

SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

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

Introduction

August 2015



Ariennir yn Rhannol gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Part Funded by
Welsh Government



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Published by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street

Leicester LE1 7GE

Company registration no. 2603322

Charity registration no. 1002775

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

1. INTRODUCTION

[NIACE](#), the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has worked with Buttle UK to produce this good practice guide. The guide highlights the effective practice developed by colleges that achieved the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in the UK. The Quality Mark was originally established in Higher Education Institutions, following its launch in 2006. In recent years the Quality Mark has been developed and expanded into Further Education Colleges. Throughout the duration of the Quality Mark project, from 2006 -2015, [112 Higher Education](#) and [81 Further Education institutions](#) achieved the Quality Mark.

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NIACE's strategic objectives focus upon supporting and enabling young people and adults who have had the least chances in life to participate in and benefit from learning. We have developed a programme of work focused on young people who are looked after or who have left care. This includes [research into the Pathway Planning process](#), the development and dissemination of a care leavers' [voices](#) publication and the development of an app '[Inspire Me](#)' to help care leavers learn from their peers' experiences of leaving care.

[Buttle UK](#) is a grant-giving organisation which gives direct, practical help to children, young people and families living in poverty in the UK by providing a lifeline when they have nowhere else to turn. It was through this activity that the needs of care experienced young people accessing further and higher education came to their attention and the need for a Quality Mark was identified.

A [definition](#) of Looked after Young People and Care leavers (LAYP/CL) can be found here alongside a summary of relevant [policy](#) in each of the four UK nations.

[Statistics](#) highlight 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. However, NIACE's research and the experience of the Buttle UK Quality Mark demonstrates that with effective targeted support and encouragement, many care leavers do succeed in further education and progress to higher education with similar success. NIACE is working to ensure that all further education colleges develop and implement a comprehensive framework of support which will enable more care leavers to experience this kind of success and fulfil their potential.

There are [216 general FE colleges in England, 26 in Scotland, 16 in Wales and 6 in Northern Ireland](#), all of which will have young people looked after/leaving care amongst their students and potential students. There are approximately 10,000 young people leaving care at the age of 16-18 each year in England, 1,000 in Scotland, 500 in Wales and 270 in Northern Ireland. This represents a significant number of young people who, with the right support, will access post-16 learning, stay in learning and progress to employment, HE or apprenticeships.

The FE college principals and other staff who contributed to this guide were clear that supporting care leavers within their institutions is fundamentally a moral duty. It is integral to their equality and diversity policies and practice, their commitment to supporting 'vulnerable groups' and creating an inclusive learning environment which is accessible to all.

2. THE BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK FRAMEWORK WITH ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

2.1 The purpose of the guide

The Buttle UK Quality Mark project ended in July 2015. This guide has been written to provide examples of good practice to help further education colleges effectively meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers. In-depth interviews with staff from colleges that achieved the Buttle UK Quality Mark in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were undertaken and a small number of case study visits were carried out. Interviews were held with members of college leadership teams, teaching and pastoral staff, and care leaver students themselves.

The examples of good practice included in this guide are all drawn from colleges which participated in this research. This is not an exhaustive list – it is a selection of good practice examples developed to encourage and enable further education colleges to reflect on and enhance their practice. It is hoped the examples will spark creative thinking for 'doing things differently' or adding to what is already a good support structure. The support that care leavers and looked after young people require should be continually reviewed and progressed in order to meet the changing needs of individual care leavers and changes to the education system.

2.2 Format

The format of this guide mirrors the [Buttle UK Quality Mark Framework](#), it includes examples, quotes and reflections from practitioners to enable colleges to take forward the good practice learned through the successful implementation of the Quality Mark.

This guide is accompanied by appendices. These are:

- [Four exemplary case studies](#): An in-depth analysis of how colleges in each of the four nations, that achieved exemplary status through the Buttle UK Quality Mark, work to engage and support care leavers in learning.

- A collection of useful resources used by Buttle UK to help colleges follow the process of working towards a standard of provision that was required to gain the Quality Mark. These include:
 - [The Quality Mark Framework for FE](#)
 - [Questions asked as prompts by the Quality Mark Assessors for each element of the framework](#)
 - [Requirements for exemplary level practice by Quality Mark institutions](#)
 - [Project Plan Template](#)
 - [Statistical return for tracking and monitoring](#)

2.3 How to use this guide

Colleges are encouraged to use the illustrative examples within this guide to develop their own good practice and to share this practice with other education and training providers and partners with whom they work. The examples can form the basis of ongoing Continuing Professional Development for practitioners across the institutions, and colleges may wish to add to them with new examples of their own. They can also be used locally or regionally to support networks developing good practice for students leaving care or looked after young people. The criteria and associated good practice can also be used to support the development of relationships with local authorities/Health and Social Care Trusts and other key stakeholders who share an interest in helping to achieve positive outcomes for looked after young people.

2.4 Acknowledgements

NIACE and Buttle UK would like to thank all the colleges and local authorities who have contributed to this resource. In particular:

- Neath Port Talbot Group, Wales
- Hugh Baird College, Merseyside, England
- Glasgow Kelvin College, Scotland
- Dumfries and Galloway College, Scotland
- Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Ireland
- Tony Clifford, Headteacher Virtual School Children in Care, Children and Young People's Services, City of Stoke on Trent