

# **National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)**

## **Final Report: February 2020**

### **Research Pilot in the North East (NE) of England on the Support Available for Care Leavers Looking for Employment at a University**

#### **Research Brief:**

##### **Based upon the second outcome of the Care Leavers Covenant:**

Care leavers have improved access to employment, education and training

- To identify which Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) identify and promote themselves as employers of Care Leavers and what if any, specified support mechanisms they have in place.
- To conduct a small stage investigation within the NE of England with the five universities and in consultation with NE Raising Aspirations Partnership (NERAP) who already work collaboratively with care leavers in the North East.

#### **Summary of Findings:**

Only two of the five North East universities have committed to the Care Leavers Covenant.

None of the universities taking part in this research had any information in place specific to any Care Leavers that would support them with an application for employment within the institution or about any support once employed by the institution for any care leaver.

That said there are some levels of support for individual HEI's own Care Experienced students, as student workers within their own institution. Only one HEI has specified particular support for care leavers with regard to this type of employment. In addition, some HR professionals expressed a willingness to consider what could be put in place for Care Leavers in the future.

During 2020, NERAP is aiming to establish and agree an overall baseline of support that all care leavers can expect from the five NE universities. This may or

may not include specific information regarding employment/future employment support.

### **Background to Research:**

The Care Leavers Covenant has been established to improve support to young people aged 16-25 leaving care. The Covenant was launched by the Department for Education at the end of October 2018. The initiative aims to harness the expertise and resources of businesses, education providers and charities to ensure those leaving care have the necessary support and opportunities to succeed and thrive. The initiative is being coordinated by Spectra First which has background in delivering national programmes and targeted programmes for care leavers. National Data contained in this report is directly from the Care Leaver Covenant Document summarised below:

<https://mycovenant.org.uk>

### **Care Leaver Covenant Overview:**

In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document 'Keep on Caring' to support young people from care to independence. A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

All young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are statutorily provided with some support from the local authority in the region in which they live. This includes being assigned a Personal Adviser to help them in the transition to living independently; there should be support with finding accommodation and with any costs of participating in education, training and employment. However, in order to provide a greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood, wider society also needs to play a part.

Undoubtedly, a large proportion of young people leave their care setting poorly prepared for independence. Typically, they lack the appropriate resource to acquire and hold down gainful employment as well as the skills needed to manage their financial affairs and domestic arrangements. They frequently do not have the social and emotional confidence or the family and friend networks that would provide the confidence and

resilience to face the challenges of earning a living and making their way in society. The aim of the Care Leaver Covenant, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided by local authorities. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid the care leavers in moving forward successfully to the next phase of their lives.

Each organisation that commits to the Care Leaver Covenant will be able to offer a support package to care leavers that is tailored to its specific expertise. The organisation would underpin its commitment to the Covenant with a specific 'offer', setting out what it can provide. Examples of the sort of activities that the offer might include, depending on the nature of the organisation, are:

- Providing care leavers with opportunities to enter the world of work, such as offering work experience placements, work shadowing placements, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships;
- Providing care leavers with additional support. For example, one-to-one mentoring or pastoral support and guidance on various aspects of their lives, financial guidance, career/employment guidance, educational prospects and opportunities;
- Providing care leavers with opportunities to broaden their horizons e.g. concessionary access to sport, leisure and cultural activities along with discounted retail offers;
- Encouraging their involvement in specific activities and events which inspire their personal interest and widen their employment prospects;
- Providing or supporting them in educational and training opportunities that will improve their vocational and educational profile and open up future employment opportunities.

The aim of the Care Leaver Covenant, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided by local authorities. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid the care leavers in moving forward successfully to the next phase of their lives.

**Statistics on Looked After Children and Care Leavers in England** (extracted from the Care Leaver Covenant Document):

There are some 70,000 children in care in England for which the state provides financial support of the order of £2.5 billion. A majority of the children (75%) are fostered and the rest are in residential care.

The following facts and figures illustrate the often blighted and frustrated experiences of children in care and care leavers:

- In general about 38% of children in care have more than one placement during a year, while 11% had three or more placements
- 14% of children in care in 2016 achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C compared to 58% of children not in care
- 40% of all care leavers of 19, 20 and 21 years of age (in 2016) were not in employment, education or training compared to 14% of all 19, 20 and 21 year olds
- The percentage of children in care gaining entry to university is 7% and this figure has not been improved since 2006; compared to the university entry in 2016 of around 40% of their peer group
- 20% of young homeless people have been previously in care
- Children in care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty, which in many cases is attributed to isolation and loneliness.

The quality of care is highly variable and often falls considerably short of what constitutes good parenting. Some young people lack the support and encouragement to benefit from a good education and their experiences out of school are not rich, in personal, social and cultural experiences.

Whilst there is overwhelming evidence that care leavers can find themselves at the 'thin end of the wedge', there is also have first-hand knowledge of many success stories, detailing how care leavers overcome adversity and succeed in spite of their circumstances. The Care Leaver Covenant is a kite mark for organisations who want to celebrate their contribution to helping care leavers have a greater chance at success.

**Care Leaver Covenant Outcomes:**

1. Care leavers are better prepared and supported to live independently

2. Care leavers have improved access to employment, education and training
3. Care leavers experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure
4. Care leavers have improved access to health and emotional support
5. Care leavers achieve financial stability

## **Purpose of this Research:**

Many young people leaving care face serious disadvantage in their lives compared to their peers, and do not get the same care and support that their peers could expect from a parent such as help in finding a job and may very well lack access to the internet, all of which is likely to impact negatively on their job prospects.

