

SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

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

Section 4: Monitoring outcomes and
impact

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SECTION 4: MONITORING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

4.1. 'The college Principal endorses a college-wide strategy to support students from care and the development of the college's provision for this cohort. Looked after young people/care leaver (LAYP/CL) policy, retention strategy, awareness and culture of whole college, high expectation of students'

'The college recognises that it has a key social responsibility to support care experienced learners in order to work with them to achieve their aspirations and goals. At Glasgow Kelvin College this involves effective partnership working to provide learners with the opportunity to gain the skills which are required for employment and further learning while developing the self-confidence needed to engage meaningfully within their community.'

Alan Sherry, Principal, Glasgow Kelvin College

▪ **A whole institution strategy, robust structures for monitoring and evaluation**

As well as endorsement by the Principal for a college-wide strategy, it is important that all staff within a college are aware of the challenges faced by young people in care/care leavers and what kind of support will help, from the Principal, to managers, teachers, support staff and staff responsible for buildings and premises. This can be promoted by strategies and policies, such as Widening Participation Strategies, but also strategies that have care-experience as the main focus. Robust methods of monitoring and evaluating the impact of those strategies and the interventions put in place are crucial in terms of reviewing success and identifying impact on learner retention and achievement.

▪ **A passion at senior level about meeting care leavers' needs is a key driver**

At East Kent College a key driver is the Principal who is passionate about supporting and meeting the needs of this group of students, as well as other vulnerable groups. He chairs a steering group in the county called the Care Leavers Progression Partnership (CLPP). This group also has links to the other Kent colleges and universities, virtual schools heads across Kent and Medway, third sector organisations such as Catch-22, Jobcentre Plus and a range of other stakeholders.

4.2. 'A senior member of staff oversees the implementation and monitoring of the commitment across the institution'

Staff at all levels within a college require active support from senior management. It is important for key messages and guidance about inclusion and diversity to be

clearly communicated to all staff, from the very top of the organisation. Active support from senior management - frequently at assistant principal or assistant director level - can add considerable weight to an initiative to support care leavers.

4.3. 'Collect data for this specific cohort on application, on enrolment and on course and establish processes to measure retention and success of students from care and review regularly'

- **The type of data to collect**

As part of the Buttle UK Quality Mark process, data was collected via an [annual statistical return](#) submitted by award-holding HE and FE institutions. This gives a clear indication of the types of data that are useful to collect and illustrates the characteristics of the young people being supported and what support is being provided.

- **Processes for measuring retention and success**

Colleges which have flagged students with care experience within their mainstream data rely on this for measuring retention and success, but the frequency of monitoring of individual young people is usually increased. This monitoring is either fed back at regular meetings with the learner, or, if anything unusual arises (a sudden drop of grades for example) this would trigger a meeting with support staff. Otherwise colleges rely on good relationships between key support staff and young people.

- **Collect data on enrolment**

At [Belfast Metropolitan College](#) staff are constantly striving to improve methods for capturing data to ensure that there is an accurate picture of the students and their requirements. This means that there is support to positively encourage students to 'tick the box' on the application and enrolment forms and to request help. By ticking the box the student is flagged to the Learning Support Officer assigned to care leavers for additional guidance and support provision. 'If we don't know you are there, we cannot help you' is part of the outreach and workshop campaign.

Similarly, at Hugh Baird College care experienced learners are encouraged to declare this at enrolment resulting in continued support:

'The college enrolment form has been amended in order that Looked After Children or Care Leavers tick a box to declare their status, and sign to consent to the information being shared with relevant key team members. This is then communicated to the Retention and Progression Co-ordinators, and the contact is then established with the student, who will be monitored and supported for the duration of their course.'

- **Tracking and setting targets improves outcomes**

Uxbridge College has improved its data collection processes and can therefore report more effectively on progression data at the end of every year; a report is made to the governors' meetings. The college would like to see more young people

from a care background progressing to university, but at the moment this cohort is not achieving outcomes comparable with other students. There is a recognition that achievement of higher levels of learning may take longer, as a result of care leavers' disrupted experiences of schooling. What the College perceives to be important though, is that they are now able to track and set targets. This is vital in improving outcomes for care leavers.

