NNECL Webinar; Update to HESA CE Data Flags Q&A

Where can I find some of Neil's research?	• https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-020-00660-w - link to recent journal article on *Employment and further study outcomes for care-experienced graduates in the UK* • https://neil-harrison.me/ has links to all publications.
I'd like to flag that in Scotland kinship care would very much count as care experienced - SAAS assess suitability for CE bursary as any kinship care that had some local authority involvement in arranging. Due to the No Order principal in Scotland many young people looked after by family would otherwise have definitely been formally accommodated. This seems like a potential area for some inconsistencies in data between the different nations?	• The decision not to include informal kinship care in the revised HESA care leaver record was based on provider consultation and on the need to enhance the accuracy of the data as opposed to being a policy decision. The OfS would encourage providers to consider the needs of students with experience of informal kinship care when developing effective support and pathways for disadvantaged groups.
Why isn't the UCAS data being adapted to capture these new data categories ?	• The UCAS flag doesn't fulfil the same purpose as the HESA flag – it was introduced for the sole purpose of alerting providers to a student's support needs (as per the forthcoming new WP flags) rather than to capture or verify the student's circumstances. This initiates the start of the relationship between the student and the provider, and we have always been clear that the student response in the UCAS application should be followed up with a conversation with the applicant to verify/understand their circumstances and discuss support. • In addition, UCAS covers all devolved administrations in the UK and, due to the differences in how care experience is defined (e.g. the inclusion of all forms of kinship care in Scotland), further alignment would not be inclusive.

I really like the decision tree. Can I however confirm do institutions have to physically see/request evidence from a student OR can a conversation take place so we can say we are reasonably happy there are a care experienced student?	• Providers are responsible for how they approach this. See the HESA coding manual and the text for both 06 and 07 states: *" For example, this may have been verified by talking to the student personally, by email correspondence or as a result of assessing their eligibility for financial support. This only needs to be established once by a member of staff at the provider, preferably at the point of the student's entry. The provider must have reason above and beyond the information given on the student's UCAS form to identify them."*
At what stage should providers be having these conversations/requesting the evidence from students who ticked the UCAS flag? Should this be during the application stage for all applicants, or only for accepted applicants/new entrants?	• This is the provider's decision and, as we can see from the comments in the chat, providers do approach this differently depending on what support is attached to students' status etc. • This will depend on your own processes. However, we would recommend that the conversation starts at the point of application as there may be support you can offer immediately (e.g. to support interviews, advise on bursaries/ accommodation, introduce to student services) – but that this should be an ongoing conversation to build a trusted relationship. Some providers also use this information to make a contextual offer. When the UCAS flag was first introduced, it was felt that this data should be shared as early as possible to allow for this sort of activity to happen. • If helpful, our good practice briefing for providers outlines some of the excellent work being done in universities from the pre-applicant stage through to transition.
It feels rather intrusive to be asking students who may have left care some time or long time ago, and also placing an increased burden on LAs and/or other professionals to provide evidence. I personally would want to be clear in being able the explain the potential benefits of providing this evidence/information and currently for many of these students this might be tricky to articulate. The decision tree will be a helpful tool though so is much appreciated.	• UCAS student support pages link to information on why students should declare their care status and 'tick the box'. • We know from feedback from NNECL members that institutions always aim to be sensitive in their discussions with care experienced students. In many cases, having one conversation may be all that is required. If financial support is being provided, that may require some additional evidence but that will be determined by the individual university or college.