Individual universities already offer varied levels of support towards employment to the entire student body, including care experienced students but not always bespoke to this vulnerable group. They report to the Office for Students as part of Access and Participation Plans and annual returns.

This research is focussed on the second *Care Leaver Covenant* outcome from the perspective of a university as an employer of a care leaver whether they have been a student or not:

 ***Care leavers have improved access to employment, education and training***

The five north east universities collectively have a well established reputation for the overall support given to care leavers seeking to undertake a university degree. Each university has its own level of support for young people as part of widening participation outreach activity through to recruitment onto a programme of study and level of retention support during their time at university.

All of the five universities have well established career advice, work placements, internships etc. as part of future job readiness available to all of its students and care leavers can be or are signposted to these internal services, run by a variety of internal departments. This small research pilot had the specific aim to identify the level of support currently available to Care Leavers as employees or potential employees of a university.

## **Identified Research Cohorts:**

**a] The Five Individual NE of England Universities:**

The five higher education institutions (HEI's) in the North East of England who took part in this research pilot are Durham University, Newcastle upon Tyne University, Northumbria University, University of Sunderland and Teesside University. The research was undertaken with staff involved with 'Looked After Young People and Care Leavers' within each institution and staff from Human Resources within each institution with responsibility for Equality and Diversity.

**b] The North East Collaborative University Partnership:**

The North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) is a collaboration of the five universities in the region (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) working together to support higher education progression, specifically for key vulnerable groups. The Partnership has been in place since 2015 and is fully funded by each Partner. Through in-depth and progressive programmes of outreach, the Partnership aims to develop confidence and aspiration to consider higher education progression among pupils from targeted backgrounds.

The Partnership complements individual HEI widening participation activity by working with groups that are more difficult to target as individual institutions. Among the groups are Young Carers and Looked after Young People.

The five HEI's cover a far wider area of the North East with key messages from all the NERAP universities being disseminated by each participating institution. These five institutions are also members of the wider National Collaborative Outreach Partnership with a North East (NECOP) programme of activity.

**Methodology:**

The research was on behalf of *NNECL* so the focus was only on Care Leavers, although other disadvantaged groups were part of interview discussion such as Family Estranged Young People (for which there is a separate pledge [www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk](http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk))

a] Individual interviews held with each university with a representative from their student outreach team with Care Leaver knowledge and/or responsibility and with a representative from their Human Resources team with a knowledge of and/or responsibility for disadvantaged groups under the remit of equality and diversity between April 2019 and December 2019. (***Discussion Questionnaire***)

### **Appendix 1)**

- b] Web based research for each university (**Web Based Research Appendix 2**) looking at the institutions:
  - ☒ offer for Care Leavers and supporting services
  - ☒ HR web pages
  - ☒ information relating to Care Leavers as part of their *Office for Students Access and Participation Plan*
- c] An individual meeting with a representative of NERAP in January 2020. (**Web Based Research Appendix 2 & First Star Academies Appendix 3**)
- d] An opportunity for all participants to review the content and accuracy of their individual report of our meeting, and the final report document before submission to NNECL.

### **Research Challenges:**

Each of the universities were going through some level of staffing re-organisation and it took some time to identify the most appropriate staff to interview and to set up the interviews, as a result the research period extended to ten months.

### **Summary of Discussions at the Universities**

- ☒ One HEI is considering opportunities for recruiting care leaver student ambassadors by the central team to support outreach activities. As part of this process would seek support from the other members of NERAP in developing processes and implementation.
- ☒ Where an HEI has no specific support provided for care experienced students who may apply to become a Student Ambassador can a mechanism be developed to identify them.
- ☒ Where current support is provided by separate teams/departments within the institution this would need to be a shared discussion.
- ☒ A review of the current and overall Care Leavers support package offered across the institution, with a view to offering a cohesive package that all staff teams from across the institution understand and can communicate to care leavers.
- ☒ Widen discussions on care leaver support to include a representative from HR re external job applicants for those who are care experienced, where this has not

occurred already.

- ☒ Educating hiring managers to consider alternative qualifications to more traditional routes e.g. BTec, Access to HE qualifications etc. so that role profiles are created that are not so specific as to exclude potential employers with less-traditional qualifications from being shortlisted. Also to new qualifications emerging such as T Skills.
- ☒ Looking at other HEIs in the sector using a cross institutional senior staff coaching and mentoring service for care experienced students (Huddersfield cited) that includes the Vice Chancellor and how effective this approach has been.
- ☒ Identify sessions to which all students applying to be Student Ambassadors are welcomed and where advice is given on how to complete the application form.
- ☒ If able to identify care leavers at application stage, consider if a care leavers application form is of an appropriate standard could the candidate be offered an unconditional interview however if an application form falls short of this standard the applicant is signposted to the careers and employability service and then reapply for the next opportunity.
- ☒ Consider looking at a two-tier system of employing student ambassadors e.g. those helping at a University Open Day versus those ambassadors undertaking more frequent and demanding roles in schools and colleges
- ☒ Check when the Recruitment and Selection Policy for all employees is up for review. At one HEI this will occur in 2020.
- ☒ Look to support specific under-represented groups within the University student population with some targeted employability projects to help the students get positive outcomes.
- ☒ Explore the possibility of a development session with employers and gauge their appetite for such an event, through connection with the Department for Academic Enterprise with a view to how the University uses best practice as an employer to support disadvantaged groups and as a forum to encourage these employers to take on these students as interns.

