

Supporting care leavers on apprenticeships: Case studies

March 2019



Introduction

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work helps people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life.

Evidence shows that many young people who have been in care face barriers in accessing suitable education and employment opportunities. These challenges can be financial but also be lack of support and guidance in how to navigate through the transition from education to employment.

An apprenticeship can make a huge difference to a young person's life. By providing an apprenticeship opportunity and offering effective support, employers can enable care leavers to overcome the challenges they have often experienced and help them on their way to a happy, successful and independent life. In return employers benefit from dedicated and confident apprentices that bring different skills and perspective to their business.

Published by
National Learning and Work Institute
(England and Wales)
4th Floor, Arnhem House
31 Waterloo Way
Leicester LE1 6LP

Company registration no. 2603322
Charity registration no. 1002775

Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. Working with partners, we transform people's experiences of learning and

The case studies featured in this publication provide examples of the types of support different organisations have put in place to support care leavers to progress to, sustain and complete an apprenticeship, together with individual care leaver stories.

We hope that these stories will encourage and inspire other employers to recruit care leavers and will provide insight into practical ways in which they can effectively support young people to become successful apprentices.

The case studies are part of our **new resources** to help employers, and organisations working with care leavers to provide effective support for care leavers on apprenticeships. The resources provide further hints and tips on supporting care leavers as well as details of additional **apprenticeship funding** to help employers and training providers to better support care leavers on apprenticeships and the £1000 bursary for care leavers choosing to do an apprenticeship.

employment. What we do benefits individuals, families, communities and the wider economy.

We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'.

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CASE STUDY 1:

Core Assets Children's Services

Background

Core Assets Group is a group of companies and organisations delivering foster care and children's services to vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Core Assets Children's Services, part of the Core Assets Group, were commissioned by Birmingham City Council to provide targeted support for care leavers as part of their European Social Fund (ESF) Birmingham and Solihull Youth Promise Plus programme. The programme supported young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) to progress into and sustain work or training. Additional funding was provided from Birmingham City Council's Young Talent for Business fund to support the provision of apprenticeship opportunities within Core Assets itself as an employer in the area.

Core Assets Children's Services delivered intensive interventions and mentoring to young people, NEET, who were in care or were care leavers. A team of intervention workers were embedded within looked after children and care leaver teams in Birmingham and Solihull local authorities, to support eligible young people. Each young person took part in a 12-week programme to identify potential barriers, put an individual action plan in place around their journey from NEET to education employment or training and then support them through that transition.

Watch Jessica's Story to find out more about how Core Assets Youth Promise Plus intervention workers have supported young people from vulnerable backgrounds, including care leavers, into sustainable education, employment and training.

To maximise the chance of securing good outcomes for young people, the intervention team worked closely with the local authority employer development service to engage with employers across Birmingham and Solihull and identify suitable EET opportunities for young people coming through the Youth Promise Plus programme. They also developed links with local training providers and approached individual employers to source employment and training opportunities matched to a care leaver's interests.

Children's Services care leaver apprenticeships

As part of their contract with Birmingham City Council, Core Assets Children's Services created two Level 2 care leaver apprenticeships within their own organisation. The opportunities were advertised through COG, a local online job portal, through the Youth Promise Plus programme, and via local authority care leaver service partners. As a result, in 2016/17, Core Assets Children's Services recruited two young people that they had supported through Youth Promise Plus, as apprentices.

The apprenticeship, in Business Administration, was provided in partnership with SEETEC, a training provider partner in Youth Promise Plus.

Support for care leavers

Due to their previous involvement in the Youth Promise Plus programme, and their wider work with care leavers, Core Assets Children's Services were already familiar with the background of both apprentices. However, specific needs, identified through the induction process, were used to tailor support to enable each of them to be successful apprentices:

"we got to know...them and their situation and [that] helped shape the way that we worked and they worked with us to benefit their personal situation."

(Service Manager)

In addition to workplace support from their line manager, the employer provided off-site pastoral support to enable the apprentices to talk about any challenges that they might be facing in their wider lives, which could create difficulties for them in sustaining or completing their apprenticeship

To manage the additional investment in staff time needed to offer more intensive pastoral support, staff from the intervention team were recruited on a voluntary basis to provide individual mentoring. This was available, when needed, for each young person. This was particularly beneficial for one care leaver who

was experiencing significant challenges at home which on occasion meant that she would be upset when she came in to work.