There is a massive burden on providers capturing all of these new categorisations and collecting the evidence despite the fact OFS and HESA are supposedly reducing the burden.	• There should be limited additional burden as this is not a new flag but a revised one. We have broken the flag down to assist practitioners with the conversation and to help providers to understand who their students are, and their support needs. • This exercise will also help universities and colleges better to evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions, including financial support for specific groups of care experienced students. • The verification exercise remains unchanged and providers are responsible for how they approach this. • Regarding the collection of the categorisation - UCAS has always recommended that providers follow up any declaration of care experience on the application with the student directly to verify/ understand their circumstances (e.g. eligibility for bursary) and discuss support. As such, this change should not require additional work.
Did anyone ask any students about the burden on them on providing evidence?	• Some students were consulted informally about the HESA changes, and stakeholders, including students, were encouraged to respond to the consultation. In addition, NNECL membership includes front line practitioners who work directly with students. However, more needs to be done in respect of disclosure and verification. • HESA does not have a direct relationship with students in order to ask their opinions. Instead, it relies on providers either asking students directly or more usually providers including feedback they have received from students in their consultation response.
Appreciate the need for high quality, reliable data, but the process of verifying personal information relating to 'care experience' is a much more involved and sensitive process than seems to have been suggested so far. It can be extremely intrusive, or difficult, or even traumatising for an individual. If the HESA questions are so specific and particular, do we	• It is the responsibility of providers to determine how to verify the status of their students. • The following tools and organisations can help / advise with this process: *The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers has produced a decision tree document to help practitioners determine the status of their students and assist providers in the verification process.* *UCAS student support pages link to information on why students should declare their care status and 'tick the box'.*

need to ask students to 'evidence' that life experience?	*The Care Leavers' Association* is able to advise students and practitioners on evidence of care experience and how to access it.
How would the different codes work between UK nations, so for example if a student who had been in care in Scotland went to university in England, how would the data categories work - given that they differ between nations?	• The definitions in the HESA field are for the categories to be based on where the provider is located. So in your example if a student domiciled in Scotland went to a provider in England, they would be completing the question against the English categories. • HESA do have cases like this, where different countries genuinely have completely different definitions for similar data items, and it isn't possible to make them align with each other. We always try to make sure that any users of the data understand the reasons behind this and are given clear guidance of the differences when analysing our data.
Students will also potentially be asked for evidence from up to 5 institutions. What role can UCAS play in helping to verify evidence to reduce the repetition?	• This is not the case as the verification exercise is only required on entry (at the HESA admissions stage). • There is certainly a benefit in creating efficiencies and improving the student experience – and it may be a feature that, if viable, could be rolled out for other purposes. However, there may be risks that need to be mitigated, sector consultation to understand how to make this consistent, fair and transparent, and UX testing – alongside technical and system capabilities. I have raised this for consideration for future development with those who in a position to explore this idea.
Where might a student who has experienced estrangement sit within HESA categories? I know UCAS are working on including a data flag for students to indicate that they have experience of estrangement, and I wondered how HESA approach this?	• Estrangement is not included in the amended HESA care leaver record. UCAS are hoping to implement an estrangement flag later this year, alongside some other additional characteristics. • At the moment HESA only collect data on estranged students from providers in Scotland. There is no current requirement for this data from other countries.
@Rachel Wilkes we have received feedback from our students to say providing evidence especially as a more mature student can not only be problematic but also very	• Re: disclosure this process is unchanged. The new subcategories are intended to help guide practitioners with regards to understanding the status and needs of their students. The verification process is also unchanged and down

triggering bringing up a traumatic past. Many who are mature also cannot get evidence especially some 20+ years later. Even having a conversation for some students is extremely problematic due to feeling they have to relive these experiences which they often want to forget.	to the provider. See the signposting links above (in particular UCAS' tick the box pages) for support with encouraging disclosure.
It would be great if the flag for estranged students can go on UCAS for the 2022 cycle for this has been discussed for many years now **I have concerns that as applicants/students become aware that institutions may be required to discuss the precise nature of their care experience with them, that it may discourage them from disclosing at application stage - which would be unfortunate.**	• UCAS student support pages link to information on why students should declare their care status and 'tick the box'. • UCAS will confirm the inclusion of the estrangement question, and other questions, at the start of February. • UCAS is planning a report on care experienced students later this year and we will be asking about their experience of sharing their circumstances in the application so we hope to gain more insight on this and identify how we can improve messaging. This ties into our commitment to working with the sector to create a culture of positive disclosure, where applicants feel that sharing their circumstances and support needs is an empowering act that helps move them towards independence (flipping the more negative narrative of support making up for a perceived 'shortfall').