The [Virtual School in Stoke-on-Trent](#) has developed a 16-19 Young People in Care and Care Leaver Learner Support Agreement. The Virtual School in Stoke recognised the need to develop a more formal agreement between providers - FE and training providers - social care, careers and the Virtual School itself, in order to ensure joined up support for young people in care as they moved to Post 16.

The Stoke Learner Support Agreement has been developed with Stoke's Virtual School partners since 2012 and all their providers in Stoke (FE, VI Form and training providers) have signed up to it. It has been so successful that it is now being developed as a West Midlands document by 5 local authorities. This approach has improved education, training and employment outcomes in Stoke by 15% and it has prevented any young person being universally removed from provision for over three years now.

4.4. 'Measure outcomes of improved support within the college and the impact on student success and have in place reporting procedures to their senior team as part of the college's regular reporting cycle, as well as Governors or Board meetings. The outcomes are also included in reports to external inspectorates, such as Ofsted'

Following the collection of data on numbers enrolling and achievements for care leavers, Ofsted were able to identify good outcomes specifically for care leavers at East Kent College:

'A large number of young people either in the care of or having left the care of local authorities attend the college. They achieve qualification successes above the national average for young people in care.'

April 2013

Similarly, outcomes for care leavers were acknowledged at Northbrook College's inspection in 2013:

'The college has outstanding provision for groups of students often marginalised or vulnerable within the community. The inclusive nature of the college's enrolment policy ensures that, for example, unemployed adults gain access to relevant employability training and that young people in the care of the local authority gain valuable experience of independent living such as travelling to and from the college on their own.'

[Dumfries and Galloway College](#) was able to secure funding to enable tracking and monitoring of care leavers' pathways:

'The collaboration of social services and the college secured a bid from the Funding Council for 2 years resulting in the Go Further Project which aimed to improve the participation, retention, achievement and attainment of looked after young people and care leavers. The project also aimed to formalise the partnership arrangements for referral identification, tracking, monitoring and supporting looked after young people'.

At Hugh Baird College, all staff are committed to supporting care leavers, including Governors:

'The Quality Mark has enabled staff to understand that everyone has a duty of care towards Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and illustrates the college's commitment from the Governors through to front-line delivery'.

4.5. 'Collect feedback from care-experienced students and work with the Student Union / Student Association to evaluate the quality of student experience and the impact of college procedures'

It is important that colleges develop good relationships with the Student Union/Student Association as this is an ideal way of collecting feedback on the learner experience and of finding ways of supporting students from care backgrounds. Student Unions can offer effective formal, informal and peer-focussed support to learners, which is often effective in breaking down barriers and enabling care leavers to feel as though their voices are heard and their views matter.

- **Appoint care leaver champions and develop activities to collect feedback**

From taster days onwards NPTC Group includes care leavers as champions and ambassadors for other care leavers, as sounding boards and in ensuring that they get support. Learner voice is valued highly and young people with a care experience tend to stay in touch.

Amongst many others, Forth Valley College runs focus groups for eliciting feedback. Other colleges, especially smaller ones, collect feedback from learners on an almost daily basis. This enables them to constantly review the impact of the support offered to care leavers.

- **Participation in College Council**

One college reported that care leavers are involved in the College Council - they were not elected as a 'care leaver' but as a student representative and in that role they can bring their experience of care.

4.6. 'Offer mandatory wider staff training across the institution and ensure all relevant staff across the institution are aware of issues relating to the needs of students with a care background'

- **Examples of CPD available**

At the time of writing, there are certified courses available as well as those offering a qualification to raise awareness about the experiences of care leavers and improve practice.

