

Using Admissions to bridge the gap for care leavers



Examples of good practice and support
guide for HE providers

September 2017

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www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/care

Executive Summary

Higher Education Providers (HEPs) are undertaking a variety of activities to support care leavers at all stages of the admissions process and beyond, and there is real diversity in the provision and implementation of support across the sector.

This SPA guide uses examples from case studies to demonstrate how HE providers are already using admissions as part of a joined-up approach to supporting care leavers. These examples and subsequent recommendations should help HE providers to reflect on their existing provision, bridge their own gaps and build processes, regardless of how extensive their current support is.

The main findings of this guide are:

- i. HE providers have a **diverse and varied** range of initiatives to support care leavers, with great variety in scope, remit, funding and operational demand, so no matter the extent of a provider's resources, there will be some steps that can be taken to improve the provision.
- ii. The **definition** of those in and from care varies across the sector and can differ within the same institution. Reasons for a lack of single definition vary, and HE providers are largely good at publicising their definitions and the support available based on the chosen definition.
- iii. **Admissions** can and should be an **active agent** in supporting care leavers, and considerations for care leavers should be incorporated in to each stage of the applicant experience.
- iv. **Support** can be offered and deployed at all stages of the applicant experience (pre-application; application; post-application; transition) or cross-over between stages, to ensure an integrated applicant experience.
- v. **Effective communication** of the support available, underpinned by clear processes and definitions is key to successfully supporting care leavers in to HE.

As a result of these findings, SPA has also produced a series of [recommendations](#) to help HEPs to consider and support care leavers at any stage of the applicant experience:

1. **Have clear definitions:** Definitions for those in and from care can differ between and within different Higher Education providers. Some providers use a single definition, whilst others use multiple definitions for different purposes, both of which bring potential benefits or limitations.

There should always be sufficient information and advice in place to ensure all support eligibility criteria, including definitions, are clear. We would encourage HE providers to review what definitions are used across its range of services and support, and ensure that these are applied consistently across all internal and partner areas.

2. **Promote support through policy;** Supporting care leavers should be driven and promoted by clear policy that empowers and directs staff across all aspects of admissions and contiguous areas. Care leaver considerations should be embedded in to new and existing processes and procedures that support the admissions process and any stage of the applicant experience. Robust policies and procedures could be underpinned and strengthened by having a member of the senior management team, or governor, as a champion of care leaver support within an institution.

SPA aims to include consideration of care leavers into all our good practice updates, to help HE providers consider ways to embed it within their own policies and procedures.

- 3. Implement a communication plan:** There will be a wide range of information available to care leavers and their advisors from across the sector and it should never be difficult to find. This may be especially important where HE providers have distinctive approaches or have multiple definitions for different purposes.

Considerations for a successful communication plan include clear definitions, support eligibility criteria, dates and deadlines, and key contact information. Information on supporting care leavers should be easily accessible, easy to understand and consistently conveyed by all staff in the institution, regardless of the point in the cycle that the applicant is applying.

- 4. Ensure an integrated applicant experience:** Strong collaboration and co-ordination across the applicant experience ensures that admissions is not isolated from the institution's care leaver support strategy. Consider how any initiative connects across the applicant experience to ensure that the correct support is offered, maintained and enhanced.

Admissions staff should maintain communication with the provider's named contact for care leavers, not only to ensure awareness of the status of relevant applications, but also to liaise on minimising barriers and providing clear advice on admissions procedures.

- 5. Include 'care leaver' considerations within contextualised admissions:** Contextualised admissions can be used to aid in the judgment of the potential of care leavers, as part of the holistic assessment of an application, as their achievements may have been affected by relative disadvantage in their education or life situation.

The use of contextual data may be applied for several purposes throughout the applicant experience that are particularly relevant to those coming from a background in care, including: targeting aspiration-raising; informing admissions decision-making; identifying additional learner support or advice; financial support; or for monitoring and reporting purposes. Sources of relevant contextual data may include information as declared in students' applications (personal statement, reference, school information), in institutions' own data or additional questionnaires, from publicly available data sets or from commercial sources.

We would like to gather more case studies and good practice examples to continually build and update this evidence and welcome any new submissions via our website:

www.spa.ac.uk/information/callforevidence.

Methodology

As part of SPA's commitment to the care leaver agenda and our expertise in admissions built on evidence-based practice, SPA sought to identify specific good practice in how higher education providers (HEPs) support applicants in and leaving care through the admissions process.

The methodology included:

- Calling for evidence from HEPs (2014, 2015 and 2017), asking the sector for specific good practice examples on how applicants in and leaving care are supported through the admissions process.
- Facilitating events for HE practitioners to share good practice and areas for improving support for care leavers, specifically around admissions-related discussion themes. Collating and reviewing feedback to incorporate in to and inform the recommendations in the guide.
- Reviews of individual case studies, event feedback and individual desk-based research, to find and highlight best practice examples across the applicant experience

This guide presents the good practice examples grouped under each stage of the applicant experience ('pre-application'; 'application'; 'post-application'; 'transition'), as well as a list of recommendations to help to bridge the gap between widening participation (WP) and retention initiatives and to demonstrate how admissions can be in active agent in supporting care leavers.

We are very grateful to the providers who provided case studies and contributed to this project, and these are listed individually in [Appendix 1](#).

This information is for general guidance only, and should not be taken as a list of obligations or a legal document. SPA emphasises that it does not offer legal advice and cannot take any responsibility for actions taken based on this information. Institutions must always take their own legal advice as they see appropriate.

SPA good practice statements and information are kept under review and updated as appropriate. Your comments or updates are invited and appreciated, please contact enquiries@spa.ac.uk.

Care leavers and the gap

Definition of a care leaver

The definitions for those in or from care vary across different HE providers and can sometimes differ within the same institution. Some will follow central and local authority terminology (which themselves vary across the UK), whilst others choose to be more flexible. As such, commonly used terms, such as 'in care', 'care leaver', 'care experience(d)' and 'looked after child' may have slightly different meanings both across the sector and within the same institution. For the purposes of this guide, any use of such terms outside of a specific case study have been generalised for convenience and do not necessarily infer any restriction in the type of person in or from care it may apply to.

Reasons for a lack of any single agreed definition are predominantly due to varying definitions being used for different purposes including:

- Bursary eligibility
- Scholarship eligibility
- Accommodation provision
- Summer school provision
- Different legal connotations across the UK constituencies

Some HE providers are working with virtual schools or other local stakeholders to develop a common definition. There are benefits of both a single definition, used commonly between HE providers and local authorities as well as multiple definitions across the support sector and within providers. Examples can be found in our [good practice section](#). Some potential advantages to these different approaches are highlighted below.

advantages of a single definition:

- ✓ Easy to understand
- ✓ Consistent
- ✓ Easy to compare
- ✓ Easier to do shared work
- ✓ Transparent

advantages of multiple definitions:

- ✓ More flexible around differing support needs
- ✓ Can tailor to institution priorities
- ✓ Can account for legal differences across borders
- ✓ Easy to adapt

Each HE provider should identify what definitions, formal or informal, are used across its range of services and support. We recommend this is done in consultation with all relevant internal and partner areas to assess the impact of those definitions on the range of current and potential future support. Such assessment can then be used to inform a strategic decision on determining what definition, or definitions, best support the aims of that HE provider in encouraging the participation of care leavers in HE. It would not be in the interests of applicants if support became more limited through adopting a more restrictive definition; though neither would it be helpful if different definitions became overly confusing. There should always be a communication plan in place to ensure all support eligibility criteria, including definitions, are clear.

