

Care Experienced Consultation

“Educating children in care about the prospects of going to university is a great thing, we are as capable as any other child and I think that message needs to be promoted more”.

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Greater Manchester Higher
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Executive summary

This consultation reviewed the pre-entry support and aspirations interventions care experienced students receive to determine what work still needs to be done to improve their progression experiences. The key outcomes from the report were sourced from surveying 20 care leaver students studying at various universities in Greater Manchester. The findings prompted some key recommendations, including the main points for practitioners working with this group to consider. There are several recommendations made in the report, the key ones include:

1. **Provide a more sustained project for Year 12 learners** specifically focused on providing information about higher education, giving them exposure to care leaver ambassadors and understanding their entitlements for support, both financially, pastorally and academically.
2. **Provide more engaging activities and events** such as competitions and quizzes, and more subject specific sessions to help care experienced learners develop a passion for a subject.
3. **Provide more training for foster carers, PA's and designated teachers** on the benefits of higher education, and encouraging learners to fulfil their potential, to tackle any negative perspectives of University that are passed on.
4. **Train practitioners to support learners to build their confidence** and provide authentic praise, introduce reward and recognition to activities.
5. **Create a more comprehensive resource of regional care leaver support** in HE that explicitly covers the offer in detail to send to relevant contacts and used in activity.
6. **Provide a more consistent approach to supporting learners at pre-16, post-16, pre-entry and post-entry**, provide exposure to both outreach staff and support staff in order to give a sense of stability for regional progression.

The recommendations from this report should be considered when developing the approach to support care experienced young people, to ensure interventions are reflective of the student care leaver voice.

Introduction

This consultation was conducted to find out how Greater Manchester Higher can improve their work with care Experienced students. Greater Manchester Higher (GMH) is a Uni Connect partnership who deliver a nationally coordinated approach to working with schools, universities and colleges to help young people access higher education. As a government funded project it is important that GMH has the maximum impact it can have on young people, in particular those from target groups such as care experienced students. We are aware this is a key group with evolving needs when it comes to accessing outreach initiatives and progressing into HE. Changes need to take place for GMH to meet those needs and address gaps in our knowledge. This consultation aims to close these knowledge gaps and enhance our offer for care experienced students.

The Care Experienced Consultation survey took place in June 2020. It was created using Microsoft Forms and consisted of 14 open and closed questions – giving the participants a platform to express their thoughts and feelings about the support they received at school and to discover what more can be done by external providers to help with the transition from pre-16 to post-16 study. It was sent out to care experienced students via the contacts at the University of Bolton, the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford. There was a total of 20 responses.

This report will cover:

1. Research method
2. Survey results
3. Analysis
4. Recommendations
5. Appendix

1. Research method

The research was conducted via Microsoft Forms due its ease of design, secure data protocols and familiarity by the participants. The survey was anonymous to ensure the participants felt comfortable answering the questions truthfully. The questions for the survey were carefully thought through to ensure the correct information was gathered to accurately capture the student's experiences. The survey was sent to the care leaver contacts in a detailed email explaining what it was and encouraging students to participate.

Once the survey was completed participants were offered the opportunity to take part in a focus group or interview to look more closely at the current GMH activities and review their perceived effectiveness and potential impact from their own viewpoint. One student participated in an interview, and their review was captured and included in the appendix.

2. Survey results

This section will cover the survey results, themes and views shared amongst the group of respondents. Also, there are some reflections based on the survey question outcome.

Question 1 – What engaged you at school? [Appendix 1](#)

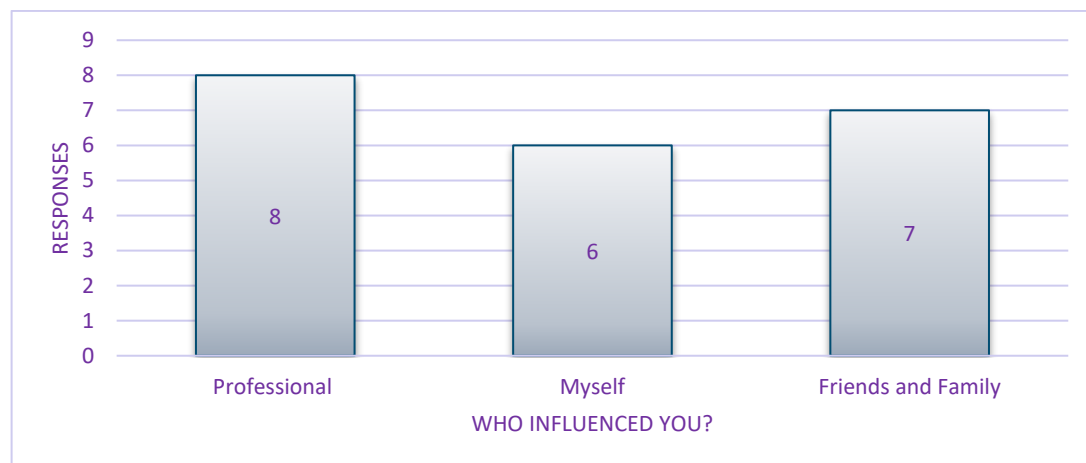
The most common answer for this question was either being engaged with learning or being interested in a specific subject area. Another shared answer was their teachers - specifically teachers who have a passion for their subject and receiving praise from either teachers or people around them.

There is a positive influence from lessons at school and from teachers passionate about their subject area. From this it's clear that more emphasis on specific subject activities would be more engaging. However, it's important to find out what subjects the learners are interested in to tailor the session for these specific learners to encourage their engagement. Another important area here is praise, using encouragement and feedback to inspire and maintain a focus.

Question 2 – Who influenced you to go to university? [Appendix 2](#)

The outcome of this question highlighted that whilst the participants were at school, they were influenced by several people around them. The most common individual they were influenced by was a professional staff member. Many of the participants also mentioned a self-motivation as an influencing factor.

One recommendation here is a 'top down' training approach. Educating the professionals around the learner about the benefits of going to university and how this pathway can benefit a learner's life. Whilst GMH currently support local authority activities such as stands/talks at events and provide sessions for professionals on request, there is currently no focus on talks for designated teachers and only one annual event for supporters of care experienced learners. Friends and family are a key influencer group and may benefit from a similar event to build their knowledge of information, advice and guidance about HE and understand how impactful it can be.