"We did feel that it was important that they had that, kind of professional support for their work, but also, knowing what their individual circumstances were, that they did have somebody to talk to if they needed as well."

(Service Manager)

Other support included travel 'training' such as reviewing where a young person needed to be on different days for their training, looking at timetables and working out the cost, as well as basic advice around budgeting to ensure that young people put enough money aside to pay for essential costs such as transport or rent.

Financial support was also provided for practical items such as suitable clothing for the workplace, some travel costs, for example to attend a work-related conference and basic equipment such as stationary.

As part of their employer social responsibility pledge, Core Assets Children's Services paid the young people on their care leaver apprenticeships at an increased 'fair wage' of £5.50 per hour rather than the apprentice minimum wage often paid in the first year of an apprenticeship.

Working in partnership

At the start of the programme, strong links with SEETEC ensured that the training provider had a good understanding of the needs and challenges that might be faced by care leavers and the requirement for flexibility from both employer and

provider to effectively support young people on their apprenticeship. Training was provided on-site for example, rather than apprentices having to travel to college.

As the employer, Core Assets Children's Services was keen to maintain a three-way relationship and be part of the conversation between the training provider and the apprentice so that they clearly understood what was required of the young person, for example when exams were approaching, and could support them to give them the best chance of success.

For the duration of the apprenticeship, Core Assets Children's Services maintained close links with the young person's care leaver service and where appropriate with the young person's wider family to help to address any problems or issues that might create barriers to the young person completing their apprenticeship. For example, liaising with or referring the young person to other agencies for support.

Benefits and outcomes

Having completed their apprenticeship with Children's Services one of the apprentices went on to a job with a warehousing company. The other young person progressed to a higher-level apprenticeship in Business Administration before securing employment in the energy sector.

The employer identified wider benefits for the young people including "having a better understanding and ability to adapt to the working world [and] a clear idea of where they want to be in terms of career".

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY

Jonathon did a Business Administration apprenticeship with Core Assets Children's Services in Birmingham, which is targeted specifically at care leavers. Jonathon was very able but because of his previous experiences, lacked confidence and motivation to engage with education, employment or training; prior to starting the qualification he had limited and only short-term experience of being in work. To help Jonathon make the change from having no regular daily routines to working nine to five in an office environment, his line manager worked with him to identify what kind of support would help him

to stay with and complete the apprenticeship, for example offering flexibility around start and finish times. This was reviewed on an ongoing basis to help him to gradually increase the working day up to full-time hours. The apprenticeship with Core Assets Children's Services helped Jonathon to develop his confidence and demonstrate his abilities as well as gain experience and a better understanding of the world of work. In addition to professional skills, the apprenticeship also enabled him to develop wider skills, for example, managing housing issues and finances to support his transition to independent living. Jonathon did well on his apprenticeship and successfully went on to find a job with a warehousing company

CASE STUDY 2:

Barnardo's

Background

Barnardo's, the UK's largest children's charity, provide a bespoke apprenticeship scheme for care leavers through the Lincolnshire Education, Employment and Training project, part of their Lincolnshire County Council contract to deliver leaving care services in the county. The aim of the project is to increase the level of participation in education, training and employment for young people receiving care leaver services in Lincolnshire. The programme is tailor made to meet each care leaver's needs, with intensive support provided throughout.

The Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme (CLAS)

The Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme is part two of a two-stage programme. Part one, the Work Preparation Programme, includes a two-day course which covers for example, interview techniques and helps young people to think about the skills and knowledge needed for work. This is followed by a closely supervised, up to 13-weeks, work experience placement matched to the young person's skills and interests. The placement provides practical experience of the workplace and ensures that any specific barriers a care leaver might face in accessing or sustaining paid employment are identified and support is put in place to address them.

This preparatory stage is considered essential to enable care leavers to progress successfully to an apprenticeship.

Young people who complete their work experience, with good attendance, and for whom an apprenticeship is considered appropriate, can progress onto the Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme.