Where is the gap?

HE providers have put significant operational and financial efforts into raising aspirations and encouraging early interest in HE study amongst those least likely to progress to university, including care leavers. This effort is then replicated to support these students in their transition and adjustment to HE life.

Historically, there has been a gap between widening participation (WP) initiatives and transition that may have been overlooked or under-resourced, the 'admissions' stages or the applicant experience.

HE providers are becoming increasingly innovative and joined-up in how admissions processes and procedures can actively support care leavers, incorporating support through the whole of the applicant experience, and this approach has helped to 'bridge the gap' between the WP and transition stages.

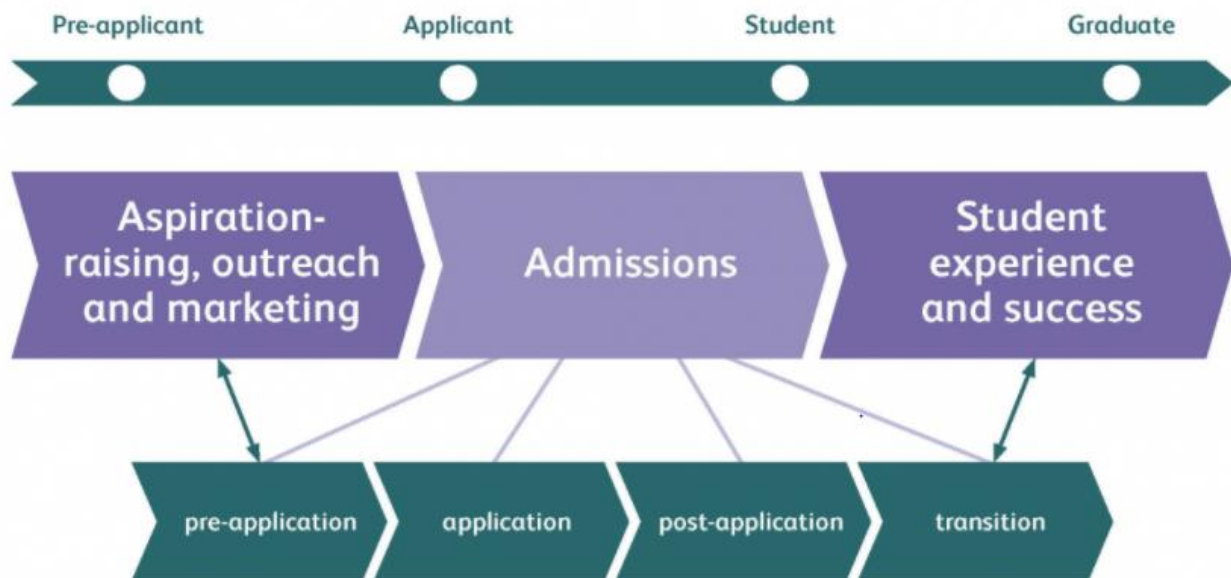
The applicant experience

[The good practice examples](#) demonstrate how HE providers are already using admissions as an active agent in a joined-up approach to supporting care leavers.

An early relationship between prospective students and HE providers helps to prepare students for university life and shape attitudes towards higher education. The applicant experience encompasses all the opportunities or points of interaction between higher education providers and a potential student, and can be broken down into four distinct (but connected) stages. These engagements can start before a learner has even considered higher education, and can influence whether an individual chooses to apply, becomes a student and effectively transitions to higher education. The interactions at each stage of the applicant experience should not be in isolation, and a joined-up approach is key:

- **Pre-application:** Covers individuals' consideration of higher education study and all activities and interactions prior to any commitment to commence an application for the given admissions entry cycle, including raising aspirations, widening access, understanding reasons for non-participation and forging links with suitable prospects.
- **Application:** Covers all activities from the point a learner has committed to commence an application for the given admissions entry cycle up to the point that application is considered by the institution(s) applied to.
- **Post-application:** Covers all activities concerning an institutions consideration of a submitted application, from the point the application receives any initial institutional assessment through to when the applicant has been confirmed, or guaranteed, a place of study.
- **Transition:** Covers all post-confirmation activities, from the point an applicant's place has been confirmed through to (and potentially beyond) the commencement of higher education studies.

The applicant experience should be considered as far more than just a one-way, or passive, journey taken by an individual. Experience is gained via participation, so there should be a fully-interactive path of engagement in which all potential students have the opportunity, knowledge and understanding to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations and in which higher education providers can inform, inspire and attract students who can add to that institution's character and succeed in their studies.



Both applicant and institution benefit from the kind of experience where ability and aspirations are accurately matched with an appropriate place. This is particularly pertinent to care leavers where consistent and effective engagement at each point in the admissions process and throughout the applicant experience is key. HE participation amongst care leavers across the UK is far too low and they are highly likely to have experienced disadvantage, disruption to studies and inconsistent advice earlier in life. As such, they may be less likely to have followed a linear path towards HE or be as prepared for applying for HE study.

We have collated examples of good practice under each stage of the applicant experience. Furthermore, many initiatives cross-over the whole applicant experience and case study examples have also been included to highlight overarching support across the stages. It is good practice to consider how any initiative could connect across the applicant experience to ensure that support is maintained and enhanced through to transition and beyond.

It is only by linking widening participation/outreach and transition work and increasing the support for care leavers during the admissions stages that the gap can be addressed. The recommendations below are aimed at helping universities and colleges address this gap in the context of the whole applicant experience and the case studies from a wide range of HE providers provide examples of where practices and policies have been put in place.

Recommendations

SPA is committed to the care leaver agenda and to supporting HE admissions to redress the challenges that those coming from care are faced with when applying to higher education. We will ensure that we embed consideration of care leavers into all relevant aspects of our work, including our good practice statements and the discussions that we have with HE providers, and we would encourage HE providers to consider care leavers in any of our good practice areas.

SPA has formulated a series of recommendations to help HEPs support care leavers throughout the applicant experience, underpinned by the good practice examples provided.

1. Have clear definitions

Definitions for those in and from care can differ between and within different Higher Education providers. Some providers use a single definition, whilst others use multiple definitions for different purposes, both of which bring potential benefits or limitations.

There should always be sufficient information and advice in place to ensure all support eligibility criteria, including definitions, are clear. We would encourage HE providers to review what definitions are used across its range of services and support, and ensure that these are applied consistently across all internal and partner areas, working with contacts to coordinate and confirm appropriate definitions.

- Several examples of in-practice definitions in our [good practice](#) section.

2. Promote support through policy

Supporting care leavers should be driven and promoted by clear policy that empowers and directs staff across all aspects of admissions and contiguous areas. Care leaver considerations should be embedded in to new and existing processes and procedures that support the admissions process and any stage of the applicant experience. Robust policies and procedures could be underpinned and strengthened by having a member of the senior management team, or governor, as a champion of care leaver support within an institution.