My Deputy head of year
My dad My college tutors
My maths teacher My family
My daughter Careers & Friends
My awful employer

Question 3 – Why did you go on to Higher Education? [Appendix 3](#)

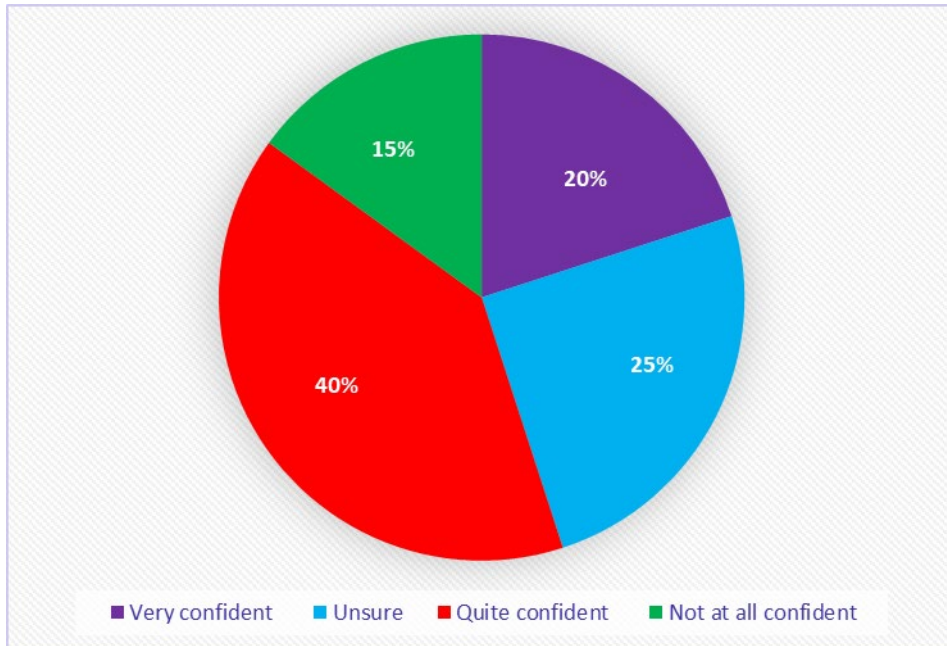
These results have been really enlightening. The participants' reasons for going into higher education varied, however the overall trend points towards participants wanting more for themselves and to benefit their future. Several of the participants outlined how going into Higher Education broke the trend around care leavers, as there is usually an expectation in society of care leaver students dropping out. From the responses collected, each participant had their own reasons for progressing onto HE, however they appear to be extremely determined individuals who understood the opportunity earlier on in their decision-making process. The data highlights the want and need to improve their own lives through getting a degree.

Question 4 – What information did you get about coming to University? [Appendix 4](#)

Participants in this question outlined how they sourced most of the information regarding universities themselves or through school and UCAS. Very few participants received information about student finance and care leaver bursaries. One participant suggested that care experienced students should receive a leaflet with information regarding the help for each university.

Question 5 – How confident did you feel coming to University? [Appendix 5](#)

The survey results show that 60% of participants were very confident or quite confident starting at university. There was no question to establish why this might be, although there may be a link between the outcome of this question and question four as most care leaver students did their own research, which could be why they felt confident and well prepared when coming to university.



Question 6 - What activities would you suggest? Have a think about your time in school from year 7 - year 11, were there any activities especially for students in care that really engaged you. [Appendix 6](#)

A lot of suggested activities came out of this question. Participants suggested a wide variety of different projects that would have engaged them at school. However, there is a strong theme of stability and making new friends. Group based activities and sports activities were the most suggested by participants to engage students at school.

The results from this question highlighted the need for a project that brings stability and friendship through group-based activities. Most students in care will be very isolated in comparison to their peers. Students typically will not tend to meet another care leaver until they go to university or join a charity for care experienced people. Therefore, several areas should be looked at here to ensure the design and delivery of GMH activities is reflective of these responses.

Question 7 - What information would you have wanted to find out about at school about Further and Higher Education. [Appendix 7](#)

Financial support, support for care leavers and general information and advice surrounding university such as what living at university is like, independent study, accommodation information, were the most common responses for this question. Each participant put between one and three suggestions for this question, which has enabled a richer picture of the information that care experienced students feel they are missing.

This question highlighted a variety of areas that need a focus during workshops. Topics such as financial support – see recommendations from question 4 and 6. Advice about living at university; which can be a very concerning area especially during the holiday periods and independent study.

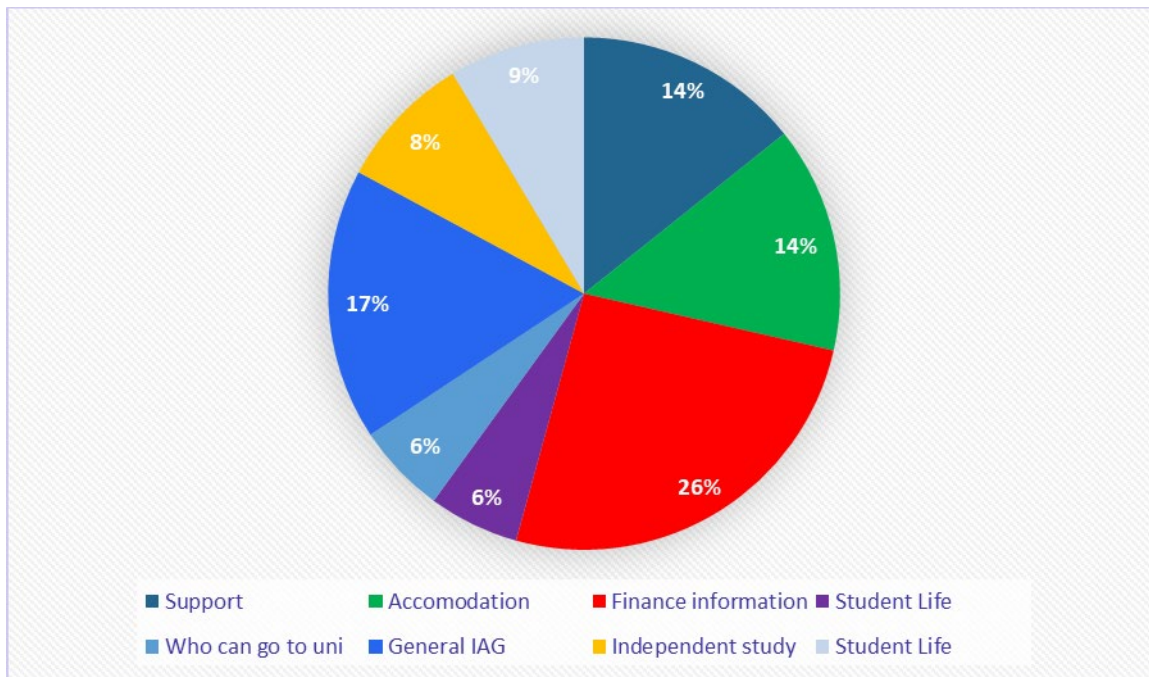


Figure 1: What information would you have wanted to find out about at school about Further and Higher Education.

