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Conclusion

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SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION: A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE IN COLLEGES ACHIEVING THE BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

CONCLUSION

'My message to learning providers is that they should always listen to the young person to hear their story.'

Designated member of staff

Colleges are complex and varied organisations. Some are large multi-faceted businesses; some are small and single focused; some are rural covering very large areas of the country. So support for care leavers and looked after young people, needs to be placed in context – they may be a small part of any student cohort. We need to recognise that, while all colleges, and staff within colleges, are motivated by wanting the best for all their students, there are other motivators that influence their provision and priorities, including inspection and income targets attached to successfully retaining and progressing as many learners as possible.

We have drawn out of our work, our conversations with staff and care leaver learners a number of conclusions. We hope these conclusions will enable staff to develop, improve or implement processes to ensure those who are, or have been looked after, can access college provision, stay in learning and progress. The best practice shows all or most of the following features:

1. Within policies and strategies, looked after young people/care leavers (LAYP/CL) are recognized as a distinct cohort with often unique and individual support needs within the wider vulnerable students group. This should be supported by regular reporting and review of policies and strategy, with input from students.
2. All staff within a college need some awareness of what a looked after young person/care leaver is, the typical issues they may be facing and the support they need. Good CPD includes the development of networks and access to national training opportunities.
3. Regional and national structures offer an effective way of networking, of bringing together different relevant agencies and stakeholders, and represent a proactive method of sharing good practice and developing relationships across many agencies and geographical areas.
4. A named and accessible member of staff is responsible for supporting care leavers. This individual typically has the explicit backing from the Principal and senior management team (SMT). The named member of staff may be from the teaching staff, a pastoral worker or a member of the support team.
5. Clear processes and procedures for engaging and supporting care leavers, which are understood by all staff. Such processes and procedures are typically

reinforced by clear marketing activities, publicity, use of social media and of printed matter, which are not only part of the initial recruitment procedure but accessible throughout the year.

6. Access to immediate support – whenever and however the care leaver needs it, and around any issues or difficulties that arise, such as financial, academic, connected to home life or to do with health issues. Individual staff members are unlikely to be able to directly offer the full range of support that may be required – but they must know where to go and how to get information quickly.
7. Colleges need to work in collaboration with local authorities/Health and Social Care Trusts, schools, and other organisations in order to identify, track and monitor care leavers. This should go hand in hand with efficient methods of data collection internally and externally to feed into reporting processes.

Support for care leavers and looked after young people to access learning, have a positive experience and achieve their potential in colleges is driven from Principal level downwards and involves all staff members working together across departments and responsibilities.