SPA aims to include consideration of care leavers into all our good practice updates, to help HE providers consider ways to embed it within their own policies and procedures.

- [The University of Edinburgh](#) introduced their care leavers' policy in 2013
- [Aberystwyth](#) offer a service for care leavers which is a holistic wrap-around **G**uidance, **A**dvice and **S**upport (GAS) for care leavers, looked after children and those estranged from parents, stretching from pre-admissions and outreach activity, through to transition and beyond.

3. Implement a communication plan

There will be a wide range of information available to care leavers and their advisors from across the sector and it should never be difficult to find. This may be especially important where HE providers have distinctive approaches or have multiple definitions for different purposes.

Considerations for a successful communication plan include clear definitions, support eligibility criteria, dates and deadlines, and key contact information. Information on supporting care leavers

should be easily accessible, easy to understand and consistently conveyed by all staff in the institution, regardless of the point in the cycle that the applicant is applying.

- [Cardiff University](#) believes that communication is key once the student has applied, using a variety of communication methods specifically to interact with care leavers, and encourage them to connect with others.
- [Bucks New University](#) have built in a process to identify care leavers applying through Clearing to ensure even new applicants at this late stage in admissions receive clear information and support.

4. Ensure an integrated applicant experience

We would encourage HEPs to reflectively consider how the work that they do in supporting care leavers or those coming from care, fits into the [applicant experience](#).

SPA advocates strong collaboration and co-ordination across the applicant experience, and recognises that there are many individuals and teams involved including school and college liaison staff, WP and outreach staff, marketing teams, planning, teaching and learning, student services and student records. The extent and scope of engagement with external partners will also be pivotal. To be able to think through the entire applicant experience in a joined-up way requires HE providers to look at how teams and individuals work together, for example, how does outreach and recruitment work contribute to and support a positive transition stage? Can the student services team have a role to play in the recruitment stage? Do Virtual Heads know who to discuss an applicant's portfolio preparation with? It is important to note that admissions is the key link in the applicant experience and has a key role to play in binding WP efforts to fair access or undoing them. Do not allow your admissions to become isolated from your care leaver support strategy. It may be helpful to have a member of the senior management team, or governor, champion care leaver support within your institution, and where this is the case that champion should be kept aware of the opportunities for such support within admissions.

Admissions staff should maintain communication with the provider's named contact for care leavers, not only to ensure awareness of the status of relevant applications, but also to liaise on minimising barriers and providing clear advice on admissions procedures.

- In addition to the named contact at [Sheffield Hallam University](#), support is embedded in staff roles across the institution, ensuring long term sustainability. The teams have developed close links to enable consistency in their approach and regular information sharing.
- [UCLan's](#) Care Leavers Support Panel meets monthly and consists of internal and external representatives from Admissions, Student Financial Support, Accommodation, Marketing and Outreach, Foster Carers, Social Work, Academics, Youth Services, Student Wellbeing, Mentoring and the Student Union.

5. Include 'care leaver' considerations within contextualised admissions

Contextualised admissions can be used to aid in the judgment of the potential of care leavers, as part of the holistic assessment of an application, as their achievements may have been affected by relative disadvantage in their education or life situation.

The use of contextual data may be applied for several purposes throughout the applicant experience that are particularly relevant to those coming from a background in care, including: targeting aspiration-raising; informing admissions decision-making; identifying additional learner support or advice; financial support; or for monitoring and reporting purposes. Sources of relevant contextual data may include information as declared in students' applications (personal statement, reference,

school information), in institutions' own data or additional questionnaires, from publicly available data sets or from commercial sources.

Recent policy initiatives around the UK have been supported by the [UCAS contextual data](#) service and the SPA research in this area, including the SPA report [Contextualised Admissions: Examining the Evidence](#). UCAS and SPA have worked with the Fair Education Alliance to provide information for teachers and advisers on what contextualised admissions is, how it's used and what it might mean for student applications.

Contextual data and information can be used for many purposes within admissions and access, many of which are particularly relevant to those coming from a background in care. These include:

- ✓ widening participation and targeting aspiration-raising and WP and fair access activities
- ✓ to inform the decision as to who to interview
- ✓ to inform admissions decision-making to enable the “best students” to be admitted and retained (as defined by the HE provider)
- ✓ to identify applicants who may need additional learner support or practical advice during their application process, transition or when registered as a student
- ✓ to help assess applicants for financial/in-kind support
- ✓ for statistical and qualitative tracking, monitoring and reporting purposes

The number of care leavers / looked after children applying to and entering HE are likely to be too small for relevant statistical analysis on an individual provider, or even local area, basis, but their low participation rate nationally, plus the high risk of disadvantage, should justify it as an indicator for providing additional support and consideration in admissions.

- University of Sheffield have a Disrupted Studies initiative which allows care leavers to submit additional information to help admissions staff put their learning into context.
- Applicants who have indicated that they have spent time in care on their UCAS form who are offered a place at Newcastle University are automatically given a dual offer: the standard offer for the course; plus an alternative offer usually two grades lower than the standard offer including successful completion of an Assessed Summer School through their PARTNERS Programme.

Bridging the gap good practice examples

These examples are not exhaustive and go some way to demonstrate the diversity in scope, remit, funding and operational demands of different initiatives across the sector. Full versions of these and more case studies can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

In practice care leaver definitions

UCLan

For applicants to qualify for a Care Leaver Bursary, UCLan use the following definition:

- 'Enrolled on a full-time, undergraduate UCLan programme
- Care Leaver-defined as in care for at least 13 weeks, spanning your 16th birthday
- Under 25 on the first day of the academic year you started your current course of study

If you do not qualify as a Care Leaver, but you are estranged from your parents or have been resident in a Foyer, please contact the Care Leaver Advisor as you may be able to apply for support through the Access to Learning Fund.'

Kingston University

Kingston supports young people under the age of 25, who meet one of the following criteria:

- have left or are about to leave the care of their local authority
- are housed in Foyer accommodation
- are estranged from their families

Kingston require contextual evidence from their Social/Keyworkers upon which they become a known Care Leaver to the University – which unlocks the complete package of support.

University of Edinburgh

Background in care - anyone who has been in the care of a local authority for at least 13 weeks, whether away from home or in the home, will be considered to have a background in care, and therefore be eligible for support.

Care leaver - A care leaver is defined as a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after away from home by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after away from home by the local authority at school-leaving age or after that date.

Cardiff University

Cardiff University are very flexible with their definition and have extended the support to estranged students who have not formally gone through the care system, looking at these on a case-by-case basis:

- 'Have been in Care for 6 months from the age of 14' **or**
- 'have been in Care for 3 months from the age of 16' **or**
- 'have been irreconcilably estranged from my parents or guardians between the age of 16 and leaving school or FE'

University of Winchester

'Care leavers are students entering higher education at the University who have a Former Relevant care leaver status. This being those young people who are under 25 years old and who are 'looked after' by the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and which ended after the age of 16 (Children (leaving Care) Act 2000).

Care leavers may also be defined as students who have been: Privately fostered up to the age of 16, or the subject of a Special Guardianship Order and were 'looked after' immediately prior to the making of the order subject to written confirmation of their status and a letter of support from their Local Children's Services Department.'