Question 8 - During college/sixth form, did you partake in any activities that were interesting for students in care? [Appendix 8](#)

From the data collected the most common outcome from this question was ‘No’ students did not partake in any activities that were specifically for care leaver students. Only 2 of the 20 students did. This included an outing to London and a summer school at Nottingham Trent University.

Question 9 - During college/sixth form, what information would you have wanted to know about Higher Education and life after further education. Rank these from most important to least important. [Appendix 9](#)

This question asked the participants to rank what information they would have wanted to find out from the most to the least important. The topics that came out as most important were finance, then pastoral support and the least important was a mixture of clubs/societies. Please see the table below to see the responses from each participant.

This question supports the need for a workshop on student finance and highlights how important it is that this work needs to be done during sixth form/college.

Most important	Slightly important	Least important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Financial support/ bursaries. • Accommodation • Job aspects • Spending plan • No idea about life after further education • How much harder it is for children in care • I wish I knew about all the companies who offer support to care leavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What jobs I can enter once I get my degree • Wellbeing and Counselling services • After university plan (specially for care leavers) • Time management • Grades, • How our experiences make us more likely to be messy or fallible but that's okay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs/committees • Workshops • Grades • Information on societies • The area I was going to study and what was around it. • We don't always have to be strong or do everything ourselves. • What else I can access as a care leaver in terms of activities

Question 10 - Are there any other topics that you think should be covered? Think about what you would have benefitted from when you were in year 8/9. [Appendix 10](#)

The most common response was the use of activities such as competitions and quizzes. Other topic areas included skills - participants suggested learning about how to be confident, understand others and how to be a good judge of character whilst preparing for their future.

Question 11 – How would you deliver the workshops? [Appendix 11](#)

Responses here indicate the use of PowerPoints and engaging activities. Most participants suggested activities which involved quizzes, teamwork and discussions needed to take place in order to keep students engaged during workshops. A participant also said that using a platform where learners could ask questions but anonymously - without the fear of having to put their hand up and speaking out loud. There was a strong theme of making the workshop very conversational - getting the learners to work together through team building activities but also getting a student ambassador involved who the learners can relate to.

PowerPoints presentations and quizzes would promote anonymity if some learners find it difficult to ask questions in a group setting. It also allows the students to feel more carried through a structured and well-planned session that has a clear beginning and end and are easier to facilitate and be creative with. The sessions can have a variety of different approaches such as group discussions, writing, drawing, listening, watching and talking focuses throughout.

Question 12 – Is there anything we are missing? [Appendix 12](#)

The results for this question came back with a strong 'No' theme. Greater Manchester Higher are not missing anything. However, there were a few answers of N/A or blank which are represented in Misc. There was also one answer of 'yes' – that GMH could do something around working with the schools and the NHS on subjects such as mental health and specific learning difficulties.

Question 13 – What could be improved? [Appendix 13](#)

There were not many answers for this question however there were some recommendations highlighted that many Universities are currently offering already. Again, this suggests that support needs to be more widely communicated to students as this is not necessarily being picked up.

Question 14 – Anything else you would like to say? [Appendix 14](#)

Most students said no there wasn't anything else, however one participant highlighted the importance of 'Educating children in care about the prospects of going to university is a great thing! We are as capable as any other child and I think that message needs to be promoted more'.

3. Analysis

This next section will cover the recommendations based on the analysis of each question.

Question 1 *What engaged you at school?*

- Provide more subject specific workshops that are tailored to the student's interests.
- Ensure that practitioners from subjects are passionate about their workshop and are enthusiastic about teaching it.
- Praise the learners more, build in training for staff as to how praise students effectively, provide positive and meaningful feedback, and train staff in how to build confidence through engagement techniques.
- Build in more reward and recognition for activities where learners have had an opportunity to demonstrate a learning outcome.

Question 2 *Who influenced you to go to university?*

- Online workshops about the benefits of University and how to support the young person in care that are visible on the university websites, there are a wealth of resources through Become and Propel websites that could be hosted on HE websites or signposted more directly.

Question 3 *Why did you go on to Higher Education?*

- Continued support for care leavers whilst at University, outlined during earlier interactions with the students – although the offer might change and will vary at each institution. For example, at visit days, through the school and through the leaving care teams, students need to be made aware of all the support, and that they have the potential to go to university as well. Planting the seed early about Higher Education is key as these students may not have anyone around them pushing them to fulfil their potential.
- Provide effective and well-trained role models and relatable student ambassadors to support activity so young people have someone to connect to.
- Ensure that activities and workshops for the young people don't focus on the 'deficit model' of care leaver statistics, they should focus on encouragement, and to take opportunities they are offered. Everyone has a duty to focus on the positives statistics it is important to make sure that care experienced

students feel like they're not just another number. Going into HE should be normalised rather than the ethos of 'breaking the mold'.

Question 4 *What information did you get about coming to University?*

- Ideally learners should have a 1:1 session about student finance. This should be offered by the Uni connect partnership to the Local Authorities.
- Workshops covering finance and bursaries need to be better established for care experienced students. By having a separate workshop, they can ask questions regarding student finance that they may not feel comfortable asking when with their school peers. This could be incorporated with other activities as wrap around IAG.
- Create a more detailed and up to date webpage resource for care experienced contacts. The webpage could contain information on specific support and bursaries for their institution, rather than just a tick box of support. It would be a 'one stop shop' for detailed support information that is available for all. It could be sent to sixth form/college designated teachers, LAC forums etc. that can also be passed onto the learners. However, we are aware of the limitations such as – getting every university on board, the competitive landscape of universities and the workload of the designated staff members. Alternatively, this information should be sent to the LA's and colleges - they can then send it onto their care experienced students. Having it all in one document will make it easier to digest for the student and allow them to make an informed choice rather than sifting through numerous university websites.

Question 5 *How confident did you feel coming to University?*

- Signposting to websites such as Propel and Become (<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/propel/>) (<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-pre-entry>)
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Question 6 *What activities would you suggest?*

- Create a project for year 12 students. Currently we do not do a lot of work with year 12 care leavers. It would be ideal to create a project that kept students engaged in education throughout college. Weekly themed sessions could take place at an HEI after sixth form/college had finished. It would be a continuous project that takes place throughout the year – to ensure stability and an opportunity build friendships. Each week the get together would have a different theme, whether it be an active competitive activity, a talk from an inspirational speaker etc. By covering different themes, the students would be able to learn more about HE in a casual setting and ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking in-front of their peers who are not from a care experienced background.
- If the above recommendation is not possible due to limitations such as staffing, space and budget then a 6 to 8-week program like Success4Life, which is led by the GMH Uni connect project would be suitable. Success4Life is an 8-week program that young people are nominated onto by either their school, foster carers or social worker. During the 8 weeks students learn soft skills and the projects looks to focus on group work and aims to motivate and inspire young people in their development and progression, raising awareness of Higher Education and the options available to them post-16. By providing stability through a longer-term project, students will get more out of it as they are able to form lasting relationships with peers and staff but also be informed about the benefits of going onto Higher Education.