Wrap around support is provided to individual care leavers throughout both the work experience programme and the apprenticeship. Barnardo's consider this crucial to the success of their scheme as care leavers often do not have the level of support that other young people might expect to receive from

their families, to access and sustain education and employment opportunities.

This might include CLAS staff being 'on call' when a young person is at work, to provide advice or emotional support. This includes weekends, evenings and public holidays. It could also involve going with a young person to buy new work clothes, for example.

Providing care leavers with one-to-one support for the off-the-job training they undertake as part of their apprenticeship is particularly important, as Barnardo's find this is often the element of an apprenticeship that young people find most challenging, especially if they have had negative experiences of school.

"What we find is that young people are often very motivated about the on the job bit because they've got a real job, and that is often in itself, from a self-esteem point of view ...that's quite good... Once they get in place and start working, they're quite motivated to turn up to work but to complete an apprenticeship you also have to turn up to college and...do the work that links with college. That's often the area where young people struggle a little bit more..."

(Barnardo's Policy Lead, Care Leavers)

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY

Rod entered care aged 9, after arriving in England from Eritrea. Upon leaving care he expressed an interest in learning a trade and was referred to the Barnardo's Work Preparation Programme to get some practical experience. In 2017, after completing a 13-week work experience placement, Rod was signed up for the Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme to do an apprenticeship in Bench Joinery and completed the whole qualification well ahead of schedule. His attendance at college was 100%; he walked to work every day for a 7am start and was never late. The apprenticeship gave Rod the skills needed in a workshop and he was offered full-time work in joinery in the company that hosted his apprenticeship.

The support that Rod was provided with by Barnardo's has been a key part of his success. His leaving care worker was very happy with his progress and says he is a great example to other young people.

Offering this individual support, in addition to the wider support provided by the training provider, has proved to be key in helping young people to complete an apprenticeship.

Working in partnership

Barnardo's have had particular success in working with smaller employers to offer apprenticeships for care leavers. They find that smaller employers are often willing to offer a young person an opportunity, if they feel they are the right person for the role, as it anchors them into their local community.

CLAS staff ensure that all employers are supported throughout the process of employing a care leaver so that the experience and outcomes of the apprenticeship scheme are positive for both employers and young people. Smaller employers in particular, may not have had previous experience of care leavers or an understanding of the needs of care leavers and how best to support them.

"We know that we need to have somebody that the employer can phone up...that they've got somebody that they can go to, if for instance, there's conflict in the workplace or issues so that we can help iron out difficulties, particularly in the early stages to prevent something blowing up."

(Barnardo's Policy Lead, Care Leavers)

The Scheme Manager is a point of contact for employers who may need additional support or information on how best to support a young person.

The Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme has good working relationships with a wide variety of training providers in the area. As well as sharing details of a young person's previous academic achievement, and any challenges they may have faced previously in education, staff are able to provide insight into what motivates each young person.

Benefits and outcomes

In 2017/18, eight care leavers progressed from work experience onto the Care Leavers' Apprenticeship Scheme and a further 11 went to college.

Of these young people, two are still on the scheme; three completed and went on to permanent employment, one with the county council, another with their apprenticeship employer and the third with a company in a different sector; two young people left before the end of the scheme, one having gained full-time employment and the other to go back into full-time education and one was offered full-time employment with their host employer but is applying for jobs in a different industry.

In addition to progression and employment outcomes Barnardo's has identified wider benefits for care leavers from participating in the CLAS, including improvements in levels of confidence and self-esteem:

"This is something where they've got a job where it's like a profession, it's a name, and the self-esteem that comes with it is quite significant...You're at a point where the ability to say, 'I've got a job and I am somebody and this is what I do' is huge."

(Barnardo's Policy Lead, Care Leavers)

CASE STUDY 3:

Hampshire County Council

Background

Hampshire County Council is a large local authority employer, which provides its own apprenticeships through its Hampshire Futures service.