Good practice and the applicant experience: Pre-application

Sunderland University

Sunderland University provide 1:1 support for Care Experienced Students at Open days, on campus events, individual tours and in completing their UCAS application. They also provide interview preparation sessions pre and post application, where applicable. Additionally, they will meet and liaise with students, their Local Authority and Carers to develop pathway plans and ensure support is in place for university. This can include ensuring costs of application and visits are anticipated. There is also a Care Leaver Scholarship, which is offered in addition to the wider scholarship package.

University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde has a suite of activities and approaches designed to support people from care backgrounds throughout the student lifecycle, aimed to encourage confidence, success and participation at every stage of the learner journey. These include a residential summer school for high school pupils in S2 and S3 designed to encourage aspiration and attainment. The summer school provides young people in care with an experience of university life and develops their understanding of the subject choices open to them and the entry requirements, thus aiding their transition into the senior phase of the Curriculum for Excellence and the process of application to university. Applicants from care backgrounds are also given priority places in summer programmes and outreach activities

The University is a partner in the MCR Pathways programme, providing one-to-one mentoring for vulnerable young people, including those from looked after backgrounds, in schools in the East of Glasgow. As well as providing aspiration raising insight and support, the project provides taster sessions at university. The University has recently begun to support staff members in becoming mentors for the project, allowing volunteers to undertake mentorship during working hours.

Applicants from care backgrounds are given priority places in summer programmes and outreach activities.

Liverpool John Moores University

LJMU host a variety of widening participation events specifically targeted at Looked after Children. The largest is held during National Care Leavers' Week, when LMJU works in close partnership with its local schools/colleges and the surrounding Local Authorities to recruit young people aged 13-17 and with the potential to achieve and enter HE onto campus to experience a whole host of HE related activities. LJMU work in close partnership with local schools/colleges and the surrounding Local Authorities to identify and recruit students for events like this.

Over the past two years, they have welcomed over 80 looked after children from Liverpool and beyond on campus, delivering a whole host of introductory to subject specific activities. Such activities are run by their own Student Advocates, many of whom have been through the care system themselves. Student Advocates play an essential role in their student recruitment and widening participation programmes. They impart their knowledge of Higher Education and experience of student life to the young people, encouraging engagement in activities and raising motivation and aspirations to enter higher education.

Since 2011, over 70 LAC and Care Leavers have engaged with the Academic Mentoring Support Programme that is run in partnership with LJMU and Wirral Local Authority. The programme has had a dramatic impact on the academic attainment of our LAC at Key Stage 4 and our Care Leavers at KS5. The mentoring support has predominantly been used to improved GCSE grades in English and Maths.

As a Local Authority, Wirral are assessed against a national indicator; number of LAC who achieve 5 A*-C GCSE grades including English and Maths. With the support of the mentoring programme, 25 LAC have achieved this over the past 3 years. Additionally, the mentoring programme has also had a direct impact on the amount of Care Leavers in Wirral who have progressed into Higher Education. Over the past 5 years, 8 Care Leavers have successfully started University courses after engaging with the mentoring support programme. The programme allowed these Care Leavers to receive subject specific mentoring which helped them to meet the conditions of their offers from their chosen universities. LJMU has been very supportive in assisting our team in raising aspirations towards HE for LAC and Care Levers in Wirral.

LJMU provides a range of opportunities for LAC/Care Leavers to engage with the University including; Campus tours, student shadowing, residentials, individual discussions with Pastoral support staff and meetings with course lecturers. These programmes consistently have a positive impact on the young people, allowing them to establish a good understanding of all aspects of HE.

HEART

HEART is a partnership made up of 12 providers: Bradford College, Calderdale College, Kirklees College, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City College (incorporating Leeds College of Music), Leeds College of Art, Leeds College of Building, Leeds Trinity University, University of Bradford, University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds and Wakefield College.

They have aimed to systematically engage intermediaries involved in providing support and guidance to young people in or leaving care. This has involved establishing a network of local authority officers, independent fostering agencies, partners and other agencies involved in providing support to share critical issues associated with progression into and through higher education. This has subsequently led to:

- Access to fostering support groups to provide details of partner support for care leavers entering higher education.
- Development of foster care coffee mornings, providing information to carers about key transition points through education including guidance on GCSE selections for onward progression and accessing higher education.
- Foster family learning days enabling the whole foster family to experience campus based learning and allowing foster carers without higher education experience to gain insights to the process of application.
- HEART taking on the representative role with the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, thereby gaining insight to practice across England and enabling partners to enhance their support packages.
- Development of a summary of support available from our partners, based mainly on the headings for the Who Cares? Trust HE Handbook.
- Securing the NCLW14, National Lecture.
- One local authority adopting the practice of another in appointing a dedicated 'HE Support Officer' to work with looked after young people/care leavers in considering all aspects of support offered by their partners and nationwide.

University of the West of Scotland

UWS provide 1:1 engagement at the pre-entry stage as well as during the admissions process. Students can contact the Care Leaver Coordinator (CLC) to find out more about applying to their institution. Pre-entry support is provided through the CLC over several months offering help with the UCAS application and the personal statement. Applicants also have contact with the Funding & Advice Advisor before enrolment. The Admissions Team are also kept in the loop.

Cardiff University

Confident Futures: The Widening Access Team works with regional Social Service LAC and Care Leaver Teams to deliver a mentoring scheme to young people who are in / have experience of being in care between the ages of 14 - 19. The Confident Futures Project combines group activities with individual support to raise aspirations and improve confidence. This will include social trips, university taster days and workshops to support studies and applications for jobs, college and / or university. As part of the project, the young people will also have access to university events such as GCSE /A level revision workshops and advice sessions to support Personal Education Plans and pathways.

Open day Registration: Cardiff University has four institutional Open days a year usually in April, July, September and October. They have adopted the same question that is on the UCAS application for registering for the Open day. They ask all prospective students if they have been in care. This allows the dedicated contact for Care Leavers, to contact applicants and arrange to meet them at the Open day. Many students tick this box in error (like the UCAS application) however it has led to the dedicated contact meeting with at least 2 care leavers in each Open day over the past year.

Application

Sunderland University

On receipt of application, applicants who identify as 'Care Experienced' on their UCAS form automatically receive an email from the Care Leavers Support team at Sunderland when their application is received outlining the support available. Applicants are allocated a named contact from the Support team to help with any stage of their application, during university and beyond. The Care Experienced Student Support team receive weekly data reports of applicants who have identified as 'Care Experienced'. These students are sent a letter and a copy of their *Guide for Care Experienced Students; from application to graduation*. The progress of applications is monitored and the team work closely with admissions to resolve any problems.

University of Brighton

University of Brighton work with local Virtual Schools to offer Student Shadowing and personal statement surgeries to lac/young care leavers to ensure that they are given support through the application process.

University of Winchester

At Winchester, students who are care leavers are identified by Admissions staff as soon as UCAS applications arrive, providing they have ticked the relevant box. In some cases, there has been prior contact with local authority staff via the Director of Widening Participation, through previous engagement with the university's outreach activities or the designated contact through the Propel website. In other cases, students make themselves known to staff in Student Services or Widening Participation after they have applied, or even after enrolment. Care leaver students must meet with the designated Student Adviser to trigger their Scholarship and support package.