#### **NERAP Staff Discussions Included:**

- ☒ To share information regarding the NNECL research project undertaken with the five institutions (which was discussed at the recent NERAP Strategic Group in January 2020) and the website desk top research with the NERAP Project Manager

- ☒ The NERAP Project Manager to share findings to date on the different levels of support currently on offer across NERAP partners with the NNECL researcher

### **Barriers to Employing Care Leavers Discussions included:**

- a) Job applicants wanting to maintain anonymity of being a recognised care leaver – need to be clear on what would be the advantage to them in disclosure/
- b) Mentoring and how it's targeted – a need to look at wider staff roles for new starters – and evidence of impact.
- c) Recognition that Care Leavers are not good at 'selling themselves' in terms of job applications and interviews e.g. making statements not backed up with evidence to support the statement.
- d) Maximising demands in already providing practical support to existing protected groups covered by the Equality Act. The practicality of being able to offer support for an expanding range of Covenants and Marks could impact on existing resources.

### **Findings:**

1. Only two of the five universities have signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant.
2. All of the universities hold a number of quality marks, awards and memberships for disadvantaged groups and all have made commitments to care leavers as part of their five year *Office for Students: Access and Participation Plans*.
3. The level of support offered by the individual universities varies across the five institutions and in support offered by differing teams within the institution. Not all universities have joined up thinking/sharing of practice across their institutional teams.
4. Four of the five universities employ students on temporary contracts as student workers/ambassadors.
5. Only one university has specific processes and support mechanisms already in place for care leavers seeking student worker employment. This support includes an opportunity to have a designated amount of one to one support in making an application and a guarantee of interview.

6. None of the university HR Departments currently has any specific support mechanisms in place to support a care leaver in making an application for employment nor any specific support for any care leaver once employed.
7. One university has already committed to extending a similar level of support to any care leaver who applies for employment as a university employee. The remaining universities are willing to discuss and consider introducing some level of support to its own care experienced students when employed as student workers, although in most cases this would require internal discussions and agreements.
8. There was mixed support from the other universities to consider introducing any customised support for any care leaver applying for a job or receiving support once employed, in the immediate future.
  - a) One university recognises that this approach sits well with its existing institutional culture and values and will discuss this within their institutions Equality and Diversity Group, where as another felt that resources issues would limit them to only offering specific support to those disadvantaged groups covered by current employment legislation.
  
  - a) One participant interviewed at one of the universities fed back after the meeting that they were initially less clear about the focus of the research, and thought their role in meeting was from the perspective of them as an educator and in preparing care leavers as students to leave University and enter employment, given that is their specific expertise as an institution. It was only at the meeting that the individual realised the research was actually from the perspective of the university as an employer of care leavers. At this stage this university did not feel it was possible for them to identify care leavers at the point of applying for a role in the University so it would be difficult to make employment decisions based on a person's background. There was also the issue of demands on existing resource to consider.

## **Overall Recommendations**

- 1) Consider volunteering opportunities, work experience opportunities and graduate internships targeted at Care Leavers and other under-represented groups such as Family Estranged, Young Carers and levels of support needed to support them.

- 2) Recognise that all care leavers as potential employees may benefit from employment support and have organisational discussions on what can be offered either now or in the future. Include the scope of the support available to students or to any potential employee.
- 3) Look to offer additional support for care leavers in becoming employed as student workers such as application support and guaranteed interviews.
- 4) Offer constructive feedback, support and opportunities to re-apply if not successful in gaining employed student work at the first attempt.
- 5) Share the Care Experienced criteria used already to identify those who qualify for and receive support as students with HR colleagues, so that the same criteria could be used for potential care experienced job applicants.
- 6) Consider including a statement on HR job websites as part of pre-application information, signposting potential job applicants to any support the employer can offer a care experienced applicant with the application process. This could be existing staff with knowledge of working with care experienced students and/or staff volunteers from across the institution trained to offer appropriate support. It is anticipated that demand is likely to be small and the volume of such support should be monitored.
- 7) Consider adding an area on the equality data part of application forms for self-declaration of being a care experienced job applicant. This way the hiring manager does not see such applicants to maintain levels of confidentiality.
- 8) Establish essential criteria (e.g. as per Disability Confidential Schemes) so that a self-declaring candidate meeting the essential criteria would be known confidentially to HR with oversight of any shortlisting process and can inform the hiring manager if any additional candidate(s) needs to be included in the interview process.
- 9) Initially may need a manual flag to any current HR electronic recruitment systems for any appropriate care experienced applicants, until a pop up box can be added to a system. There may be a small cost attached to any such system developments and may require initial discussions with the software developer.
- 10) Recognition that some new employees e.g. an employed care leaver (not necessarily an employed student worker care leaver) would benefit from initial support/mentoring when employed for the first time, such as expectations on how to conduct themselves in the workplace (one institution reported they found this beneficial to young apprentices within their institution).
- 11) Open discussions with Student Unions to agree how they could support/enhance

the employment of disadvantaged groups such as care leavers

- 12) Seek an institutional commitment to monitor the statistics for non-traditional candidates such as care experienced applicants, as potential employees. Currently this data is not known.
- 13) Consider having a NERAP '*Raising Aspirations for Young People in Care Conference*' that includes an employment workshop on preparing care leavers for '*life after care*'. The event could have strands aimed at looked after young people, care leavers and 'corporate parenting' such as schools, local authorities, families, foster carers.
- 14) Continue supporting each other through NERAP in providing comprehensive information of care leaver support available at each institution, sharing good practice and consider establishing a shared vision and action plan on the support available to care leavers across the region over the next five years.
- 15) Consider inviting the NNECL Researcher to participate in a future meeting of the NERAP Strategy Group to share findings.
- 16) Consider involving a NNECL national representative in engaging with the NERAP Strategy and/or Executive Group in raising awareness on the benefits/promoting the National Care Leaver Covenant and its outcomes with the aim of having all five regional universities signed up to it.