Hampshire Futures offers a range of direct delivery and subcontracted programmes supporting young people (and adults) in Hampshire to successfully participate in education, training and employment. It brings together four key areas:

- Post-14 Learning
- Adult and Community Learning
- Careers and Employability
- Outdoor and Physical Education, Sport and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The County Council has a history of working with and supporting care leavers into employment and has developed recruitment practices to ensure accessibility, such as guaranteeing care leavers an interview for traineeships. Hampshire also looks to enhance the experience of care leavers in other ways, including offering personal development opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

A traineeship programme can act as a bridge to an apprenticeship. A support worker provides trainees with enhanced monitoring, mentoring and support tailored to the trainee's individual needs. This could include helping them to manage their life outside work through, for example, budgeting and living independently, as well as in-work advice and support.

Hampshire Futures has strong links with social workers, personal advisors and progression coaches in the County Council's Children's Services Department and most care leavers on an apprenticeship have been referred via this route. The team also actively encourages recruitment of care leavers through outreach activities such as talks about apprenticeship programmes.

Matching young people with the right apprenticeship opportunity is key to a successful outcome. Rather than trying to create care leaver opportunities across the whole organisation within a short time, the focus has been to build on success in placing care leavers within specific services, such as libraries or legal support.

"We're creating opportunities for care leavers and other young people in those areas where we've established the right support, and where there are people who have gone through traineeships themselves and have some idea of what's involved."

(Christine Hansford, Strategic Manager
Apprenticeships)

Thorough preparatory work with service and line managers is undertaken to minimise any issues or concerns about taking on a care leaver.

"Sometimes, managers can have a preconceived idea about the implications of bringing a young person from a care background into the workplace and the extra work involved, so we work with them to dispel the myths and tackle any potential issues."

(Christine Hansford, Strategic Manager
Apprenticeships)

Barriers are also broken down by sharing success stories and the positive feedback from managers relating to care leavers who have successfully completed apprenticeships with the County Council.

Support for care leavers

When care leavers move into an apprenticeship their progression coaches and one-to-one mentors remain involved, where necessary, to ensure that they make a good transition and have a successful start to their employment. This continuation of support means that individual needs can be quickly identified, and any additional support can be provided for as long as the young person needs it.

A mentor support worker works closely with the young person's apprenticeship workplace mentor and line manager to check how the young person is progressing and support the employer with any issues that may arise. This ensures seamless and joined up support for the apprentice.

Much of the framework provided by Hampshire County Council to support care leavers through their apprenticeship is provided by existing staff. However, the additional government funding for care leavers available to the County Council as both an employer (£1,000) and training provider (£1,000), enables them to invest in improving the experience of young people in ways that they would otherwise be unable to fund.

Find out more

Below are brief descriptions and links to other information and resources about recruiting care leavers as apprentices as well as organisations which can offer specialist advice and support.

For more information on apprenticeships visit the government's website at:
www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

For further details on apprenticeship funding including the additional £1000 payment for employers, search for 'apprenticeship funding' on www.gov.uk

The **National Apprenticeship Service** website has lots of information about apprenticeships including FAQs.
www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Amazing Apprenticeships

This organisation offers information, resources and opportunities to network for employers, providers, career professionals and potential current and past apprentices.

Amazingapprenticeships.com

For more information on supporting care leavers:

Employers can make a specific commitment to support care leavers by signing up to the **Care Leaver Covenant** – a promise made by private, public or voluntary sector organisations to provide support for care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood.
www.mycovenant.org.uk

The Skills Support for Care Leavers website has lots of information on learning and work options for care leavers and the support they should receive in education and employment.
www.skillssupport.org.uk

Barnardo's

A charity working to support children, young people and the organisations working with them.
www.barnardos.org.uk

Become

Information and support for young people living in care and the professionals supporting them.
www.becomecharity.org.uk

Care Leavers' Association

The Care Leavers' Association is a national charity and network which offer information and advice, runs projects and campaigns on behalf of care leavers of all ages.
www.careleavers.com

Catch22

Catch22 offer a range of employability and training programmes tailored to the needs of disadvantaged young people, including care leavers, and employers.
www.catch-22.org.uk

Learning and Work Institute

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.
www.learningandwork.org.uk

Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust runs programmes for young people aged 14-30, including young people in care and care leavers, to help people move into work, education or training.
www.princes-trust.org.uk

Skills Support for Care Leavers

A website with lots of information on learning and work options for care leavers and the support they should receive in education and employment.
www.skillssupport.org.uk

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