Question 7 *What information would you have wanted to find out about at school about Further and Higher Education.*

- More workshops need to be done with care experienced students; this needs to be carried out throughout their educational journey. Different projects tailored to different stages of knowledge and learning need, rather than just one intervention that is impactful but can easily be forgotten once the learner transitions into another stage of education.

Question 8 *During college/sixth form, did you partake in any activities that were interesting for students in care?*

- Most participants answered 'no' students did not part take in any activities in college/sixth form that were specifically for students in care. This is a shame and therefore highlights a significant area for improvement that needs to be addressed. By creating a project specifically for year 12 students we can equip them with the knowledge and skills, so they feel confident when applying for university and do not have to rely solely on their own research.

Question 9 *During college/sixth form, what information would you have wanted to know about Higher Education and life after further education.*

- At least one workshop a year during UCAS/HE applications. Information needs to go out to PA's as well as the Designated teacher.
- Workshops/talks on pastoral support at University during college/sixth form. Signposting to websites such as Propel and NNCEL.
- Pastoral support that needs to be covered is the services offered by the wellbeing team at university such as the counselling service. Learners can find out who the care leaver contact for the University is, have direct contacts in the finance/accommodation teams. By having a direct contact in each team – especially the counselling and wellbeing team, the student will feel fully supported throughout their time at university and is able to build a relationship with these staff members. Prolonged and stable relationships are key for care leavers.

Question 10 *Are there any other topics that you think should be covered? Think about what you would have benefitted from when you were in year 8/9*

- Running competitions and quiz sessions e.g. running summer competitions that students can get involved with. This would work well with students that we have had multiple interventions with.
- Use platforms such as Kahoot that work well for engagement.
- Sessions on key topic areas such as confidence building and preparing for your future. However not just based on Higher Education – areas including finance, accommodation, life skills and how to be a good judge of character would be extremely beneficial.

Question 11 *How would you deliver the workshops?*

- The use of platforms such as Menti Meter where students can ask questions without putting their hand up or feel embarrassed.

Question 12 *Is there anything we are missing?*

- Working with mental health organisations and doing subject specific activities on Mental health and disability, providing role models and supporting transition for care leavers who also have a disability.

Question 13 *What could be improved?*

- Provide activities for care leavers on arrival after registration; this could be anything from weekly meet up sessions such as creating a space where students can come and talk and share their experiences of how they have found coming to university or having a safe space to talk to other people who understand their situation.
- Provide an online community via Microsoft Teams group or connect new care leavers with more experienced students in peer mentoring matches.

4. Recommendations

This next section captures the recommendations for Uni Connect partnership - Greater Manchester Higher to consider in their planning in 4 areas:

Workshops and activity design

- Ensure that activities and workshops for the young people don't focus on the 'deficit model' of care leaver statistics, they should focus on encouragement, and to take opportunities they are offered. Everyone has a duty to focus on the positives statistics it is important to make sure that care experienced students feel like they're not just another number. Going into HE should be normalised rather than the ethos of 'breaking the mold'.
- Ideally learners should have a 1:1 session about student finance. Workshops covering finance and bursaries need to be better established for care experienced students. By having a separate workshop, they can ask questions regarding student finance that they may not feel comfortable asking when with their school peers. This could be incorporated with other activities as wrap around IAG.
- Provide more subject specific workshops that are tailored to the student's interests.
- Praise the learners more, build in training for staff as to how praise students effectively, provide positive and meaningful feedback, and train staff in how to build confidence through engagement techniques.
- Build in more reward and recognition for activities where learners have had an opportunity to demonstrate a learning outcome.
- More workshops with care experienced students carried out throughout their educational journey. Different projects tailored to different stages of knowledge and learning need, rather than just one intervention that is impactful but can easily be forgotten once the learner transitions into another stage of education.
- Workshops/talks on pastoral support at University during college/sixth form would be beneficial where students can be signposted to websites such as Propel and Become.
- Ensure the activities provide the learners with the opportunity to find out who the care leaver contact for the University is and speak to people in the finance/accommodation/wellbeing teams. By having a direct link to each team, the learner will feel fully supported throughout their time at university and is

able to build a relationship with these staff members. Prolonged and stable relationships are key for care leavers.

- Sessions on key topic areas such as confidence building and preparing for your future. However not just based on Higher Education – areas including finance, accommodation, life skills and how to be a good judge of character would be extremely beneficial.

Roles and individual supporters

- Ensure that practitioners from subjects are passionate about their workshop and are enthusiastic about teaching it.
- Provide effective and well-trained role models and relatable student ambassadors to support activity so young people have someone to connect to.
- Learners should be made aware of not only the support in HE, but the fact that they have the potential to go to university as well. Planting the seed early about Higher Education is key as these students may not have anyone around them pushing them to fulfil their potential.
- PA's need to be made aware of critical information about HE progression, not just designated teachers, social workers or foster carers.

Projects

- Create a project for year 12 students. Currently we do not do a lot of work with year 12 care leavers. It would be ideal to create a project that kept students engaged in education throughout college. Weekly themed sessions could take place at an HEI after sixth form/college had finished. It would be a continuous project that takes place throughout the year – to ensure stability and an opportunity build friendships. Each week the get together would have a different theme, whether it be an active competitive activity, a talk from an inspirational speaker etc. By covering different themes, the students would be able to learn more about HE in a casual setting and ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking in-front of their peers who are not from a care experienced background.
- If the above recommendation is not possible due to limitations such as staffing, space and budget then a 6 to 8-week program like Success4Life, which is led by the GMH Uni connect project would be suitable. Success4Life is an 8-week program that young people are nominated onto by either their school, foster cares or social worker. During the 8 weeks students learn soft skills and the project looks to focus on group work and aims to motivate and inspire young people in their development and progression, raising awareness of Higher Education and the options available to them post-16. By providing stability through a longer-term project, students will get more out of it as they are able to form lasting relationships with peers and staff but also be informed about the benefits of going onto Higher Education.