Profile Development and Training in Kent offer a two-hour certified [online course](#) to support educational and social care practitioners to improve the outcomes for young people who are looked after or leaving care and a LASER '[Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Post-16 Education \(QCF\)](#)' Level 3 qualification to enhance and recognise the skills and knowledge of the 'Designated member of staff' in FE and HE institutions responsible for care leavers.

In Scotland, the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland ([CELCIS](#)) offer a [Caring for Vulnerable Children](#) online training course.

- **Catch-all awareness raising activities for staff**

Staff roadshows, breakfasts or inset days characterise the approaches taken to ensuring that all college staff are involved. This approach includes all staff and governors at some level, including non-academic staff, catering managers and estates staff. Similar examples are provided by West Highland College, which is a small college spread across 10 rural sites, but where nevertheless all are known to each other and information is shared readily, to large urban colleges also with multiple sites where people do not necessarily meet each other frequently, such as Hugh Baird College.

- **Innovative approaches**

Dumfries and Galloway College had particular success with 'roving breakfasts' where the staff with responsibility for care leavers went to each department with breakfast rolls and coffee at the start of the day to ensure that all staff were briefed with a good understanding of the needs of students with care experience.

College mergers offer additional opportunities for staff training as all the sets of staff are often brought together during the merger, to be introduced to new ways of working and to adopt a joint approach to a range of issues, including working with looked after young people.

- **Care leavers as a regular agenda item at vulnerable group meetings**

Derby College uses its intranet to promote information internally to staff. This also includes an 'enrichment calendar' of staff training and care leaving issues were included in a recent workshop. The front line intervention team has monthly meetings which include a standard agenda item around vulnerable groups. Staff

have a responsibility to read the updates and look at the moodle and the intranet and to read reminders on emails.

- **Reciprocal Training provided by social care and college staff**

Belfast Metropolitan College has developed a proactive working relationship with the [Belfast Trust](#) (Health and Social Care Trust) in support of students from a care background. The Trust has regular meetings with the college to consider the educational pathways of young people from a care background. They regularly request information on how individual students are progressing. They have also provided training to college staff on meeting the support needs of young people in care and the college has provided their staff with workshops on helping the young people they are working with to look again at education as an option open to them.

4.7. 'Share best practice with colleagues for example through local and regional networks, national organisations, etc'

- **Existing networks**

In England the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers ([NNECL](#)) was established in June 2013 by higher education institutions and national organisations committed to the progression and support of care leavers in higher education. Working together, the network aims to transform the progression of young people in or leaving care into and through further and higher education, by championing the continuous improvement of local practice, multi-agency partnerships and national collaboration.

In Scotland, [CDN](#) run a college network and in Wales there is a college/university network called CLASS CYMRU (Care Leavers Activities and Student Support Cymru) – further information about this network can be requested from Einir Evans – EvansE23@cardiff.ac.uk. The network meets regularly to develop collaborative approaches to address the needs of looked after children and care leavers entering further and higher education, identifying potential barriers facing these students, and sharing good practice. Also in Northern Ireland there is a FE/HE group which consists of representatives from all FE and HE institutions and the Health and Social Care Board.

- **Active participation in local/regional networks**

Many colleges play an active role in networks; for example Wakefield College reported positively about the network HEART (Higher Education Access Rewarding Transforming) they are involved in, which works across West Yorkshire. This network includes specific work to support care leavers and foster carers and includes HEs and FE colleges along with local authorities and other stakeholders. This kind of forum represents an excellent method of sharing good practice and developing better relationships across the many agencies whose work needs to be coherent and where possible jointly co-ordinated.

- **Raising awareness for policy makers, researchers and practitioners through free or low cost conferences**

All colleges highlighted the importance of affordable national conferences, such as those organised by [The Care Leavers Foundation](#) and [NIACE](#). The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers ([NNECL](#)) runs a free annual event for practitioners in England. In Scotland, there is an [annual conference](#) supported by the Scottish Funding Council and organised by the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland ([CELCIS](#)). [Action on Access](#) also runs conferences on Widening Participation and Access which include care leavers as a learner cohort.