## **Latest Update:**

**University Of Sunderland has reported that they have implemented the following recommendations:**

- 1) Consider including a statement on HR job websites as part of pre-application information, signposting potential job applicants to any support the employer can offer a care experienced applicant with the application process. This could be existing staff with knowledge of working with care experienced students and/or staff volunteers from across the institution trained to offer appropriate support. It is anticipated that demand is likely to be small and the volume of such support should be monitored.
- 2) Consider adding an area on the equality data part of application forms for self-declaration of being a care experienced job applicant. This way the hiring manager does not see such applicants to maintain levels of confidentiality.

- 3) Establish essential criteria (e.g. as per Disability Confidential Schemes) so that a self-declaring candidate meeting the essential criteria would be known confidentially to HR with oversight of any shortlisting process and can inform the hiring manager if any additional candidate(s) needs to be included in the interview process.

Sunderland has also updated its HR equal opportunities monitoring to include care experienced and estranged applicants. All applicants for any job (not just students) will have the opportunity to let them know if they are care experienced or estranged – so they can then start to collect data to understand more about the number of applicants from these cohorts. If applicants are care experienced or estranged they are offered confidential, bespoke support to guide them through the application process (in recognition that in some cases they are less likely to have a 'professional adult/role model' to offer this support). They have produced a document that illustrates this from an applicant's perspective.

In addition, Sunderland's We Care scholarship is now £2,000 (from September 2019) as it now includes an additional £500 July payment to tackle the financial hardship issues many of their students were experiencing during the summer vacation period.

### **Acknowledgements:**

**The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their time and contributions:**

#### **Durham University**

Richard Coldwell - Access Officer (Supported Progression & Sutton Trust)

Sophie Ray - Access Officer.

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Louise Harrison - Student Recruitment Manager and key contact for Care

Leavers

**NERAP**

Rhianne Jones – Project Manager

**Northumbria University**

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Ann Shuker - Access Manager (Strategy & Policy)

**University of Sunderland**

Justine Gillespie - Head of HR Business Partnering

Wendy Price - Access to Higher Education Manager (We Care team)

**Teesside University**

Abigail English - Deputy Director for Student Recruitment and Marketing.

Linder Wilkinson - HR Policies, Rewards and Benefits Manager

**About the Author:**

**Lesley Griffin**

- ☒ This research has been undertaken on a voluntary basis on behalf of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)
- ☒ Retired from Higher Education since January 2018
- ☒ 10 years at the University of Sunderland – Assistant Director of Student Recruitment (including responsibility for School Outreach and Widening Participation, OFFA Access and Returns, Educational/FE Partnerships,

- Scholarships, Admissions and as the University UKVI Authorising Officer)
- ☒ Previously long standing member of the University Safeguarding and Prevent Committee and University representative for NERAP and NECOP management group and Strategic Committee
  - ☒ 20 Years in Further Education – Lecturer; 10 years in senior management roles; three years as a staff Governor
  - ☒ Currently a Governor at a North Tyneside Middle School
  - ☒ Currently a Trustee and Assistant Chair of the Board for One Awards (part of the NOCN group of companies) and Chair of the Access to HE Committee
  - ☒ Currently a Trustee on the Board for NOCN Group

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Research Questionnaire/Discussion Document**
- Appendix 2: Web Based Information re Individual Organisation Care Leaver Information**
- Appendix 3: Background information on First Star Academies**

## **APPENDIX 1 – Interview Discussion Questionnaire**

**Care Leaver Covenant** (Questionnaire – Sent in advance of each interview to help

identify the best staff to attend who could know this type of institutional information and to be used as the context for discussion, rather than to specifically record answers to each question)

**Research Questions Pre-/Discussion Document:**

1] What good practice does the institution already have in place to support "disadvantaged groups" as part of its existing social and responsibility arrangements?

Is this good practice in place for:

- Employees e.g. People Awards such as:
  - o Equality & Diversity in the workplace (CIPD)
  - o Disability Confident
  - o Mindful Employer
  - o Athena Swan Award (Level?)
  - o Better Health at Work Award (Level?)
  - o Positive Allies
- Students e.g. through an Access and Participation Plan (Office for Students Approved) to Widen Participation such as:
  - o Stand Alone Pledge
  - o Supportive/Positive Student Admissions
  - o Free Aptitude Tests (towards employment)

2] Which groups have already been identified as being disadvantaged? E.g. ethnic minorities

3] Has your institution signed any Covenants/quality marks for disadvantaged groups?

4] What do HR professionals based in HEI's see as the barriers/challenges to employing such groups?

5] What levels of support are already in place within your institution for such groups?

Is this support in place for:

- Employees
- Students

6] Do you/would you identify known care leavers for **any** type/level of job role or internship or placement in your institution/place of work? Paid or voluntary?

7] Are/Can care leavers be identified (as an initial pilot group) for positive discrimination in your own institution?

8] Would you consider other groups in the longer term such as family estranged etc?

The Office for Students list the following groups/group characteristics as needing positive support:

- Care leavers and looked-after children
- Carers
- Children from military families
- Disabled students
- Estranged students
- Refugees
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Mature learners
- Ethnicity
- Low higher education participation, household income and socio-economic status
- Progression to postgraduate study

9] What support and guarantees can/could be offered to care leavers seeking paid employment/internship or placement or supported work experience role?