University of Edinburgh

The widening participation team at Edinburgh provide help and support to care leavers during the application process and beyond, and the University has a range of other support available including a 365-day accommodation guarantee.

They provide a link for care leavers, which provides information on their commitment to make an offer to care leavers who have met our minimum entry requirements, wherever possible (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-recruitment/widening-participation/projects/care-leavers>).

Kingston University

At Kingston University, the Student Support Manager often visits Local Authorities to deliver IAG sessions to Year 12/13 pupils in care, to work with them on their UCAS application, and to explain the benefits of using their experience to strengthen their UCAS application (both at declaration and personal statement stage) They also work to advise applicants about the importance of declaring that they are a Care Leaver on their UCAS application, and then request regular reports from their Admissions Department between Jan- May each year so that they are able to contact prospective Care Leavers and advise them of the support they are entitled to.

Cardiff University

Cardiff University believes that communication is key once the student has applied. The Key Contact for care leavers has worked closely with the Admissions department to create a report that can be run from the Student Information Management System (SIMS) reporting all the students who have disclosed on their UCAS application that they have been in care. The Key Contact will run the report once a month between January and May every academic year and will write to all the students who have applied to study at Cardiff University, introducing herself and her role, outlining the support available for care leavers and will also include a factsheet on student finance. In the letter, the Key Contact encourages the applicant to make contact or to pass the letter on to their personal adviser so that they can make contact. If an applicant gets in contact, the Key Contact will arrange a support meeting with the student and their personal adviser and/or foster carer. Information to be discussed will include their accommodation needs, financial support available, disability or other supporting needs and general information about Cardiff and the University. The Key Contact will also inform the student of their entitlement to financial support from their Local Authority (LA) and will offer to liaise with the LA if the student wants to. If the student can't come to Cardiff, this information will be discussed over the phone or by e-mail.

Cardiff also uses social media as a means of communications. The Dedicated Contact for Care Leavers at Cardiff University now has a Facebook account and applicants are invited to "friend" the account. Within the account, a closed group has been created for applicants and current care leavers to communicate with each other in a safe online environment. Applicants are encouraged to ask questions to their peers. They might not want to ask the dedicated contact as a member of staff and might feel safer asking things to other students. This also helps in building a relationship with the university before they start their course.

Post-application

University of Brighton

Students who declare themselves as care leavers whose initial application is rejected are flagged with the Widening Participation Outreach Manager who will give the application further consideration and liaise with admissions tutors if it is considered appropriate to discuss the student's circumstances and in light of this an offer may then be made.

This allows for contextualised admissions which may benefit the young person and is overseen by Widening Participation who have an appreciation of the difficulties that can face young care leavers and are able to intervene. The University is then able to maintain links through the Care Leaver Coordinator who is also a WP Officer and initial point of contact for young Care Leavers.

University of Liverpool

The University of Liverpool has established an admissions procedure where any applicant that receives a conditional offer and has identified themselves as care experienced is referred to the Widening Participation (WP) team. These applicants are then individually contacted to congratulate them on their offer and invited to visit the campus at Liverpool. This bespoke campus experience will allow the applicant to meet academics and undergraduates from their chosen course and have a personal tour of the campus and accommodation. The applicant will also meet representatives from Student Services who will be able to provide bespoke advice regarding the additional pastoral and financial support available to them. Transport costs to Liverpool will also be funded by the WP team, ensuring that care experienced applicants will not have to fund train fares to the University campus. Following this campus experience, the applicant will then be offered the opportunity to continue to engage with WP staff who will be able to offer advice regarding finance, accommodation and course information as well as supporting transition into university.

University of Winchester

Winchester give special consideration to applications from care leavers to ensure they have the maximum chance of an offer of a place, but without lowering entry standards to the point where their chances of coping with a degree are unrealistic. Most programmes have banded tariff point entry requirements and care leavers will be made offers at the lower end of the band if it seems necessary and appropriate. They aim to make offers as quickly as possible to reduce uncertainty and enable the student to plan ahead.

Care leaver students receive a personal offer letter from the designated Student Adviser, generated from the student information system via the Admissions team, with their offer of a place. As well as notifying students of the offer, the letter highlights when and how they can apply for 365-day housing, gives details of financial support, requests evidence of care leaver status and how to supply it, outlines potential for employment as a Higher Education Ambassador and provides details of welfare support.

Sunderland University

Post-offer applicants are invited to the applicant summer school where they can gain 20 tariff points. The Support team rings all applicants holding an offer to ensure that they have applied for accommodation, student finance and any suitable scholarships. The Support team also offers a personalised contact service for all care experienced applicants, liaising with the local authority where necessary to ensure adequate support is in place and to help resolve any queries. The Support team continue to monitor progress of applications and liaise with admissions to highlight any outstanding requirements such as GCSE results or DBS clearance requirements.

During Clearing, the Admissions Support unit are all given briefing notes for supporting care experienced students and the Support team monitor applications from care experienced students daily, sending out information as offers are made. They are available at the Admissions Support Unit to provide a dedicated support line for any care experienced students.

Sheffield Hallam University

Applicants are sent an automated email when they tick the Care Leaver box on their UCAS form. This email outlines the support available and directs them to the Sheffield Hallam Compact scheme.

Care leavers on Sheffield Hallam University's Compact scheme are given a named contact who understands the support on offer and the challenges that care leavers may be facing. The support from the named contact includes a meet and greet when they visit the University either on their own or at an event such as an open day etc. In cases where assessment by interview is required for professional courses in Health and Education, care leavers are invited to interview workshops to improve their preparation.

Communication is key to the care leaver experience at Sheffield Hallam, with regular email communications about student life, upcoming events, opportunities and support (including bursaries). Named contacts offer support throughout the applicant experience, from pre-arrival through to graduation, and with career support for 3 years thereafter. However, support is not limited to the named contact: supporting care leavers is embedded in staff roles across the institution, ensuring long term sustainability. The teams that support care leavers have developed close links to enable consistency in their approach and regular information sharing.

Care Leavers who have not met the terms of their offer at confirmation will be reviewed before other applicants to see where additional allowances can be made. This is done in the context of maintaining quality and ensuring they can progress onto a degree programme.

Bucks New University

Bucks New University realises the challenges for care leavers with disrupted educational journeys and have built in a process to support care leavers applying through Clearing. All enquirers through Clearing are asked whether they have ever spent time in care as standard, with those disclosing time spent in care being referred to the designated member of Student Services, either by transferring the phone call or e-mailing across an application form for the staff member to make contact.

A designated contact in Student Services is available throughout the Clearing period to advise care leavers of the support available to them and ensure their transition from offer to enrolment is as smooth as possible. This includes explaining the next steps, facilitating campus visits, guiding students through the funding landscape to ensure they are receiving all financial assistance that they are entitled to and helping them to secure accommodation, if required. This provides a single point of contact for any care leaver applicants at this late stage of the recruitment cycle to ensure they have all the information they need before enrolling with the university. The student is also encouraged to contact the designated member of student services with any subsequent queries.