Resources

- Create a more detailed and up to date webpage resource for care experienced contacts. The webpage could contain information on specific support and bursaries for their institution, rather than just a tick box of support. It would be a 'one stop shop' for detailed support information that is available for all. It could be sent to sixth form/college designated teachers, LAC forums etc. that can also be passed onto the learners. However, we are aware of the limitations such as – getting every university on board, the competitive landscape of universities and the workload of the designated staff members. Alternatively, this information should be sent to the LA's and colleges - they can then send it onto their care

experienced students. Having it all in one document will make it easier to digest for the student and allow them to make an informed choice rather than sifting through numerous university websites.

Other recommendations based on the findings

Provide consistency of outreach and support for all ages.

In order to provide a more consistent approach to supporting different age groups, there should be a specific team based at a University that has a remit to work with care experienced young people at pre-16, post-16, pre-entry and post entry in HE. This is in order to foster the environment of stability within regional progression. The idea that a learner may interact with the same staff member, role or team at a University from Year 8 right up until they are a student would support the idea of stability, which can be essential for this group. Where this may not be achievable due to organizational structure, it would be useful to ensure young people can interact with student support teams in HE with specific remit to support care leavers.

Visual representation of recommendations broken down for key groups

This table will allow practitioners find the key recommendations based on their role and/or institution

Recommendations	Areas of responsibility				
	LA*	HE Pre-entry/Uni Connect	HE* Post-entry	FE*	School/Virtual schools
Subject specific workshops that are tailored to the learner's interests		x		x	
Using practitioners who are passionate about their subject for workshops		x		x	x
Authentic praise for learners – training for staff		x			
Reward and recognition mechanisms		x		x	x
Provide virtual training and events for staff who support care experienced young people	x	x	x	x	
Planting the seed early	x	x		x	x
Provide role models and relatable student ambassadors	x	x	x	x	
Activities and workshops for the young people that don't focus on the 'deficit model'	x	x		x	x
Learners should have a one to one session about student finance	x	x	x		
Signposting to websites at critical transition points	x	x	x	x	x
Project for year 12 students	x	x		x	

Bespoke UCAS/HE workshops with other care experienced learners	x	x		x	
Pastoral support workshops	x	x		x	
Improving the engagement approach through competitions/quiz sessions, and discussion-based sessions		x		x	x
Sessions on key topic's such as confidence and life skills		x		x	x
Activities with care leavers on arrival at University after registration			x		
Primary outreach work	x	x			x
Increase frequency of foster carer and designated teacher workshops	x	x			x

*LA – Local Authority

*HE – Higher Education

*FE – Further Education

Consultation summary

There are several findings from this consultation that can be considered for updating the approach to this work, and the responsibilities of which fall in various services and education settings. This report will be circulated among colleagues from each sector via relevant channels in order to have the furthest and most impactful reach. We are mindful of the survey respondents commenting from a position of having already reached University, and as suggested earlier in the report, to provide a balanced view, it will be necessary to conduct the research again with those not in Higher Education. With this contrast, comparisons can be made between what has worked well, and what hasn't in the educational pathways of care experienced young people.

Appendix

Appendix 1

<i>What engaged you at school?</i>
Knowing I wanted a future
computers
Teachers who were passionate about their subject and practiced the subject outside of teaching it. The thought of achieving high grades then receiving praise from family.
Wanting to learn
PE, psychology, English and Art really engaged me at school.
Friends, foster family
Having supportive learning mentors and tutors and having a good form tutor and just having support as well as being confident and if I enjoyed a subject because of the teacher and the way they taught a subject I would engage more.
Anything fun! Performing arts, science experiments, school trips & my friends.
The course modules were really engaging and especially the court observation.
The main thing which engaged me at school was the opportunities given to me. I was given numerous opportunities and responsibilities at school to help me to succeed. Coming from a working-class background with little money, my school were always able to put this aside and didn't see this as a reason for me not being able to have the same opportunities as everyone else. They did this by putting me forward for bursaries and making sure I was never put at a disadvantage.
I was a very eager student and love to learn.
Differing opinions on interesting topics. Historical or current debates, whether in football to politics
Art, History and Science.
I was engaged by hands on learning, where I was able to get involved with what has being taught to me.
Support Available for students that are experiencing hard time.
Teachers that I felt genuinely cared
Praise, being told that I was the best and that my way of thinking was unique compared to others. In lessons, I guess it was the ability to understand complex concepts which excited me.
At school I felt that subjects that I had a particular interest in or found interesting made me want to go further to understanding and research certain areas for example in Psychology I found some of the theories and studies extremely interesting so would go further to find informational documentaries about them to watch. Furthermore, I feel my teachers had an extremely important role in making me feel motivated to complete work as they were extremely engaging and understanding. They would make me feel as though I wanted to learn their subject and made the students feel welcomed and driven.
That I got to film things that of stuff that I wanted to Make for our short films that we had to do for the module.
Getting out of my foster carers' house and being able to socialise with my friends and teachers

Appendix 2

Who influenced you to go to university?
My Deputy head of year
my awful employer
My dad
Careers & friends
Mainly my friends as a lot of them aspired to go to university. Before I was never keen. The fact that I knew I was going to get help with a bursary+ accommodation free was also a big incentive.
My daughter
My college tutor
Myself, I knew from a young age that I always wanted to go to university.
Myself.
My cousin influenced me to go forward to university. She is the only person in our family with a degree and when talking about her experience, she spoke quite highly of both the social and academic side of it. She now has a career in a sector she has always wanted to be part of and university helped her achieve that.
so i could get a further education in what was at the time what interested me the most
The opportunity to further my knowledge, going down a avenue only a few will do
I'm the first person in my family to go to university. I was inspired by the idea of being more. My niece is the reason I'm going and giving 100% to show her it's possible.
There was meaning people that motivated me to go to university. A big one I would say was my MAT worker and my head of sixth form really supported me through the process
My family
My maths teacher
Mother, pressure from asian community, pressure from foster family and other corporate parents.
I feel I had many influences. My teachers inspired me and made me believe I was able to achieve the grades I needed for University and pushed me to aim higher as well as social workers who worked with me that also supported me decision in wanting to go to University. Furthermore, my parents from a young age have always wanted me to go to University and pushed education. Finally, my foster-carers provided a safe and comfortable environment for me to be able to study and revise in order to achieve the grades I needed, they always gave me positive affirmations and supported me in my process of applying.
Basically I wanted to continue with education and always wanted to go to university so I made the decision to go and study at Bolton university.
A physics professor at Warwick University. I worked with him and his group of post-grad in a summer research placement a few years ago
Friends and Family - 7
Professional - 8
Myself - 6