- Can care leavers be offered a guarantee of an interview?
- Support/mentoring whilst applying for jobs?
- Support/mentoring whilst going through the interview process?
- Support/mentoring once in employment?
- Will the support be limited to care leaver graduates or open to any care leaver, subject to them meeting the role profile requirements?

From this list could you identify areas that your institution would consider as forms of support?

Identified groups	<i>What levels/ types of support already exists within the HEI?</i>	<i>What the HEI believes could be put in place immediately, short term, longer term?</i>	<i>What the HEI has never thought about it putting in place?</i>	<i>What the HEI believes could never work? (To include comments on why not)</i>
Care leavers and looked-after children				
Carers				

Children from military families				
Disabled students				
Estranged students				
Refugees				
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities				
Mature learners				
Ethnicity				
Low higher education participation, household income and socio-economic status				
Progression to postgraduate study				

## **APPENDIX 2: Web Based Information re Individual Organisation Care Leaver Information**

### **Durham University and its Support for care experienced students**

#### **I am a care leaver and would like more information - who can I contact?**

The University's main contact for supporting care leavers is Richard Coldwell. Richard can provide information and advice regarding the range of support services on offer to students at Durham. Whether you are a prospective or current student please contact Richard and if he cannot answer your query himself he will direct you to the most relevant person. Richard can be contacted at [richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk](mailto:richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk) or on 0191 334 49122 (or 49122) by internal phone).

Please note: due to GDPR compliance the University may only speak with the student or prospective student directly unless we have consent to do otherwise. If you are a care leaver and would like us to speak with someone else on your behalf, please confirm in writing that you consent to us doing so. For this, you can simply email Richard at the email address above. Thank you for your understanding.

For more information, including to access our privacy policies, please see: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/ig/dp/privacy/>

#### **Prospective students**

We understand that deciding to come to university can be a big decision and we want to support you in this decision making process. Durham offers a range of exciting ways to find out more about us before you decide if we are right the right place for you.

Whether it is an Open Day, a Campus Tour or a planned visit, there are lots of ways to find out more and get a feel for our university. Please click the links below for more information about opportunities that you may be eligible for.

Why do we want to know if you are a care leaver?

At Durham we have a range of support available for all students and as a care leaver, you are no different. We do however, understand that you may have concerns, questions or things happening in your life that other students may not have. We want to ensure that you feel supported during your journey at Durham and to be able to signpost you to support available, we would like to be able to contact you. We understand that some students prefer to stay anonymous and do not want others to know about their

time in care. We will respect your wishes and treat each person individually and with respect.

We are always here if you would like support, whether you are a prospective student, a fresher or a finalist so please get in touch if there is anything that we can do.

How can I let you know that I am a care leaver?

1. Make sure that you tick the box on your UCAS form that asks if you are a care leaver. That way, we will know before you arrive and can arrange for you to receive relevant information before you begin your degree.
2. Email us. You can also let us know that you are a care leaver by emailing Richard Coldwell, who will be happy to provide you with further information should you request it. Richard can be contacted at:[richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk](mailto:richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk)

### **What support is available?**

Individual advice and support

If you would like support during your application, have a query or would like to clarify anything, you can get in touch with Richard Coldwell: [richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk](mailto:richard.coldwell@durham.ac.uk)

He can signpost you to support available such as personal statement advice, finance support and deadline dates.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can be of support.

Supported Progression

Supported Progression is a scheme for talented students studying in the North East, Cumbria and Yorkshire who have the potential to study at a university like Durham and who will benefit from additional help and support to reach their full potential.

Supported Progression offers a two-year coherent, structured programme of events and guidance. This includes the opportunity to take part in our residential events, experiencing life as a Durham University student. Those who successfully complete the assessed summer school project at the end of Year 12 will be recognised as having achieved a qualification equivalent to 16-32 UCAS tariff points that can contribute towards meeting the entry requirements for a programme of study at Durham University, along with a guaranteed offer.

To find out more about the Supported Progression Programme, please see their [webpage](#).

For residential based programmes we usually ask for parental consent. We understand that this is not always possible and we do not want you to be deterred from applying to a programme because of this. We are happy to work to find an alternative in such

situations such as getting consent from social workers, other family members or case workers. If you have any concerns about this please get in touch and we will be happy to discuss any concerns with you.

### **Sutton Trust Summer School**

Durham University's Sutton Trust Summer School is designed to give bright students from non-privileged homes the opportunity to experience what it is like to be a student at a leading university. The residential summer school is a fantastic opportunity to find out more about applying to university, to meet some of our current students and work with our academic departments. This programme is available for gifted and talented Year 12 students from UK state-maintained schools.

Those who successfully complete the assessed summer school project, during or just after the summer school, will be recognised as having achieved a qualification equivalent to 16-32 UCAS tariff points that can contribute towards meeting the entry requirements for a programme of study at Durham University, along with a guaranteed offer.

Sutton Trust Summer Schools are free of charge! Not only is your place free, but we will also pay for your transport to and from the summer school. There really is no cost to attend!

If you would like more information about the Sutton Trust Summer School please head over to the Durham University Sutton Trust Summer School [webpage](#). To find out more about the Sutton Trust directly, please click [here](#).

For residential based programmes we usually ask for parental consent. We understand that this is not always possible and we do not want you to be deterred from applying to a programme because of this. We are happy to work to find an alternative in such situations such as getting consent from social workers, other family members or case workers. If you have any concerns about this please get in touch and we will be happy to discuss any concerns with you.

### **Open Days**

Pre-application open days are the best way to discover all you need to know about Durham University. With representatives from all relevant academic and support service departments, and opportunities to explore college options, the open days provide our prospective undergraduates with the full experience of Durham University.

