



Care Leavers Policy

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Care Leavers Policy

Introduction

Research shows that those with care experience have significantly poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population on average, and are underrepresented in higher education¹.

The Office for Students (OfS) states that all Higher Education Providers charging higher fees must consider Care Leavers in their Access and Participation Plans (APP).

Supporting Care Leavers forms a proportion of HCA's APP promised actions² across all three areas of Access, Success and Progress. This aligns with our role in supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and social justice, which is threaded through HCA's mission, vision and values.

To develop a Care Leaver Student Policy is an initial action point in HCA's current APP.

This policy draws on [good practice and research promoted by OfS](#) as a key research source, also [Government briefing notes](#).

It is aligned with current Ofsted IAG and the new Ofsted Framework.

Definitions

We define 'Care Leaver' as someone who has been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are:

- still being looked after, or
- have been looked after sometime after their 16th birthday and who have now left care
- under the age of 25
- in the care of the Local authority, or
- have been in the care of a local authority within 3 years prior to commencing their course, or
- have left the care system but are still receiving support from their Local Authority or an organisation such as Barnardos

Our financial support around annual accommodation bursaries uses this definition of 'Care Leaver'.

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/care-experienced/>

² It does not form one of our numerical targets

HCA is mindful of the needs of Care experienced³ Students. However, they do not fall under the scope of this document.

Principles

This Policy follows the principles and guidance set out by the government in 'Principles to guide higher education providers on improving Care Leavers access and participation in HE'⁴

Aims

This Policy aligns with the OfS ambition that, "*future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers*".

It aims to support Care Leavers by following good practice guidance and adopting evidence-based strategies that have been shown to promote positive outcomes for this group of students.

Our Care Leavers strategy aims to support HCA in signing the Care Leaver's Covenant.

Outcomes

This Policy adopts the Care Leaver Outcomes defined by the Care Leaver Covenant⁵

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.

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

³ For the purposes of this document, which aligns with HE policy and HCA's Access and Participation plan, we define 'Care Experienced students' as all students who have experienced care at any stage of their lives.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-to-guide-he-providers-on-improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he/principles-to-guide-higher-education-providers-on-improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he#web-text>

⁵ <https://mycovenant.org.uk/offers/educational/>

1. We will ensure robust IAG tailored for Care Leavers, creating a dedicated page on the HCA website for Care Leavers which follows government guidance.⁶
2. Using this Policy as guidance, we will create a clearly articulated package of support for Care Leavers that can be placed on our web pages.
3. We will regularly review and develop our support for Care Leavers.

Additionally, we will consider:

- Training staff around understanding care experiences.

2. Care Leavers have improved access to employment, education and training.

1. We will work with FE to identify Care Leaver applicants and provide a pipeline of support between tutors to ensure Care Leavers leaving FE can transition smoothly to HE.
2. We will improve the collection, accuracy and evaluation of Care Leaver data for prospective and current students, engaging with local authorities⁷ and using data collected by UCAS and at enrolment.
3. Promoting HCA as an alternative route into higher education for Care Leavers who apply when they are mature students or have non-traditional or no qualifications.
4. We have established a dedicated Care Leaver champion.
5. We will offer additional one-to-one support to help Care Leavers network.
6. We will offer additional one-to-one careers support for Care Leavers after graduation.
7. We will ensure that the needs of Care Leavers are considered when we plan outreach activities
8. We will make sure that all Care Leaver support is published on [Propel](#), enabling Care Leavers to compare HCA's offer with others.

3. Care Leavers experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.

1. We will ask students for feedback to develop our current provision and ensure a student-focused approach.
2. Within our professional practice modules, we will use links with the wider community to find work experience, placements, and internships for Care Leavers and Care Experienced students.
3. We will encourage Care Leavers to apply for Graduates in Residence and to access activities through Launchgrad, our graduate support programme, so that we can continue to support them after graduation.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-to-guide-he-providers-on-improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he/principles-to-guide-higher-education-providers-on-improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he#web-text>

⁷ Virtual schools (local authority teams responsible for the educational achievement of the children in care in their area) can help identify these students.

4. Care Leavers have improved access to health and emotional support.

1. We will Improve mental health support for Care Leavers, and work with local authorities to support long-term therapeutic support.

Additionally, we are piloting a programme at FE which may be developed to:

- Offer mentoring and peer-assisted learning schemes at HE.

5. Care Leavers achieve financial stability

1. We will signpost a one-off bursary of £2,000 from Herefordshire council and council support with accommodation. for students who are eligible⁸
2. All care leavers will receive the general low-income bursary, which can be used to support with the cost of graduation or travel.
3. We will seek to offer one year's free accommodation for Care Leavers in our new halls of residence
4. We will signpost our [Care Leavers bursary](#) on our website.
5. We will encourage Care Leavers to apply for the Care Leavers bursary to support with the cost of graduation.

Additionally, we will offer the following according to individual need:

- Support with budgeting, so that Care Leaver students can manage their finances as effectively as possible.
- We will work with the student to find a guarantor to support with moving into privately rented accommodation⁹.

References

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Herefordshire Council (2022) *Going to University, Care Leavers*. Available at:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/care-leavers/work-study-training-care-leavers-1/5>

⁸ Students from Herefordshire

⁹ Providing that support is requested when housing support is available during Semester Two

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