Appendix 3

<i>Why did you go onto Higher Education?</i>
To become a teacher, wanted to make something of my life
I like computers, I wanted to learn more
I enjoy the overall concept of learning new information and I need a degree to enable me to get on my career path. Also, i wanted to prove people wrong hat doubted me and my abilities.
Want to improve job opportunity
Honestly the biggest reason I went into higher education was because it seemed the better option than getting placed into a house by social services. Other reasonings was because I could move to a new city and start fresh.
To give my daughter a good life, and for myself
Once I knew I was capable to do so there was nothing stopping me
So that I could become a nurse! & the experience.
I wanted a chance to do something better with my life and have a shot at another career option. One that I really wanted to do
I wanted to go on to Higher Education to defeat the odds of what was set out for me in life. After reading statistics regarding Care Leavers in education and crime it motivated me to change this and be an example for other Care Leavers. I wanted to prove to everyone around me who had low hopes for my future due to my care experience that I have the possibility to succeed just as much as anyone else.
i wanted a degree in something that meant alot to me
To learn more, and to develop as person myself. It seemed like a good opportunity to take whilst at a young age
I wanted more then what I had. I wanted and want to make a difference and set an example.
I decided to go to higher education because it was something that i thought would be a good experience for me that would allow me to grow as a person. As the thought of leaving my school worried me and university gave me that next step. I also thought for my career it would be a good step in the right direction.
To gain knowledge and experience and to get a well pad job in the future
Just wanted to prove to myself and everyone else that i could do it n i would make something of myself
I enjoyed school a lot, until a levels. I wanted to carry on enjoying school.
I went onto higher education as I found a course that I was extremely passionate about. After completing work experience in a hospital, I really felt that I would be able to make a difference in other people's lives. Coming from a difficult background I knew that I wanted to strive for better for myself. I knew that people can be in vulnerable positions in their life and I wanted to pursue a career where I felt I had an active part in helping them.
Because I really fancied myself as a university student and to attend university and to make new mates and to live in student accommodation.
Because I like physics and I couldn't imagine myself doing anything other than studying.

Appendix 4

What information did you get about coming to university?
Got emails containing information about financial support and accommodation options
it's very hard to compare universities, it was so difficult i panicked and picked, because i had no time to go to many opening events.
I got a lot of my information from attending open days and doing research online.
Most information was through friends, careers, UCAS and University
I got information about finance and support and accommodation.
Didnt know much until actually joining uni
Not a lot, I figured it out as I went along but I had an adviser too
I received a lot of information at the end of high school. We were given a range of university prospectuses so that I had a better understanding of the requirements. This influenced what I studied at A-Level because I already knew what the universities were expecting. Throughout college I received consistent support throughout my UCAS applications, went on university open days and did a lot of research myself online.
I got information about care leavers bursary, support, different groups to get into.
Our school provided information via trips to university fairs, UCAS and assemblies. We could have had more support regarding finance due to the fact I was only made aware of the financial help I was entitled to when I finally arrived at uni. I was not informed of student ambassador roles or accommodation. A lot of stuff regarding the university I found out by doing my own research.
i found out about my course by searching history courses that is good in this country, i got plenty of information about finance and what support was available to me. the only thing i could of done with more help was better knowledge about what help there was towards accomidation costs.
The campus layout before attending on the day
I went through the government and official websites.
Before coming to university i did alot of research on what support each of them had as that was very important to me. I found out alot on the internet after abit of searching. I also then came ot the university for a meeting just to discuss all of the support. However one thing would be i didnt know there were oppunities to meet with care leaver ambassadors before hand which i believe should be made a bigger thing. One way to get alot of information to the kids at school would be going and speaking to them about everyones experiences. Giving them someone to relate to, having assembles to the whole school/years will make sure that no one is missed out of hearing the information.
I got information through the university and ucas. I also called the unversity for more information. One thing i didnt know about was abot the accomodation, but i wouldnt have been abe to apply for it as i am a parent.
Not very much at all, it would be helpful if careleavers were sent an information sheet with everything in one place
Just got signposted to student advice who told me I had no financial bursary I was entitled to, no encouragement to apply for student ambassador roles and accommodation was basically all taken up already so had to find that myself.
Some of the information I received regarding University was provided by my sixth form, mostly open day information and some days where there were workshops regarding finance. I was contacted by the care leaver lead at the University who offered information about bursaries available and I went further to do my own research into extra finance that was available. My education support lead from my local authority provided me with most of the information regarding accommodation as she was helping fund it and she was extremely helpful in providing lots of essential information.
That I would have a lot of work to do and that there was support that I could go for if I needed it for my studies and that I could apply for university bursary.
I was given information about open days and about my UCAS application, but it was honestly limited. I wasn't given enough information about accommodation, or extra funding as a care leaver and I only found out about the student ambassador role when I actually visited campuses. I wasn't told about other options and that put a huge pressure on me to get good enough grades at a-level.

Appendix 5

<i>What activities would you suggest? Have a think about your time in school from year 7- year 11, were there any activities especially for students in care that really engaged you.</i>
Inspirational talks
students in care got nothing special. i guess just anything would have been an improvement
I attended a group called Kic In 2 Study and it was a group of care experienced young people, we would do various fun activities that involved learning and also various activities that didn't involve learning. We also attended universities and did activities there which kept my ambition to attend uni alive.
Careers Advisors
Sporting activities were my main focus, id take every opportunity to join whatever sports they had going on.
We used to have form sessions called pshce or something like that where we learnt communication skills, and other things as a form that helped a lot
Sports competitions and anything to do with acting and improvisation.
I definitely recommend joining a campus society. I am aiming to join the cheerleading society as an option to make new friends in my second year.
i did army cadets and it gave structure and guidance and even if you move about you can be transfered to detachments and it was a good stability thing.
History, P.E, science
Ice breakers, group activities maybe competition
When i was in secondary school my i wasnt currently in care, however we had this group over called humanhutopa and they did alot of team building excises and methods of dealing with everything that was going on in your life which i believed really helped me.
I wound know much about activities because as soon I finish university at the end of the day, I would be going straight to pick up my daughter from the childminder.
There was nothing like that for kids in care at my school but i wish there was, doesnt have to be anything amazing even like a coffee club or something just where i can meet people who are similar to me
I didn't join any activities except academic ones like homework club and the odd sports club like basketball which were never serious or even supervised but even those were more so I could hang out with friends.
I had a one-to-one personal tutor from a place called the virtual school. I was able to be out of the main school lessons for some weeks and was able to do some fun activities such as visiting a public garden in school time. I felt this was extremely helpful as I was able to do something I greatly enjoyed however it is understandable this may not be viable for all individuals. I believe activities that really engaged me were school trips as they helped broaden my understanding and motivated me to do more in class.
Well basically I saw others that were care leavers going to university and I thought why not I will see if I can manage university
Children in foster care to know about the statistics about them reaching higher education compared to the general population of 18-year-olds. It's a big eye opener. Meeting care leavers who are currently in higher education would really help too.