Post-application open days are held in February and March for applicants who have been offered a place to study at Durham University. Post-application Open Days are

different to those offered at the pre-application stage. They offer an interactive study and social experience to provide a realistic insight into student life and to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to make the most of your future with us as a Durham University student.

We are pleased to be able to offer an Open Day travel bursary for those who are currently in, or who have had experience of care who would like to attend the Open Day. Please head over to our [Open Day webpages](#) for more details!

### **Current Students**

Durham University is committed to supporting all those who have the merit and potential to succeed on one of our degree courses regardless of background. We particularly welcome applications from those who have spent time in care.

These pages are designed to provide both potential and current students who have spent time in care with information and access to support. Please do get in touch if you have any questions for would like additional information about the advice, support and guidance available to students at Durham University.

## **B] University of Newcastle and its Support for care experienced students**

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/study/student-life/support-wellbeing/care-leavers/>

### **Support and guidance**

Support can include:

- appointments to discuss the support options available to you before you apply or accept an offer
- access to the range of support services offered by the University
- someone to speak to if there is anything you are unsure about
- a visit to University accommodation and/or a campus tour of the University
- meeting a current University student

### **Care Leaver Bursaries**

If you're a care leaver and interested in joining us, we can support you financially with a scholarship.

#### Undergraduate care leavers

We offer a range of support to students who are care leavers. If you have experienced Local Authority Care for a period of at least three months during the 10 years before entering Newcastle University you may be eligible to receive financial support.

#### Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the bursary you must:

- register as a student of Newcastle University for the academic year in which we consider you for the bursary;
- be a full-time undergraduate student;
- not be in receipt of an Opportunity Scholarship;
- have been in care, or under a Care Order, for at least three months during the 10 years before starting your course;
- not have been living independently for longer than five years prior to starting university;
- have applied for the maximum statutory funding from the Student Loans Company unless supported by other public funds for these costs (e.g. fees);
- have a household income of £42,600 or less as assessed by Student Finance England (or equivalent);
- include in your application a copy of all pages of your funding entitlement letter from Student Finance England (or equivalent) for the year in which you apply for the bursary;
- The University base these criteria on their experience and on consultation with colleagues in other universities and Local Authority Leaving Care Teams.

The University will consider exceptional cases that do not meet these criteria on an individual basis.

#### **C] Northumbria University Website information for Care Leavers**

**Starting university is a major transition and, whilst it can be an exciting time, it can also feel quite overwhelming, so please be aware that there are a range of services available to support you as you settle in.**

The Welfare, Immigration and Funding Team, based within Student Life and Wellbeing, is a key point of contact for Care Leavers within the University. The team offers advice on a range of issues and a Welfare, Immigration and Funding Adviser can double-check that you are accessing all of the funding that you are entitled to and offer advice on

student budgeting. We also advise on welfare and health matters and act as a referral point into other support services within the University.

### **Care Leaver's Bursary and Access to Learning Fund**

Northumbria University has a £2,000 Care Leaver's Bursary for eligible 'home' students studying on a full-time undergraduate course. You will need to apply for this. Your Care Leaver Adviser will send you an application to complete in the Student Portal once you are enrolled at Northumbria. If you are eligible for the Care Leaver's Bursary, your £2,000 award will be split into two equal payments across the academic year. To prevent a delay to this payment, please provide this evidence before the end of term 1.

For up-to-date eligibility criteria, please refer to the University's main [Undergraduate Funding](#) page. If you have any queries, please contact a [Welfare, Immigration and Funding Adviser](#).

In order to receive the Care Leaver's Bursary, you will need to provide a letter from your Social Worker to confirm that you meet the criteria.

You will receive an email regarding the Care Leaver Bursary application during term 1. Please ensure that your evidence is uploaded on to the application form in order that payment can be released as soon as possible.

In addition, Care Leavers are able to apply for further financial support, if still in hardship. You can do this by submitting an application, along with evidence, to the [Access to Learning \(Hardship\) Fund](#), as they are considered a priority group by the University and are therefore, if eligible, more likely to receive a non-repayable award from the fund.

You can find out further information regarding the Hardship Fund from the Welfare, Immigration and Funding Team, who will assess your financial situation.

Northumbria University also offers Care Leavers university accommodation on a 52 week basis at the same cost for the normal letting period for that residence. Please note that this only applies to university owned accommodation. This will not apply to privately provided accommodation or any of our nominated accommodation outlets.

You can also [contact us](#) or enquire through your [Student Portal](#) if you have any queries - please note that access to the Student Portal is limited until you are enrolled at Northumbria.

### **D] University of Sunderland and its Support for care experienced students**

We have a deep rooted commitment to supporting care experienced students and were

early adopters of the [Buttle UK Quality Mark](#). Our support is promoted through our policies and procedures and we have a dedicated contact person who is responsible for driving forward this work.

### **Student numbers**

We currently have 82 students who are care leavers – including 7 studying at Postgraduate level.

### **Commitment**

We are members of [NNECL](#) and our Access to Higher Education & Scholarships Manager is the North East regional group representative and member of the [National Strategy Group](#). We are part of the [Northern Care Leaver Activities and Student Support](#) (NorthCLASS), a network of institutions across the north of England working to support care leavers in further and higher education.

We have signed the [Care Leavers Covenant](#) to demonstrate our commitment to providing support for care leavers.