All students applying through clearing face challenges and uncertainty, regardless of whether they have spent time in care. However, to improve outcomes for care leavers, the university hopes that providing this one to one support throughout this difficult time will help to improve the experience and reduce the stress and anxiety for care experienced students.

There is also a benefit for admissions colleagues who are briefed in advance of the Clearing period of the approach. They are therefore confident asking the question as part of the Clearing enquiry form and can refer on to the designated contact.

Bucks New have been operating this support mechanism for three years and each year enquiries from the Clearing team have been transferred through to the designated contact. Having someone removed from the mainstream admissions function with the time and skillset to guide the young person through the next stages helps to ensure the right outcome. This does not always mean an enrolment in the forthcoming academic year as it may be best for the young person to take some time out from their studies until they've had sufficient time to make appropriate arrangements and be confident that they are making the right decision.

University of Sheffield

The university launched its Disrupted Studies initiative at the start of the 2012 UCAS cycle - www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/disrupted. This, in effect, is an application form that sits on the university's applicant-facing web pages. It allows any applicant that has experienced an issue of a personal, social or domestic nature, to make a submission at the time they apply or (for offer-holders) prior to receiving their results.

Any UCAS application declaring a care background or in looked-after circumstances is automatically tagged at Sheffield. This enables the Admissions Officer (WP) to have a conversation with the course Admissions Tutor. If, after a preliminary inspection of the application, the Tutor wishes to have more contextual information then the application will be put on hold, the applicant will be contacted and asked to make a Disrupted Studies submission. Once the submission is made, the application will progress to the offer-making stage. Alternatively, if an offer is made and accepted without a Disrupted Studies submission, the applicant will be invited to make a submission prior to receiving results. Where the terms of the offer are narrowly missed, the applicant will be afforded additional consideration once their results are received. We ask that the applicant evidences that they have either overcome challenges in their education, or that their grades have been affected by their circumstances.

Confirmation decisions remain the preserve of academic judgement and involve the holistic reconsideration of the application in conjunction with Disrupted Studies information. Furthermore, those applicants from care backgrounds/looked-after circumstances whose places are not confirmed can be considered for entry for the University of Sheffield's Foundation Year courses.

The Disrupted Studies function has been designed in such a way as not to create an additional burden on the applicant. Often, the Admissions Officer (WP) will guide the applicant through the process and provide impartial advice at all stages of the applicant journey. In recent years, an increasing number of applicants from care backgrounds/in looked-after circumstances who go on to register at the University of Sheffield actively seek out opportunities to work as student ambassadors as they themselves wish to provide help and guidance to the next wave of UCAS applicants. That is a vote of confidence in the approaches adopted at the University, as is the recent increase in both undergraduate applications and registrations from this cohort.

University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde has a dedicated single named Care Advisor who makes contact on application to anyone who has identified themselves as being from a care background, to provide individual support and guidance. If an applicant is unsuccessful in securing a place at Strathclyde, the Care Advisor provides feedback and advice on other options and routes to Higher Education.

Newcastle University

Newcastle University's access scheme, the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route, is extended to all UK students who indicate that they have experienced care for a period of longer than three months. This entitles the student to a lower offer for their course (usually two grades lower) and provides them with the additional support offered by the Assessed Summer School at the end of Year 13/final year college year. Students who have indicated that they have spent time in care on their UCAS form are automatically awarded a 'dual offer' (the typical offer and the lower PARTNERS offer) and contacted about PARTNERS. The event is completely free of charge - accommodation and meals are provided for the duration of the Summer School, and transport is organised or reimbursed. In addition to providing an alternative entry route into the University, the Summer School provides an excellent opportunity for looked after children to develop their confidence, make friends and develop skills in preparation for starting university. The Summer School also allows students to find out more about the support and welfare services that are available to them. Often, students who take part do not need the security of the lower grades, but value the transition support that the Summer School offers. Not all students who receive the dual offer choose to take part in PARTNERS, but since the introduction of this procedure in 2009, 40 care leavers/looked after children have taken part in the PARTNERS supported entry route, and 23 have secured their place at the University; those that were unable to secure their place did not achieve the necessary lower grades. Ten care leavers took part in PARTNERS in 2014 which is the biggest number to date, with six securing a place at the University.

Students who take part in PARTNERS often feel more confident as a result; in their abilities and in the transition to higher education. "The summer school was a great experience. I learned a lot from the lectures and higher education skills sessions and made a lot of new friends. This, along with being able to experience living in halls, has made me feel more prepared and confident about starting university in September." Care Leavers feel that they have benefitted from the extra support that PARTNERS offers, and having an opportunity to meet University staff and fellow students.

University of Edinburgh

In October 2013, the University of Edinburgh introduced a care leavers' policy which provides a range of support for care leavers who come to the University. The policy includes the pledge that, wherever possible, an applicant who meets their definition of a care leaver will receive an offer at the minimum entry requirement for the programme.

Transition

University of Edinburgh

Care leavers are guaranteed an access bursary of at least £1,000 and may be eligible for further financial support through either the University of Edinburgh Bursary (for students from the rest of the UK) or Scotland Accommodation Bursary (for students from Scotland).

University of Winchester

Winchester seek feedback from care leaver students about their support and make improvements as a result. For example, in 2014 they started staggering payment of the King Alfred Scholarship so that it is provided in between payments of other loans and grants, allowing better budgeting.

Each year, Winchester also gather staff feedback with the aim of reviewing processes and implementing improvements, considering any student feedback and good practice identified elsewhere.

Kingston University

Care Leaver applicants who are offered a place at Kingston are then invited to a three-day Summer School called 'Headstart'. This provides them with an opportunity to meet over 100+ other WP applicants, some of whom will also be Care Leavers. The programme offers them an insight into how to prepare for University - from study skills, to budgeting, to socialising.

The Kingston University Cares Student Support Manager looks after all students on-course. They deliver termly Learning Community meetings (as a chance for them to discuss any challenges or discoveries they've made at University), termly one to one meetings to make sure they are on track, and an advocacy service for their personal and academic needs (i.e. money, housing, disability, academic progression). The Support Manager also offers three students a one-week work placement in Marketing and Communications, as a way for them to develop their employability skills.

Huddersfield University

Huddersfield University has recently set up a mentoring scheme for care leavers, the idea for which came from one of their care leaver students who had access to this type of support due to a disability. They stated that they had found it so empowering and so useful that she felt all care leavers should have access to this type of support. In addition, the University was the first University to establish a PhD scholarship for care leavers.

University of West of Scotland

At UWS, to help with the transition to university, students are asked to participate in their First Steps at University module. This helps students gain in confidence and enhances their learning and study skills. If there have been any gaps in education UWS recognise the importance of providing a stepped approach to learning and ensuring that the student is well prepared.