Appendix 6

<i>What information would you have wanted to find out about at school about Further and Higher Education.</i>
What commuting to uni would be like
what accreditation really means. i thought it gave a course extra weight, it just means that company contributes stuff.
what unis have best support for care leavers.
What living in halls would be like, what my course would be like
1) The grades you actually receive at uni. I didn't know it was marked in different way I thought it was either a pass or a fail and I know a lot of other people thought that too. 2) funding in terms of bursaries which probably would have made me try for university a bit more instead of it being a last minute decision.
What uni is like, what extra support is available
Accommodation information, finance information, course options and that it's not that strict and anyone can go to uni if they try
Financial support was never really discussed. I had the idea for a long time that I wouldn't be able to afford university.
How fees worked, job offers, care leavers support, what social life at uni was going to be like etc.
I would liked to have found out how independent the study is. In school you're spoon fed a lot of the information by teachers, whereas university is largely based on information you've found yourself from other sources.
always look at what funding is available and what support is available they will come in helpful, never be ashamed to ask for help
What grades are needed. Do you have to go to college? How many years and different types of courses? Accommodation, student life
I honestly did not think I would go to university when I was in school. I believed it was for extremely smart people.
For alot of my life because of things going on i didnt think people like me could go to university so maybe that kind of information like its open to everyone no matter your background.
Financial Support
Literally all of those, i had to find most things out by myself through research
We were allowed to redo a levels would've been a great option, I was told I wouldn't be eligible for funding if I redid a levels. To know you're entitled to independent permanent housing at the age of 18 to prevent having to pay £900 London rent per month.
What pastoral support is available, what living independently feels like, what financial support am I entitled to.
Just what It is all about and what support can be offered to me .
Financial support, providers who give free accommodation bursaries

Appendix 7

<i>During college/sixth form, did you partake in any activities that were really interesting for students in care?</i>
No
unfortunately no, sorry
i attended a summer school at nottingham trent which was very insightful and motivating
No
There was not anything specific for students in care. I remember just being offered more support and they also had a bursary system for me.
No
Not really
I never experienced any activities throughout my education specifically tailored to children in care. Which is quite sad...
I did tv and film at college and I went on a tour of itv and got to play with the cameras and watch a live show being filmed.
No.
no
Not really
Group work
My sixthform didnt really have activities for people in care because in my town it isnt a really big thing. However i did get alot of extra support then it came to sorting the applications out. Also they brought people in to talk about different university's and with one or two of them set up private meeting for me so i would be able to get more information.
We had Day outing to london eye, musum
I was the only person i knew in care at my school, i think this should definitely be made into a thing
No
There was nothing that was specifically targeted at students in care however there was a very informative workshop regarding finances and what student finance you should be entitled to. However in this workshop I feel that bursaries and scholarships were not mentioned much and more information on that could have been shared. I also had a referencing workshop which I found extremely useful as some schools do not teach this and it is extremely important when you reach university.
Well not that I can think of because their weren't that many activities for care leavers like there should be more of
My sixth form was very small and only had a couple of students in foster care so there weren't any events targeted towards my group.

Appendix 8

<i>During college/sixth form what information would you have wanted to know about Higher education and life after further education. Rank these from most important to least important.</i>
Finances, pastoral, clubs/comitees
really just advice about living. whatever advice i got in primary school was kinda useless
More about financing, what jobs I can enter once I get my degree
1) I found out I could stay in student accommodation for more than 1 year as I'm a care leaver, I wish I knew this before I came.
Support, finance, workshops
Finances, accommodation , grades etc
Financial support/ bursaries. I had no idea these were available. Pastoral support available, as this has become useful during my degree.
Accommodation, information on transport, information on societies
(Most important) 1. Financial Support 2. Wellbeing and Counselling services. 3.The area I was going to study and what was around it.
job aspects and what could happen to get graduate jobs
Spending plan, after university plan (specially for care leavers) time management and travel
A clear answer would have been helpful. The websites make you dig through them and are worded confusingly
I feel my main worry was the money side of university because i knew that it was expensive. I wish there was more of a talk about how to fill in student finance if you are doing it as an individual because it was all very general and about your parents income and that would go hand in hand with the buries because i found it very confusing to find out if i fit into the catorgies as my situation isnt straight forward. Thats something through the whole process that was very confusing.
childcare, finance, Grades, accomodation,
No idea about life after further education so that would be helpful
How much harder it is for children in care, how our experiences make us more likely to be messy or fallible but that's okay, we don't always have to be strong or do everything ourselves.
What pastoral support was available, what financial support was available and any bursaries/scholarships, what intependent living entices
1.information of what support that I can access 2.what university is all about 3.how university can support me financially 4.what else I can access as a care leavers in terms of activities
I wish I knew about all the companies who offer support to care leavers (like UpReach). I wish I was told about all the help I'm entitled to.

Appendix 9

<i>Are there any other topics that you think should be covered? Think about what you would have benefitted from when you were in year 8/9.</i>
Shopping and money management
i'm not sure
No
I think in years 8/9 I should have been given a list of when and who I can get help from and what I'm eligible for, again when and from who so I was prepared and could have a vision for the future. Help and finance
I'm not sure as I didn't do much during school time but yes maybe
Team building and communication activities, this helps people make friends, be confident and be good at what they want to do, I think it's important for people to try and be good judges of character or to be wary so they don't mix with the wrong type of people (communication activities, friends - get to know each other - long term project)
Knowing that I was supported just like any child. Sometimes people's stereotypes of children in care can knock your confidence, as people 'expect' you not to go to university. I am really proud that despite going through a difficult childhood in the care system, that I was still able to make something of myself. I didn't let being a 'care kid' define me as a person, or limit my aspirations.
Different people's experiences and how they found their experience the best and the worst bits.
no
Quizzes and questionnaire on university
Explaining how many paths are possible and that there are many ways to get what you want
I think the main message is just making sure every kid knows that they can go to university if they want to and that there are great creative courses it isn't just completely academic.
no
Yes I probably would, I don't think it matters so much what the activity is as long as people provide chance for care leavers to meet other care leavers they can relate to so they don't feel so alone
Sex Ed, being told even at this point that you will not get anywhere near as much support post 18 so to take advantage of all participation services.
I believe if the workshop had activities to cater to year 8/9 students for example competitive tasks in groups that are also informative they would be good.
Topics like social care and hospitality and physical education
As mentioned previously, the statistics about care leavers entering into higher education are really important