### **Pre Entry**

We provide a bespoke service for all students which begins pre-entry. We offer a dedicated contact person to help with completing UCAS and Student Finance forms, attend university open days, and guarantee 52 week accommodation and practical help moving in to university. We send tailored communications via our CRM system to all care experienced applicants outlining the support available to them. We meet with care experienced young people and their carers/Local Authority staff to develop pathway plans and ensure support is in place for starting university.

### **Student Support**

We meet with every student individually and design a support plan together based on their individual needs. Every student is given a welcome pack and students living in university managed accommodation receive a welcome card and supermarket voucher. We have a closed Facebook group to provide ongoing and consistent peer support, celebrate achievements as well as provide access to University support staff.

We provide a We Care Scholarship of £1,500 per year for Home UG and PG students who are care experienced.

Ongoing practical support is provided throughout each student's time at university. This can include regular catch up meetings, acting as Guarantor for private accommodation, help moving house/summer storage as well as checking in at key/vulnerable times – we send birthday, Easter and 'good luck for your exams' cards and in 2019 provided Easter Eggs. Each student receives a Christmas card, gift and invitation to our We Care Team Christmas Party.

We also offer fast track referrals to other internal support services such as Wellbeing, Disability Support, Careers and Employability and Student Financial Guidance. We work closely with colleagues from these teams to ensure our support is holistic and effective.

Every student receives a graduation support package – we cover the cost of gown hire and official photos as well as attending each graduation ceremony (on occasions we are the student's only guest). We provide a graduation card and voucher to each student on the day.

### **Employment**

We guarantee all of our care experienced students an interview as part of the Student Ambassador Scheme. We currently have 5 care leavers employed by the University, supporting our outreach work and providing them with valuable work experience and employability skills.

### **Outreach**

We are a partner in the [Choices Together](#) programme delivered by the [North East Raising Aspiration Partnership](#) (NERAP). We deliver a six week programme annually for care experienced pupils aged 14-16.

We also offer one-to-one workshops and individual tours for care experienced pupils from local schools who are interested in progressing to higher education.

### **Local Authority links**

We work closely with Together for Children Sunderland and other Local Authorities in the region to provide foster carer training and CPD for staff. We have hosted training and conferences on campus and also attend regular Education, Employment and Training Committee Meetings for Local Authorities.

### **Further information**

Please see our [Support for care experienced students web pages](#) or contact [care.contact@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:care.contact@sunderland.ac.uk) 0191 515 2216.

### **E] Teesside University and its Support for care experienced students**

<https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/studentsupport/care.cfm>

#### **Care leaver support**

Helping looked after children, care leavers, social workers and foster carers

We are committed to supporting young people in or leaving care to progress to higher education. We offer a range of activities and support to looked after children, care leavers and their care workers to help raise aspirations, provide information and support, and to encourage care leavers to reach their potential.

#### **Why are we asking?**

We recognise that care leavers may have additional queries and concerns and may be eligible for additional support and funding. The UCAS form asks if you have been in care and for how long. Ticking this box enables us to identify you for the additional support - it will definitely not affect your chances of getting a place at Teesside. We will contact you after you make us your firm choice to help you with your financial package of support and accommodation arrangements.

#### **Before you apply**

##### **Need help and advice?**

##### **Mathew Greco**

Recruitment Co-ordinator, Student Recruitment & Marketing

E: [m.greco@tees.ac.uk](mailto:m.greco@tees.ac.uk)

T: 01642 384279

##### **Katie Sykes**

Student Adviser, Student Services Department.

E: [k.sykes@tees.ac.uk](mailto:k.sykes@tees.ac.uk)

T: 01642 384078

You don't have to wait until you apply to Teesside to benefit from the support available. If you let us know you are a care leaver, we will be happy to help you before you make your application. This can include advice on writing your personal statement, preparing for a university interview, visiting the campus or help with making sure you're applying for the right course

### **Support for social workers, foster carers and personal advisers**

We are happy to receive queries from both young people directly or from their support workers. If you are a social worker, foster carer or personal adviser and would like to receive information on the support we provide for looked after children and care leavers please register your details [here](#).

Before you get here

When you are here

We work closely with local authorities, schools and colleges to provide opportunities for looked after children and care leavers from access to support and activities which help raise aspirations and confidence, right through to supporting those taking the leap and making a university application.

### **Pre-application**

Contact Matthew in Student Recruitment who can advise on the range of activities available, including:

- bespoke visits to the University to discuss course choices, funding and support available
- advice on personal statement writing and interview preparation
- a meeting with dedicated Care Leaver Adviser, Katie Sykes, even before you have applied if necessary - to listen to you and your personal situation
- help in paying your travel expenses if you need to come to the University before your course starts, for example for an interview or open day.

### **When you apply**

Soon after you have completed your UCAS application form, you will receive a welcome letter from Student Services inviting you to contact us to arrange a meeting with a Care Leaver Adviser, Katie Sykes. Of course you don't have to take this up on this but do let us know if you don't need our help. If, later on, you change your mind, we can arrange a meeting then.

Below is a list of the support we may be able to offer you at this stage - if there is something else you need, please just ask and we will try to help:

- regular contact with Katie, at intervals that suit you

- ☒ helping you get an accommodation contract that suits your needs to include accommodation for 365 days a year if needed
- ☒ working with your local authority care worker, if you agree, to provide the best possible service to you
- ☒ support in applying for funding and scholarships
- ☒ **information on an additional care leavers' bursary of £1,000 for each year of your course.**

## **F] North East Raising Aspirations Partnership (NERAP) and its Support**

### **NERAP Choices Together**

#### **What is it?**

- ☒ Choices Together is the perfect opportunity to find out all about being a university student and what Higher Education could offer you in the future. It doesn't matter if you haven't thought about college or university – everyone is welcome!
- ☒ Our current university students will be with you every step of the way to help you out, answer questions and make sure you are having a good time.
- ☒ You will have the opportunity to visit three out of five North East universities and will be allocated based on your local authority.