University of Brighton

At the University of Brighton, students applying for the Care Leaver bursary package give them pre-entry contact with the Care Leaver Coordinator who they can get in touch with for advice and support before and during their time at University. The bursary gives young care leavers a good financial foundation as they do not have the luxury of being able to call on parents to help them out. The university gives young care leavers extra consideration for the student ambassador programme and if they are successful in being appointed this provides them with the opportunity to undertake flexible employment which can be organised around their other commitments and which will also provide them with employability skills for their future. Guaranteed accommodation and accommodation over the summer break aim to give the young care leaver a sense of security and a safe place to live. The university's Student Support and Guidance Tutors (SSGTs) are mindful of which students are care leavers and are sensitive to their circumstances. The SSGTs contact students once they have enrolled and send regular reminders of the support they can offer so that students are aware of who they can contact if they need advice/support. The SSGTs will also make swift contact with young care leavers should they find that they are not attending classes etc. These measures are in place with the aim not only to support the students but to support retention.

The University of Sheffield

Admissions shares information with other parts of Professional Services to ensure a joined-up approach to transition, such as:

- Disability and Dyslexia Support Service to help inform a supports needs assessment and minimises the need for the applicant to resubmit the same information
- Accommodation Service who guarantee priority attention to those from care backgrounds/looked-after circumstances
- Student Support and Transitions Team to ensure individuals get all the help and support they need to navigate registration and Freshers' Fortnight.

Overarching

Supporting individuals: Sheffield Hallam University

Case study from a current student (names have been removed form anonymity): A significant factor for A coming to study at Sheffield Hallam University came when she organised to come to an Open Day. She was met and looked after by a Student Ambassador who was himself a care leaver. He showed A around the university, talked about what it was like to study there and shared his personal experiences. *"He was so helpful, he went through everything with me."* He went through all the forms that as a care leaver she would need to complete and offered accommodation advice. Up to this point A was unaware of the bursaries on offer to her as she hadn't received additional support from her school. She put this down to a lack of understanding on their part and overly crowded class sizes. The support she received from Sheffield Hallam University has been in stark contrast to that. She described the support she received from staff as, *"Brilliant ... just being able to speak to someone and get any concerns off my chest has been really helpful,"* and, *"It's helped me speak to people if I'm struggling."* She also really appreciates that staff get in touch to check she's ok. Sheffield Hallam's Unite bursary, *"Took a lot off my mind and helped me a lot."* It gave A extra support where she needed it with her course and helped pay for travel and living costs. *"I would recommend being a part of it because the support is very helpful."* Like many students, A's primary concern about coming to university was not knowing anyone. Her biggest piece of advice to new students would be to try and not be shy, try new things, go along and try as much as you can. You will make new friends. One of the things A has found particularly beneficial since coming to university is working as a Student Ambassador, she thinks it has helped her speak out and she's really enjoyed helping inspire younger students in similar situations.

Co-ordinated communication and support: Aberystwyth University

Aberystwyth offer a service for care leavers which is a holistic wrap-around **G**uidance, **A**dvice and **S**upport (GAS) for care leavers, looked after children and those estranged from parents.

As well as pre-admissions projects (from aged 10 and upwards) there is support to complete UCAS processes, visits to University, etc. As the 'Named Person' (under Buttle UK Quality Mark), the WP Manager liaises closely with Schools' Liaison and Admissions to identify care-leavers through UCAS, on application / offer. Those indicating their status are contacted individually: e-mail introduction, follow up letter laying out the support available during the application year, at results time, and into registration, including:

- support for departmental visits (travel costs refunded, or can be made available as public transport tickets),
- reminders for key dates: accepting places, applying for accommodation on line (365 days' guarantee), early IT/online library access for firm unconditional offers, etc.
- contextual confirmation acceptance based on declared care-leaver status, if applicable
- availability of early arrival (priority move in to accommodation), help to move, Starter Pack available in their room (bedding, linen, crockery, cutlery, stationery & food for a couple of days)
- the allocation of a peer mentor on arrival (an opt out system for these students - and other Widening Access groups) to our peer mentoring system 'Signpost'
- close liaison from January to September with mainstream Student Support Mentoring Co-ordinator - particularly where DSA advice and support is needed (above average in this group)

The 'Named Person' role is key in being a pivot for accessing support through the mainstream support services; a signposting, referral system in effect. This is particularly effective as the WP Manager manages the flagship Aberystwyth Summer University programme meaning that they are available on campus over the school / college summer vacation period and can (together with a trained team) respond to last minute problems and queries.

Consistent and continued communication and support: University of the West of Scotland

Student A was contacted through email, by the Senior Widening Participation Development Officer in her role as Care Leaver Coordinator (CLC) to introduce herself and provide information on the support available at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). The email which goes to all Care Leavers who have applied to UWS also invited students to come and meet the CLC to discuss any problems that may affect their transition to university.

Student A replied that she was worried about coming to university and wasn't sure whether she would take up the offer of a place on the course for which she had applied. The CLC asked if she would like to come for a chat and at she could bring someone with her. The student brought her mother along and through the discussion it became apparent that coming to university at that point was not going to be viable for her. The student had moved home many times in the past five years and her confidence had suffered. After discussing the options available, the student then spoke to the Admissions Manager and it was agreed that her place on the course would be deferred for a year.

Student A was happy with this decision and contact was maintained throughout the coming year. For the second meeting with the CLC, the Student brought along a friend and for the consequent meetings came along independently. During this time appointments were made with a Funding Advisor to make sure that the student was receiving the correct benefits and with a Disability Advisor to assess how much help student would need for her academic work as she had dyslexia.

To maintain academic writing skills, Student A participated in an access module, Next Steps at University, over a period of 10 weeks to develop study skills, essay and report writing and critical thinking. The module has helped to ease Student A into learning again a year after having left school and has enhanced her existing skills which will make it easier to study at degree level.

The CLC could provide information on trust funds that were available and was able to provide guidance on the application. Help was also provided on applying for the new Care Experienced Students Bursary.

A tour of the campus was also planned so that Student A can find their way around during Induction Week, again making sure that the transition to university is a positive experience.

Pre-entry support and ongoing communication from the Admissions Team, the Care Leaver Coordinator, the Funding Advisor and the Disability Advisor were essential to providing the student with the information needed to make an informed choice on whether to come to university or defer for a year. The relationship with the Care Leaver Coordinator also proved to be beneficial in helping the student build their confidence again and the student was better equipped to cope with barriers that may prevent them from coming to university.

Contextualised Admissions: Cardiff University

The aim of the Contextual Admissions Model is to better inform Admissions Tutors' understanding of applicants' social backgrounds, allowing Admissions Tutors to assess applicants' potential to succeed at Cardiff University in the context of barriers they may have encountered. The model in operation involves the identification of individual applicants for 'additional consideration' based on reliable data. One of these "contextual indicators" is if a student has disclosed on their UCAS application that they have been in care. The University does not use contextual information to make lower or differential offers to any group of applicants. If an application is identified as eligible for 'additional consideration', this may take one of several forms, including:

- **Guaranteed Offer (programmes without additional entry requirements):** Applicants with contextual indicators who have applied to a programme which does not have additional non-academic or professional entry requirements will be guaranteed a typical offer for the programme applied for.
- **Guaranteed Offer (programmes with additional entry requirements):** Applicants with contextual indicators who have applied to a programme with additional non-academic requirements (e.g. submission of a portfolio of work or written work) who have demonstrated suitable potential will be guaranteed a typical offer for the programme applied for. Any additional requirements are stipulated in each Academic School's admissions criteria.
- **Guaranteed Interview (programmes with profession-specific non-academic suitability requirements):** Applicants with contextual indicators who have applied to a programme with additional profession-specific non-academic suitability requirements who have demonstrated their suitability for the profession and whose predicted grades satisfy minimum academic thresholds, expressed as non-academic and academic application scores, will be guaranteed an interview. Minimum thresholds and requirements are articulated in the relevant Schools' admissions criteria.
- **Summer Results period:** Admissions tutors will give additional consideration to applicants with contextual indicators for remaining places following the publication of the summer examination results. Applicants with contextual indicators may also be considered for Clearing vacancies on related programmes if there are no remaining vacancies on their preferred programmes of study.