Appendix 10

<i>How would you deliver the workshops?</i>
I enjoyed acting workshops where you watch a drama
a powerpoint is a tool of presentation, not the entire presentation, every presentator will have their own preferences
PowerPoint in small groups with question and answer
I would offer a face to face or just a PowerPoint. I would probably prefer a PowerPoint because then I have all the information in front of me.
Yes
I think I would do everything with part PowerPoint but more engagement and fun
Powerpoint is great, with a mix of activities and group work to keep everyone engaged. Make it fun!
PowerPoint, a presentation a talk. A tour.
Bringing in university students who could give their own experiences.
powerpoint is good but people get bored try and get people to ask what they see their future and what guidance they think is available, make they become engaged
Powerpoints, but not loads of writing, engaging questions and personalities
I'd set up a circle of chairs, so everyone could engage. But I would also say a PowerPoint would be helpful.
I would say its good to have the support of a powerpoint put making sure that it isnt a very strict one that you are just reading off. Having a more relaxed and conversational tone would mean that the kids would be more likely to listen to you and not zone out. I think being closer to their age than possibly their teachers is a massive strength because kids are more likely to listen to someone closer their age. Also having activities so it isnt just people talking at them. I would also have a question thing at the end so if a kid has a question it can get answered, However it would be so everyone can put a question in the box and we would answer it to the whole group without anyone knowing who it is. This is because the likely hood is that more an one person has the same question because kids are normally too shy to ask.
Group discussions
No id do something more engaging like not just everyone staring at a screen maybe something like where you work in a team n make something together where it forces you to talk
Interactive presentations
I would use engaging activities e.g. working in groups to match words and definitions against time to engage students. I would also try to get people to visit the school who can relate to the students or who have been in a similar position e.g. previous students from the school.
By a PowerPoint and a hand out basically
Kahoot. Quizzes are very fun and engaging!

Appendix 11

<i>Is there anything we are missing? If yes, what?</i>
No
being in care has left a massive impact i can never recover from. the support for people in care just isnt there. i don't think i even get any special help with rent in manchester, i did in peterborough
no
No
No. You do so well and offer me so much support.
No
no
No
No.
no
No
N/A
no
no
It should be a necessity that all those care experienced before the age of 18 take advantage of the health system and be tested for dyslexia, adhd, autism etc bc many go undiagnosed and after 18 it's too late as you have to pay. Look at the nhs stats for mental health for children in care and you don't need to look any further to realise how grossly outdated the research is and how alarming high the numbers are.
N/A
No
No

Appendix 12

<i>What could be improved?</i>
Options of activities
im sorry im not sure
for me just supporting the young care leavers and ensuring that the support is there especially mentally because for me personally i almost gaqve up on my ambition to attend uni because of mental health problems that were a direct result of being in care.
Ensuring students have the best knowledge about university possible
I would probably suggest when first years come to uni and mark they are a care leaver, have them a PowerPoint of everything you can offer and what content you would be sending them in the future.
Just organisation
Again, make it fun! As a young child, I hated being reminded that I was a 'care kid', I often wanted to have fun whilst learning.
Activities how turn it in works
No.
dont think of anything
It was a good question list
n/a
I believe asking previous students who can relate to current students to answer questions and help would be useful.
Just to support care leavers at University more
I haven't seen the workshop

Appendix 13

<i>Anything else you would like to say</i>
PLEASE campaign for care leavers to get support. they need a lot of support, without it they are permanently disadvantaged compared to people with parents, it has a lasting impact and leads to a sad life of solitude, you can quote me on that, it is a firsthand account. the details on the focus group seem vague
No
I personally like the way things are and think there's always room for improvement but things are all good and well
I definitely think educating children in care about the prospects of going to university is a great thing! We are as capable as any other child and I think that message needs to be promoted more.
No
No.
no
Thank you
no
N/A
Not at the moment

Appendix 14

One to one interview with a care leaver in Higher Education

The interview focused on the recommendations made from this report and asked for the student's feedback based on the findings from the report. Relevant projects that GMH run were also discussed and feedback was requested. The interview took place on Friday 18th September 2020, please see appendix for full transcript.

Summary of interview

The interviewee agreed with survey respondents in terms of what encouraged them at school, and when they discussed the importance of praise, suggested that practitioners used school merit systems to reward and recognise. This might make some of the praise more 'useful' to them as it might have a more cumulative effect back in their school setting.

They discussed the influence the foster carer can have and feels there is a push for them to get their young person into a job so they can be financially stable. They mention career passions being brushed aside as they are too unstable and risky in the here and now. They mentioned that foster carers opinion of higher education or lack of knowledge on it can be a negative influence on progression.

When thinking about their current University support they have had, the interviewee mentioned normalising care experience, using care leaver ambassadors in all the outreach activity to break the stereotype. They also discussed the impact of having a role model and someone to look up to who has also been in care.

The student talked of how prepared they had been when starting at University, doing huge amounts of research themselves. Reflecting on the information they received pre-arrival, they mentioned having someone looking out for you at college, someone to help care leaver students who has excellent knowledge of student finance etc. would have been extremely beneficial.

When asked about the perceived effectiveness of creating a Year 12 project to support with transition the interviewee thought it would be a positive opportunity and may even effect attainment and provide a focus. They mentioned a need to incentivise the project and ensuring staff are passionate about their subject areas. They mentioned that this project could tackle the feelings of being displaced in society and that care experienced students are 'pushed under the carpet'. The interviewee talked of the anxiety and shame of being a care leaver and this kind of project could remove that feeling of loneliness and increase the feeling of belonging.

The interviewee talked of a very positive experience at their University of feeling welcomed and supported through engagement and staff sessions. They felt that if other applicants knew about this support it would entice people to apply there. More support from universities to 'entice' care leaver students to university and make them aware of all the support that is available using student ambassadors.

When discussing primary outreach, the student felt that it was a missed opportunity to work with this group from a younger age as they may be going to a very tough time and need to know they are not alone. They also mentioned feeling missed at college because they were capable and didn't need the extra support.

Thoughts and views on Greater Manchester Higher care experienced projects

Step up to Uni

- The advertising leaflet mentions the word 'VIP' – 'Stop trying to make me different' – Want to do what normal people do and go on the normal open days.
- Don't want to stand out from the crowd.

Care leaver awards

- Felt that these kinds of events were very ingenuine and felt fake. Felt that they just awarded care leaver students for anything and everything just to make them feel validated.
- These kinds of events make students stand out more when they've tried so hard to fit in and 'be normal'.
- However, these events are important for some care leaver students to have their efforts recognised in a public way in front of their supporters.

Success4Life

- Good project for year 8 and 9 as they have a place of belonging and feel less isolated.
- Students are very impressionable at that age.
- Supporting each other and having the feeling of community.

Transition Mentoring

- The Access Platform is a good to use to communicate virtually.
- Removes the awkwardness and is accessible for everyone.
- Being able to talk to someone who understands and has been through the same thing.
- Gives the students a role model.