#### **Who is it for?**

- ☒ To take part in Choices Together you must be in Year 10 or 11 at school and currently be in, or have experience of the care system.

#### **How much is it?**

- ☒ The activities and sessions are all completely FREE! We will also give you a meal at all the sessions, as well as arrange your transport.

#### **Why should I go?**

- ☒ As well as being great fun, we hope that you will get to make some new friends and perhaps learn a few things along the way.

#### **How do I apply?**

Please complete the application form below to register your interest. Alternatively, please get in touch to request a paper copy.

For more information, email [info@nerap.ac.uk](mailto:info@nerap.ac.uk) or call 0191 208 3128

***Additional Information Supplied:***

*NERAP also run 2 x Foster Family Fun Days for Years 7-9 and their families, and are beginning to include these under the Choices umbrella. The Year 12/13 support will also be included – so that Choices is a progressive, long-term programme of support and not just for Year 10/11 students.*

**APPENDIX 3 - First Star Academies Web Research:**

First Star Academies UK is a national charity dedicated to improving the lives of Looked-after Children and Young People by partnering with universities, social welfare and educational providers to ensure our young people have the skills and support to aspire to higher education and beyond. The first of these Academies is First Star St Mary's Academy in Twickenham, which started with a first cohort of 30 pupils in 2016. Further academies were planned across the country.

**Programme Components:**

The First Star Academies keep students on track through GCSE and post 16 education and prepare them for higher education and adulthood by providing specialised programmes that addresses: (1) academics; (2) life skills; and (3) carer and mentor engagement.

***Academic Support:***

Looked-after young people have among the poorest education outcomes in the country often because of school and placement instability and unaddressed special education needs. By year 3 more than 3/4 of Looked-after Children have fallen behind expected levels of progress. GCSE outcomes (grade A\*- C in English and maths) are significantly below the general population (58.8%) with only 17.5% of Looked-after Children achieving the basics. Only 60% of care leavers transition to training or further education (19-21 years) compared to 84% of the general population. Only 6% of care leavers

progress to higher education while current data from Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) indicates that 49% of 18-30 year olds currently enter HE.

Evidence from Academies in the USA shows that First Star Academies reverses these trends for participating young people through targeted academic learning and education advocacy. During the Summer Academies and monthly sessions, experienced teachers work with the students on GCSE specific content and provide additional support as needed. These teachers also provide GCSE exam preparation to ensure the students are able to revise and complete their GCSE exams. Academies review student's school records, track their progress through GCSEs and onwards through post 16 education, and identify and secure any support they need to succeed in school. The Academies strive to work with the student's carers, social workers, virtual school heads, and schools to develop a coordinated academic plan for GCSE attainment, post 16 success and admissions to higher education.

***Life Skills:***

Looked-after Children often lack the skills needed to successfully transition into adulthood. At age 18, they are usually expected to independently manage their education, employment, housing, healthcare and finances without the support of other adults. Recent and ongoing changes to policy and legislation is ensuring local authorities and social services provide more support post 18 years, particularly for those continuing in education at ages -18 -21. The Academies develop a life skills curriculum to ensure the students are prepared for adulthood. Workshops include topics such as self-advocacy, creativity, higher education, financial management, online safety and identity theft, housing, hygiene, healthy relationships, and substance abuse.

***Carer and Mentor Engagement:***

Too often, Looked-after Children repeatedly move placements and leave care without any family or permanent adult support. The Academies strive to work with virtual school heads, carers and social workers to ensure students are supported in their preparation for the transition to adult hood (post care), this includes working with carers to understand the programme and the potential of university and further education and training

First Star Academies UK partners with universities, virtual school heads, designated

teachers and social services throughout the country to make a long-term investment in Looked-after Children and change the course of their lives, from abuse and neglect to academic achievement and self-sufficiency. The Academies are the UK's only long-term programmes for Looked-after Children as they transition through GCSE and post 16 education. Each Academy includes four immersive summer residentials on a university campus, and monthly sessions (First Saturday) during each school year. Academy students join the programme in the summer of their year 9 to year 10 transition and continue through four years of compulsory education to university or further education and training. Through the residential Academy sessions, the students are supported by highly qualified teaching and life skill professionals and undertake a programme of academic development and life skill enhancement tailored to their age, progression and needs.

Academy participants are considered part of the university's student body and are mentored throughout the programme by university students who are attending the host university. Throughout all four years, Academy staff provide holistic, long-term education case management for each Academy student, working with virtual school heads and supporting their carers to sustain the progress students make during the university immersion sessions.

The First Star Academies UK currently has one Academy at St Mary's University, Twickenham which serves 30 students from the London boroughs and surrounding local authorities. A second cohort is due to start at the First Star St Mary's Academy in the summer of 2019 and further academies are planned across the country. The First Star St Mary's Academy is in its second year and all students continue with the programme, including undertaking a four-week residential Academy at the start of each summer holiday.

First Star Academies UK has a close relationship with its sister organisation – First Star in USA which currently has 12 Academies across the country. Additional academies are starting in Canada and the USA. The First Star Academies (USA) have significantly improved the outcomes of participating youth across the country. In the USA, 99% of First Star Academy youth who have completed four years of the programme have graduated from their high school, and 91% have enrolled in higher education, at a range of universities. All First Star Academies UK students are supported in their aspiration to attend university, further education (post 18) or training.