In addition to these specific actions, Schools will take the following factors into account for applicants with contextual indicators:


- **Non-Academic Achievements:** It is recognised that applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds may have had fewer opportunities to undertake work experience or to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- **Interview:** Applicants with contextual indicators are likely to have fewer opportunities to prepare for interview e.g. coaching in interview skills, practice interviews etc.





Co-ordinating support teams: UCLAN

In January 2014, UCLAN convened a Care Leavers Support Panel initially tasked to develop systems, processes and a package of support for Care leavers to meet the requirements for Buttle accreditation. From the outset, the group also noted the wider potential benefits to other vulnerable groups such as those estranged from parents. This project has continued and has succeeded in pulling together a full package of support. The panel continues to meet monthly to consider the existing package of support, future developments, issues arising at application and post enrolment stages, staff development and other outreach and development activities/opportunities. The group consists of internal and external representatives from Admissions, Student Financial Support, Accommodation, Marketing and Outreach, Foster Carers, Social Work, Academics, Youth Services, Student Wellbeing, Mentoring and the Student Union. The package consists of a range of support covering money, accommodation and services from all aspects of student life & health and wellbeing. Care leavers and their supporters can access dedicated staff members - one person for the pre-application through to acceptance stage and another from enrolment throughout their career with UCLAN.

Appendix 1 – Call for evidence submissions

We are very grateful to the below HE providers and partnerships who submitted evidence on Using Admissions to bridge the gap for care leavers.

Aberystwyth University	Debra Croft Manager, Centre for Widening Participation dec@aber.ac.uk	 download
University of Brighton	Michelle Tarling Widening Participation Officer & Care Leaver Coordinator m.tarling@brighton.ac.uk	 download
Bucks New University	Lee Byrne Team Leader – Student Finance and Information Lee.byrne@bucks.ac.uk	 download
Cardiff University	Einir Evans Student Support Adviser (dedicated contact for care leavers) evanse23@cardiff.ac.uk	 download
University of Edinburgh	Gillian Simmons Policy and Project Manager gillian.simmons@ed.ac.uk	 download
HEART	Ian McGregor Brown Manager i.m.brown@adm.leeds.ac.uk	 download
University of Huddersfield	uncited	 download
Kingston University	Chrissie Farley Student Support Manager - KU Cares c.farley@kingston.ac.uk	 download
University of Liverpool	Ben Toleman Widening Participation Officer btoleman@liverpool.ac.uk	 download
Liverpool John Moores University	Catherine Shillito Schools and Colleges Account Manager C.H.Shillito@ljmu.ac.uk	 download
Newcastle University	Gemma Kirkbride Student Recruitment Manager gemma.kirkbride@ncl.ac.uk	 download
University of Sheffield	Heather Macleod-Jones Admissions Officer (Widening Participation) h.macleod@sheffield.ac.uk	 download
Sheffield Hallam University	Cassie Joicey Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer c.joicey@shu.ac.uk	 download
University of Strathclyde	Louise Martin Widening Access Support Adviser	 download

University of Sunderland	Wendy Price Access to Higher Education and Scholarships Manager wendy.price@sunderland.ac.uk	 download
UCLan – University of Central Lancashire	Jo Afrin Black Applicant Guidance Officer jafrin-black@uclan.ac.uk	 download
University of the West of Scotland	Jane O'Rorke Senior Widening Participation Development Officer jane.ororke@uws.ac.uk	 download
The University of Winchester	Sarah-Louise Collins Director of Widening Participation Sarah-Louise.Collins@winchester.ac.uk	 download

Appendix 2: Further information sources

The call for evidence will remain open and any new submissions, or updates to existing case studies, will be incorporated into the guide to continually build this bridge of evidence. If you have any examples of good practice within admissions (pre-application; application; post-application; transition), please submit them via: www.spa.ac.uk/information/callforevidence.

UCAS has produced [information, advice and guidance](#) to specifically support care leavers through the admissions process.

Buttle UK provides advice and financial support for care leavers and other young people in need: <http://www.buttleuk.org/about-us>

NNECL provides Higher Education activities and resources for care leavers, children in care and those who support them: <http://www.nnecl.org/>

OFFA: Many Higher Education Providers have made commitments to supporting care leavers as part of their OFFA access agreements. Further information can be found in individual access agreements via the OFFA website: <https://www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/>

Propel is a service from [Become](#), a charity for children in care and young care leavers. Propel provides care leavers with information about moving in to higher education from care. Universities and colleges have their own page to provide specific details on the support packages that they offer: <http://propel.org.uk/UK/>

Commitments and support statements

SPA has worked closely with Buttle UK and were a signatory to Buttle UK's statement of commitment. According to [Buttle UK](#), "*the emphasis going forward needs to be on embedding of practice into mainstream provision across the sector...with the right policies to bring about change and ensure the very best support is in place for this cohort of students wherever they wish to study*" and it is SPA's hope that this guide will support HEPs in embedding good practice in to their provision. With only around 6-7% of care leavers progressing into HE and varying patterns of participation across the UK, supportive good practice should continue to be championed.

In addition, SPA is an early adopter of the [Care Leaver Covenant](#). More information on this government initiative will be added to the guide as it becomes available, however SPA supports the principles that:

- All parts of society have a responsibility to help care leavers all parts of society have a responsibility to help care leavers to avoid poor outcomes and make a successful transition to adulthood; and
- Action to support care leavers should be in their best interests, promote their health and well-being and secure the best possible outcomes for them.

We will demonstrate our commitment to the care leave agenda by:

- ✓ Providing definitive expertise, advice and good practice on fair admissions to the UK HE sector, staff in Further Education Colleges offering HE and other stakeholders, to help HE providers in their drive to support those in and from care.
- ✓ Publishing and reviewing case studies from the sector, to showcase specific good practice
- ✓ Disseminating and promoting our care leaver good practice via a range of communication channels and deliver ways of bringing practitioners together to share good practice and examples of how applicants in and from care are supported through the admissions process. The case studies and examples of good practice submitted by HE providers and collated for this guide will also help inform and update SPA's advice to the HE sector.

We would like to gather more case studies and good practice examples to continually build and update this bridge of evidence and welcome any new submissions via our website:

www.spa.ac.uk/information/callforevidence.

If you have any queries concerning admissions good practice, or wish to discuss any issues with us directly, please get in touch:

Email: enquiries@spa.ac.uk

Telephone: 01242 544891

For further information on any of our good practice, please visit: www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice