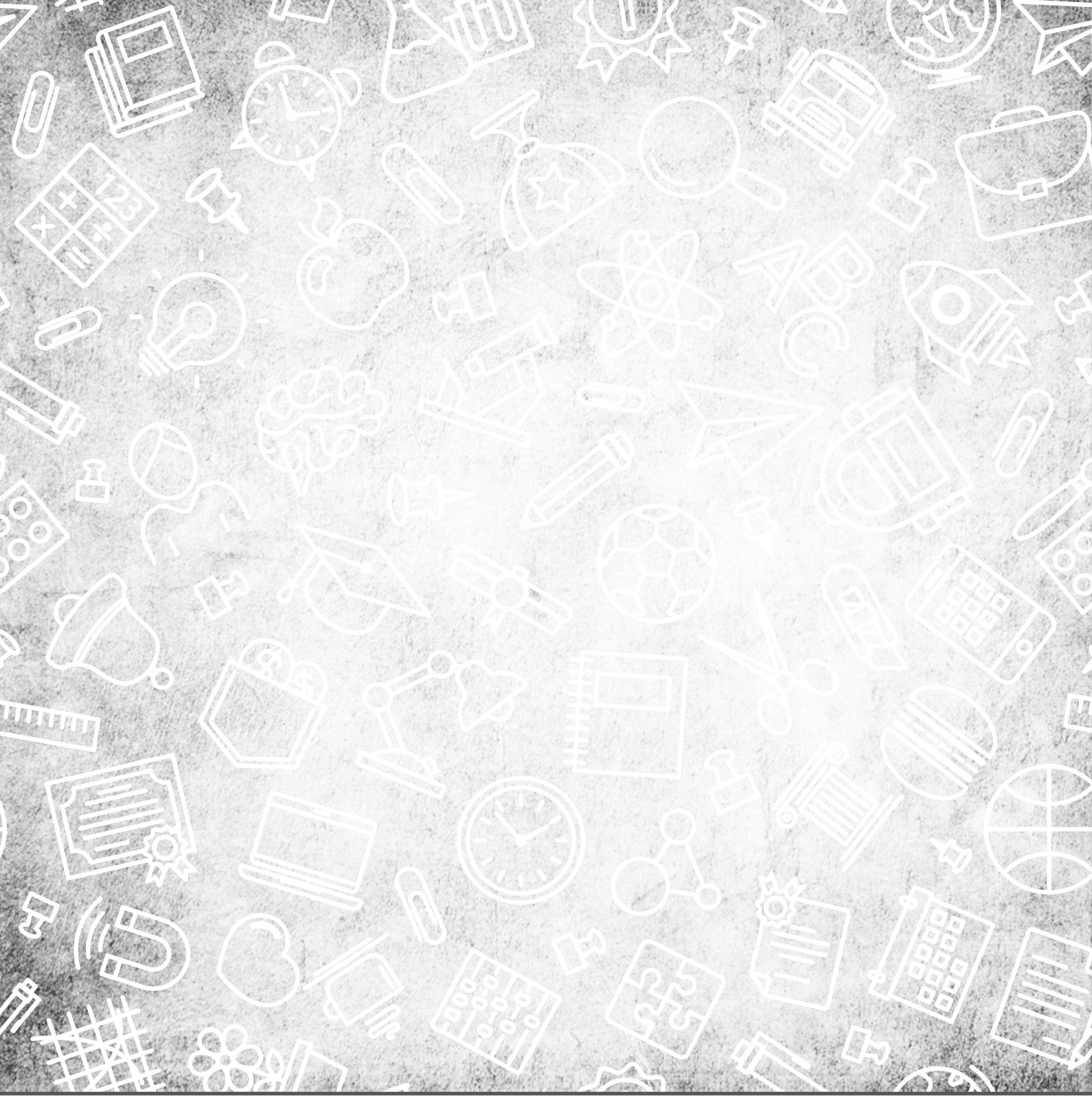




LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

SUPPORTING LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARE LEAVERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

A guide and resource pack for colleges in England



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INTRODUCTION

This guide is for colleges in England that want to review and improve their support for Looked After Young People (LAYP) and Care Leavers (CLs). It includes information about who LAYP/CLs are, the kinds of challenges they face, their rights and entitlements to support, and what staff need to be aware of when working with LAYP/CLs.

The guide then goes on to provide information, tips and case study examples of good practice in supporting LAYP/CLs at each stage of their learner journey: outreach and recruitment, application and enrolment, on-course support and progression into further learning and/or employment.

Throughout the guide, we refer to templates and examples of documents and resources which colleges can use to provide effective support to LAYP and CLs. are included in orange text and are available to download as a set from: www.learningandwork.org.uk/review-and-improve-your-support-for-looked-after-young-people-and-care-leavers

The guide is accompanied by a pack of training

materials which can be adapted and used by designated members of staff to raise awareness of the needs of LAYP/CLs across their college. The training materials can be downloaded from: www.learningandwork.org.uk/review-and-improve-your-support-for-looked-after-young-people-and-care-leavers

About Learning and Work Institute

This guide was developed by Learning and Work Institute, with support from the Department for Education. Learning and Work Institute (L&W) 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 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'.



LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARE LEAVERS

Looked After Young People (LACP) and Care leavers (CL), like all young people, are different. Each young person is unique, with different backgrounds, interests, talents, goals and aspirations. However, it is well known that many LACP/CL face serious disadvantage growing up and that this can affect their long-term life chances. Having an awareness of the challenges and barriers that LACP/CL often face, while not making stereotypical assumptions, should enable colleges to offer support that is both appropriate and effective.

Definitions

A Looked After Young Person (LACP) is someone who is in local authority care and aged 18 or under. The term Looked After Young Person is interchangeable with 'Looked After Child' (LAC), 'Child Looked After (CLA)' or 'Child in Care' (CiC). The terminology used varies across local authorities.

A Care Leaver (CL) is someone who has previously been in care and is over 16 years old. Local authorities have duties and powers to support both LACP and CL as they move into independence. What they must do (duty) and what they can do (power) depends on the young person's leaving care status.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act)¹ is intended to improve support for Looked After Young People and Care Leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of young people, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers. This new legislation requires councils to provide personal advisers to care leavers up to the age of 25.

Local authorities are also responsible for, and have a duty to, protect and support unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied asylum seeker young people and migrant young people, as well as young people who are victims of modern slavery. Because of the circumstances they have faced, these highly vulnerable young people often have complex needs in addition to those faced by LACP more generally. For more

information see DfE guidance on UASC (included in the Resources section of this guide).

If a young person has been in care for a total of 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16, and for at least 1 day after they are 16, they are:

- an 'eligible' child if they are 16 or 17 and still in care
- a 'relevant' child if they are 16 or 17 and have left care
- a 'former relevant' child if they are 18 or over.

Young people who leave care after 16, but who do not meet the above criteria or who have been privately fostered or in special guardianship arrangements can get some support from local authorities as 'qualifying' young people.

If you are unsure about whether a young person is a Care Leaver, you should speak to your local authority's leaving care services.

Facts and Figures

In England, there are around 70,000 Looked After Young People at any one time, which is around 0.5% of all children².

Every year, around 10,000 16 to 18-year olds leave foster or residential care in England. Many young people leaving care are at a serious disadvantage, compared to their peers. Care leavers are one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups in society.

- In 2016, only 14% of Looked After Young People obtained at least five GCSEs (or equivalent including English and Maths) at A*-C compared with 59% of their peers.³
- In 2016, only 7% of 19-21 year old Care Leavers were in higher education, compared with more than a third of all young people.⁴
- In 2016, 40% of 19-21 year old Care Leavers were not in education, employment or training, compared with 14% of all 19-21-year olds.⁵
- LACP are four times more likely to have a special educational need (SEN) than all young people and are almost 10 times as likely to have a statement of special

1 Local Government Association: Get in on the Act – Children and Social Work Act 2017: https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/9.36_Get_in_on_the_Act_-_Children_02%20web.pdf

2 DfE: Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2017 SFR 50/2017

3 DfE: 'Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England 31 March 2017'

4 DfE: 'Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England 31 March 2017'

5 DfE: 'Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England 31 March 2017'

educational need or an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). In 2016, 57.3% of LAYP had a special educational need, compared to 46.7% of children in need and 14.4% of all young people).⁶

- LAYP are more than five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all young people, and more than one and a half times more likely than children in need.⁷

Challenges faced

Many LAYP/CL will have experienced significant emotional distress and instability growing up, which will have a huge impact on their transition to adulthood and on their ability to form positive relationships.

Attachment difficulties and mental health issues are common and may manifest as behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Many LAYP/CL will have suffered significant trauma caused at various stages in their lives, resulting, for example, from their experiences prior to being taken into care, the process itself and the breakdown of relationships with foster carers.

Issues, challenges and difficulties LAYP and CL commonly face include:

- Low self-esteem and low confidence
- Lack of trust
- Difficulty planning long-term or committing to deferred gratification
- Practical difficulties relating to suitable housing and finance
- Emotional instability
- Some may also have experienced drug or alcohol abuse or issues with offending



TOP TIP: LAYP and CL need positive role

models to give them the motivation to aspire and do well. A role model doesn't need to be a tutor or mentor. Sometimes other members of staff, or someone from an external organisation the college works with on a regular basis, can be excellent role models for individual students.

Legal rights and entitlements

Young people often stop living in care from the age of 16 onwards, although many continue to be in care until the age of 18.

However, they should continue to get support from the local authority Children's Services department, where they were last in care, until they are 25, and for as long as they are in a programme of education or training as agreed with the department.

A social worker or personal adviser should work with them to create a 'pathway plan' (see below) - to help them plan their future. This should include assistance around education and employment. In addition, care leavers have the right to a £2000 bursary if they are going onto higher education.

Local authorities also have a duty to make sure that care leavers have appropriate accommodation until they are at least 18. If a young person is fostered then they have the right to stay with their foster family when they reach 18, as long as both they and their foster carers agree to this. This 'Staying Put' arrangement aims to provide care leavers with a more gradual transition into adulthood.

The government has recently announced their plans to extend this offer to children in residential care. 'Staying Close' will give care leavers the right to live independently near their former children's home and continue to receive support from that home until they are 21.

All local authorities are now required to consult on and publish their local support offer to care leavers. Visit your local authority's website for more information about the full range of support available to young people in your area.

6 DfE: 'Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England 31 March 2017'

7 DfE: 'Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England 31 March 2017'

Local authority support for Looked After Young People and Care Leavers

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievement of young people they look after, regardless of where they are placed.

All LAYP in education should have the following:

- **Care Plan:** All LAYP, regardless of whether they are in education, should have a care plan. The care plan outlines a young person's needs, how they will be met and the plan for that young person. It should include contacts for health and support, and a personal education plan which is appropriate to the young person's age and needs. It should also be thoroughly integrated with the young person's pathway plan.
- **Personal Education Plan (PEP):** This is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school. It is a record of what needs to happen for the young person to fulfil their potential and reflects any existing education plans. The PEP should set out clear objectives relating to academic achievement and out-of-school activities as well as other personal and (if appropriate) behavioural targets. With the rise in the participation age to 18, all LAYP and CLs should now receive a PEP until they are at least 18. This has led to the introduction of Post-16 PEPs in many local authorities.
- **Pathway Plan:** Explores a young person's wishes and aspirations for the future and outlines steps to prepare the child for leaving care, ensuring relevant preparation and support. It takes into account relevant information from the PEP and integrates with the young person's care plan. It should include information on different aspects of a young person's development: health, education, training and employment, emotional health, identity and family and social relationships.
- **Looked after child (LAC) review:** This is a regular meeting that brings together those people who are closely concerned with the care of the LAYP. It is an opportunity to review the LAYP's care plan – the document which sets out how the LAYP will be cared for while they are looked after – and discuss the LAYP's progress and plans for the future. Education institutions may participate in LAC reviews.

● **Head of Virtual School (or equivalent):** Because looked after young people are being educated across a large number of schools, the Head of Virtual School has a powerful role in tracking their progress as if they were in a single school. The core purpose of this role is to improve the educational progress and attainment of all young people looked after by their local authority, including those who have been placed in schools in other authorities. For more details visit www.navsh.org.uk

● **The Children and Social Work Act 2017:** This extended the role of virtual schools and designated teachers to certain groups of previously Looked After Young People as they also continue to experience educational challenges after leaving care. These new duties apply to young people who leave care as a result of adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders and children adopted from state care abroad. At the time of publication of this resource, the government was consulting on an update of the statutory guidance to reflect this change.

● **Designated Teacher:** The member of staff who has the lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the young person's PEP within their school and is a central point of engagement between social workers, head of virtual school and other stakeholders. They also have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand factors that affect how looked after young people learn and achieve.

See the Resource section of this guide: Resources for more information, including the DfE document 'Promoting the education of looked after children - Statutory guidance for local authorities', and government websites for other documents and information relevant to Looked After Young People and Care Leavers.

What to be aware of when working with LAYP/CL

LAYP and CL need to be listened to and their needs and situations respected. The difficult backgrounds and disruptive situations that may be part of the everyday life of a LAYP or CL can cause many negative expectations and beliefs, such as:

- Self-doubt
- Fear of change



- A sense that they can't/don't fit in
- Distrust that good things could ever last
- A belief that they don't deserve success.

Self-sabotage is behaviour that interferes with, and eventually disrupts, a person's long-term goals. LAYP/CL often fall into this trap at some point during their education. Combined with mental health issues, this can completely undermine an individual's ability to make the most of opportunities.

The signs to watch for include:

- Failure to attend appointments
- Missing assignment deadlines
- Not attending classes
- Emotional breakdown
- Inappropriate behaviour in class
- Exacerbation of mental ill health

Colleges need to be in regular contact with LAYP/CL students to make sure they recognise a change in behaviour and when they may need help.



TOP TIP: Take a full cross-college team approach to supporting LAYP/CL.

Make sure all staff have at least a basic level of awareness and understanding of what being in care is like and the impact that it can have upon a young person and their life chances. This should include personal tutors, programme leaders, canteen and security staff, receptionists, etc. Staff also need to know who to contact for advice and who to refer students to.

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

L&W has developed a self assessment tool to enable you to review your college's current provision and support for LAYP and CLs. It will help you to identify existing provision, set targets for development and compile an action plan including ongoing reviews and monitoring.

The [Action Plan Self-Assessment Template](#) is set up for both FE and HE combined but you might want to use a separate template for the FE and HE sections of your college.

STRATEGIC AND WHOLE ORGANISATION APPROACH

The purpose of implementing a strategic and whole organisation approach is to:

- Create a whole organisation approach and culture of awareness and understanding across all departments, across FE and HE provision.
- Improve effectiveness of and develop provision through monitoring and measuring of impact.

Senior management buy-in and leadership is crucial

An organisation-wide strategy for LAYP/CL needs to be driven by the college's Senior Management Team. It is therefore important that SMT have an awareness and understanding of the barriers faced by this cohort of vulnerable students and of their support needs. Meetings between SMT and current LAYP/CL students from the college can provide the opportunity for senior management to get a personal and real-life insight into the issues and needs of these students. It can create an understanding which may lead to policy changes and development of support across college departments.

Student Association LAYP/CL representatives or LAYP/CL students working with staff and advising relevant college committees can allow the LAYP/CL voice to be included in college management and strategy development. In addition to ensuring that new policies become more relevant to LAYP/CL students, this empowers them to be able to influence the support available in their college.



Bridgend College has established a learner-led LAYP/CL support group. The 4 care-experienced students meet and liaise regularly with key staff in student services to feed into the development of college provision and resources.

Appointing a Lead Governor for LAYP/CL can also generate SMT buy-in to cross-college support for LAYP/CL.



The responsibilities of the Designated Governor for Looked After Children and Care Leavers at **Canterbury College** are to:

- Monitor the College's implementation of its Looked After Children policy through the annual Self-Assessment Report
- Ensure that the College has a senior member of staff with responsibility for Looked After Children
- Undertake an annual evaluation, with the members of the Corporation and the Principal and Chief Executive of the attainment and progress of Looked After Children at the College.

Policies and strategy

It is important to ensure that an SMT-driven LAYP/CL strategy is visible across the college. Some colleges have a separate policy for LAYP/CL, others include LAYP/CL as a named cohort and/or as part of the vulnerable students cohort in the college safeguarding policy, SEND, HE Access Agreements and other college policies. There is no right way to write a policy or a strategy for LAYP/CL – it will depend on what works best for your college. However, there are some key points to consider when developing a policy or strategy:

- Key messages and guidance about inclusion and diversity need to be communicated to all staff across the college.
- LAYP/CL should be identified as a specific, named group within the vulnerable students' cohort.
- The college should either have separate policies for LAYP/CL or ensure that all college policies, strategies and procedures specifically mention this group where appropriate.
- Staff support and resources need to be available to implement these policies.

- The strategy and policies should be made visible across the college and be championed by SMT.

 At **East Kent College** the Principal is passionate about supporting and meeting the needs of LAYP and CL. He is the key driver of change and endorses a college-wide strategy to support students from care and the development of the college's provision for this cohort.

Examples of different colleges' approaches to strategy and policies:

- Resource 1: Middlesbrough College LAYP Policy
- Resource 2: Coleg Gwent Strategy for LAYP and CLs

Measuring and Monitoring

Colleges should ensure that there are robust methods in place for monitoring and measuring the outcomes and effectiveness of policies specifically for LAYP/CL which inform new developments and change.

Collection of data on enrolment, progression, retention and success

In order to collect and analyse data on LAYP/CL it is important to identify this group of students as a specific cohort. There should be processes in place within the college MIS to collect and record data at every stage of the student life cycle, starting with pre-application outreach, followed by application and enrolment, and continuing into attendance, retention, drop-out, progression and success rates. This data should be collected and analysed for both FE courses and HE provision.

 **Uxbridge College** improved its data collection processes and as a result reports more effectively on retention and progression data at the end of every year, including a report to the governors' meetings. What the college perceives to be most important is that they are able to track and set targets. This is vital in improving outcomes for LAYP/CL students.

As part of the Buttle UK Quality Mark process, data was collected via an annual statistical return submitted by award-holding HE and FE institutions. This gives a clear indication of the types of data that are useful to collect and illustrates the characteristics of the young people being supported and what support is being provided.

Resource 3: Data collection templates for FE and HE based on the Buttle UK Quality Mark

Internal and external reporting

Colleges should have processes in place to report relevant data and outcome measures about their LAYP/CL students to their senior team as part of the college's regular reporting cycle, as well as to Governors or Board meetings. The outcomes should also be included in reports to external inspectorates, such as Ofsted.

 Following the collection of data on numbers enrolling and achievements for care leavers, Ofsted were able to identify good outcomes specifically for care leavers at **East Kent College**:

'A large number of young people either in the care of, or having left the care of, local authorities attend the college. They achieve qualification successes above the national average for young people in care.'

 Outcomes for care leavers were acknowledged at **Northbrook College's** inspection in 2013:

'The college has outstanding provision for groups of students often marginalised or vulnerable within the community. The inclusive nature of the college's enrolment policy ensures that, for example, unemployed adults gain access to relevant employability training and that young people in the care of the local authority gain valuable experience of independent living such as travelling to and from the college on their own.'

 **Blackpool and The Fylde College Ofsted Report 2013:**

'The college is very successful at engaging students from disadvantaged groups and ensuring that they stay on course and succeed. Outcomes are very positive for students from a wide range of groups, such as young people in care...'

Gather and evaluate support through feedback from LAYP/CL and staff.

A good relationship with the Student Union/Student Association is an ideal way of collecting feedback on learner experience and of finding ways of supporting students from care backgrounds. Student Unions/Associations can offer formal, informal and peer-focussed

support to learners, which is often effective in breaking down barriers and enabling care leavers to feel as though their voices are heard and their views matter. Colleges can also gather student feedback through focus groups and questionnaires with students directly or as part of the annual student survey.

Resource 4: Sheffield College Focus Group Questionnaire for Care Experienced Students

This feedback can then be used alongside the college's monitoring data to evaluate and improve support systems for LAYP/CL across the college, identifying any key areas which are problematic or teams/curriculum areas which provide particularly effective support which could be replicated in other areas of the college.

Staff training and support

All staff across a college will come into contact with students who are in, or have left, local authority care. In order to be able to understand LAYP/CL circumstances and be aware of and respond appropriately to their needs – emotional, behavioural, academic – staff training is key.

In addition to training, it is important to have

a central point where information about the college's support offer is stored. This will enable all staff to access information if they receive an enquiry or referral, and to have a key contact for LAYP/CL that all staff can ask for advice or refer queries to. You should consider:

- Ensuring that information about the needs of LAYP/CL is a mandatory part of induction training for all new staff and NQTs.
- Encouraging all staff to watch the L&W staff induction/training video' at www.learningandwork.org.uk/review-and-improve-your-support-for-looked-after-young-people-and-care-leavers
- Offering specific CPD about the needs of LAYP/CL for existing staff e.g. staff intranet, inclusion in regular staff training and monthly meetings.
- Inviting LAYP/CL students to talk about their personal experiences (either existing students at college or work with charities such as Become or Care Leavers Association).
- Working with other further education colleges and networks to share information.



- Ensuring effective staff supervision arrangements are in place.

LAYP/CL are often living in difficult circumstances that can create complex support needs. It is therefore important to offer supervision and support to those members of staff who are directly involved in supporting LAYP/CL. These include the designated member of staff (DMS), key contact and other student services staff, specialist mentors, personal tutors and mentors.



One example of a regional network is the **Kent and Medway Care Leavers Progression Partnership** (CLPP). CLPP brings together staff from colleges and local authorities across Kent, as well as third sector organisations, universities and Jobcentre Plus and is chaired by the Head of **Canterbury College**.

Network with other colleges and organisations

Creating contacts and working with networks to share practice and resources is important.

The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)

NNECL is a network of learning providers and national organisations committed to the progression and support of Care Leavers in further and higher education. It aims to transform the progression of young people in or leaving care into and through further and higher education, by championing the continuous improvement of local practice, multi-agency partnerships and national collaboration. To find out more visit www.nnecl.org

Local or regional HE/FE networks

As well as NNECL, there are local and regional networks of FE and HE providers who work together to improve support for care leavers both within and between their organisations. Engaging with these networks can not only help you identify and replicate good practice, but also improve transitions for LAYP/CL who move between localities. You can use the NNECL website (www.nnecl.org) to find your nearest HE/FE network.

 **Bournemouth and Poole College** found that networking with other regional FE providers allowed sharing of best practice. It also enabled the college to put in place support for individual LAYP/CL students who transferred or progressed from one college to another.

You may also wish to find out about local authority networks: for example, safeguarding teams, 14-19 networks and virtual schools.

OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING

The aim of implementing effective outreach, recruitment and marketing is to:

- Attract students from care into the college (FE and HE)
- Promote college course offer and support offer directly to stakeholders
- Raise aspirations of learners to continue their education into college
- Help learners make the right choice of course
- Identify LAYP/CL pre-entry and prepare smooth transition into college

Many LAYP/CL will need support to raise their aspirations at different stages of their journey through education. Often their education has been disrupted and/or they have become disengaged from learning. Care leavers often don't reach higher education, or even further education, until they are over 21 years of age. It is therefore important that all marketing and recruitment activity includes adult care leavers.

There are many stakeholders and key influencers in the lives of LAYP/CL. Building effective relationships with them is vital to engaging and informing LAYP/CL.

Pre-entry identification of individual LAYP/CL

Identification of LAYP/CL prior to application and enrolment can ensure that colleges have a good understanding of their specific personal circumstances, educational background and support needs. It also enables colleges to put in place effective support at the beginning of their engagement with the college.

The most important and effective tool in helping identify LAYP/CL prior to application and enrolment is through networks with stakeholders and influencers. Building relationships with all stakeholders will help you get to know about individual LAYP/CL coming to your college and the kind of support that the college will need to put in place for them. Having strong contacts externally will also help with managing students during the year and having access to support in case of a crisis, e.g. housing or mental health emergencies.

The main stakeholders that have a role to play in

supporting LAYP/CL are:

- Their local authority: social worker, personal adviser, leaving care team, children's services
- Virtual school
- Previous education provider: Schools/Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)/other training provider and the designated member of staff within those organisations
- Housing organisations
- Police and Youth services
- Local community organisations

The key influencers of LAYP/CL include:

- Personal advisors in their local authorities
- Virtual school
- Teachers and advisers in education institutions (schools, other colleges, PRUs, training providers)
- Foster carers/guardians

Compiling a Stakeholder Engagement Plan which includes contact details of all your local partners is a useful tool for identifying LAYP/CL prior to application and enrolment.

Resource 5: Template for stakeholder engagement plan



A joint transitions project between **Wakefield College** and Wakefield Leaving Care Team helped LAYP/CL make the transition between school and college and gave older CLs returning to education the opportunity to explore the pathway they would like to take.



TOP TIP: a good relationship with the Virtual School is key - both within your own local authority and other local authorities where LAYP/CL may come to your college from. The Virtual School is the main point of contact to find out about individual students prior to application and enrolment.

 **TOP TIP:** Offer your institution as a host venue for local authorities. Hosting local authority or community group events or meetings on campus, aimed at relevant groups such as foster carers or social workers, will give great opportunities to engage and build relationships with them. **Telford College**, for example, provides opportunities for the local Children in Care Council to meet at the college every two weeks.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Data Sharing Agreements with local authorities/virtual schools can be a good way of establishing effective processes for the identification of LAYP/CL. A SLA sets out the responsibilities of the local authority/virtual school and of the college in relation to supporting the educational progression of LAYP/CL. It is a key document for a collaborative working relationship and the necessary sharing of data and information pre-entry and throughout the LAYP/CL student's time at the college. Make sure you include procedures and data sharing arrangements for outreach and aspiration raising events in your service level agreement.

Examples of a college/local authority SLA:

- Resource 6: Coleg Gwent Protocol Agreement
- Resource 7: Middlesbrough College Local Authority Educational Policy 2013

Marketing and Recruitment

All college marketing and recruitment information should include information specifically aimed at LAYP/CL. It will give a strong message of understanding, acceptance and support.

Marketing and recruitment or outreach staff are crucial in developing and communicating the message of diversity and inclusiveness of the college to potential new LAYP/CL students, their corporate parents (local authorities) and their guardians/carers. It is key that marketing and recruitment staff, including those members of staff on reception or answering telephone enquiries, are trained to have an understanding of LAYP/CL as a cohort, their circumstances and needs but also who their main influencers are. Training needs to also cover how to appropriately identify LAYP/CL and respond to them in a sensitive manner.

Social media

Social media is an important tool for getting the attention of young people and creating a rapport with them. The college will have a social media strategy aimed at potential new students. LAYP/CL, the professionals supporting them and their guardians need to be targeted specifically as part of this strategy, advertising not only the college and its courses but also the support on offer for LAYP/CL.

 **TOP TIP:** Work with current students to create appropriate language and messages, Facebook pages and case studies. Online forums, videos and Twitter are used by colleges to connect with young people, promote their programmes and boost enrolment. Make sure LAYP/CL are specifically included.

Targeted leaflets, posters, digital information for screen displays throughout the college

These materials should be directed at LAYP/CL applicants and their support staff in local authorities and schools, as well as foster carers. The information should provide a list of support available, including:

- Named key contact for LAYP/CL with contact details
- Financial support and advice available
- Help in organising childcare and transport
- Progression and career support

These materials are useful during the recruitment stage but also throughout the year.

Resource 8: Middlesbrough College LAC/CL leaflet

 **TOP TIP:** Work with current LAYP/CL students on the design, content and language of any recruitment materials and information. This will ensure that they are attractive to the target audience and include all the information needed to encourage this group to engage.

Website information

A page on the college website providing details for LAYP/CL on courses, student support, and the key contact and their details, makes it easy for LAYP/CL and also teachers, local

authorities, foster carers and guardians to find the information they require. Again, invite current LAYP/CL students to work with you to develop the right information and language and to make sure the page is easily accessible via the search engine.

Some examples of college LAYP/CL specific webpages:

- North West College London: <https://www.cnwl.ac.uk/college-life/looked-after-children-care-leavers>
- East Surrey College: <https://www.esc.ac.uk/looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>
- Swindon College: <https://www.swindon.ac.uk/Student-Information/Support-for-Looked-After-Children.aspx>

Open days

Ensure all staff, i.e. tutors, advisory staff and also reception staff and other support staff are aware of LAYP/CL and other vulnerable groups to ensure information provided is relevant to them and delivered sensitively. Have specific information about the support available for LAYP/CL to hand out to potential students and their influencers and be sure there is a trained member of staff on hand to speak to them.

 **TOP TIP:** Enlist current LAYP/CL students (and give them training) to talk about what it is like to study at your college at open days, school visits and any other events. This is a highly effective way of showcasing your support to LAYP/CLs.

Outreach activities for FE and HE

If you run outreach activities then it is important that you make these accessible for LAYP/CLs. Your most important partners for pre-entry outreach are current education providers, virtual schools and the local authority. Strong collaborative relationships with feeder schools (also Pupil Referral Units and other providers) will support staff to include LAYP/CL in any activities your college offers and will help you to obtain information about LAYP/CL prior to the event.

Activities can be targeted and tailored specifically at a LAYP/CL cohort, but many LAYP/CL will not want to be singled out in this way. Instead, run inclusive events aimed at all potential students making sure LAYP/CL are invited to attend. Where appropriate, have priority access

to certain activities and events for LAYP/CL. You may also want to consider providing help with the costs of transport for LAYP/CL to remove this barrier to them attending activities or events.

Participating LAYP/CL should be identified for you to record attendance and track conversion into application and enrolment.

All outreach activities should automatically include information, advice and guidance (IAG) which includes the needs, rights and entitlements of LAYP/CL alongside other vulnerable student cohorts (such as young carers, estranged young people and people with disabilities).



TOP TIP: Include social workers, headteachers of virtual schools and foster carers in any parent activity or event that you run.

If you are developing a Service Level Agreement with your local authority, include the virtual school and aspiration raising, outreach and transition agreements. Give a clear outline of what you can offer them and what you would like in return.

Planning activities

- Encourage all LAYP/CL to be involved in your activity regardless of what their current 'potential' is. Your activity may inspire them to turn their education achievements around. It will also ensure that students are not ostracised from activities because someone does not think they could go to college or university.
- Discrete activities specifically for LAYP/CL are of value as they allow similar experiences to be shared. However, be sure to avoid highlighting individuals who attend these as being different/special. You may also want to avoid labelling activities as specifically for LAYP/CL; instead, you could run an activity with a generic title but only invite this cohort to attend.
- Include an element aimed at foster carers/guardians and other professional support staff in all your activities.
- Make sure that costs are not a barrier to participation (such as travel, food, costs for residential, costs for specific activities/materials)
- When developing a new activity, prepare long lead in times and have contacts in place

to help spread the word.

- Increase your staff to student ratios. Some groups of LAYP/CL can require additional support and attention. Staff should be prepared with behaviour management techniques and keep activities interesting and hands on to ensure engagement. Work with social workers to identify cases of LAYP/CL students that need individual risk assessments due to their specific needs.
- Be flexible in your approach with LAYP/CL; they prefer to be treated like all young adults. You may also find that some smoke or discuss underage alcohol use openly. Be prepared for unexpected changes, for example a LAYP/CL may come with a friend at the last minute.
- Ensure the right safeguarding measures are in place; plan for an emergency safeguarding officer and have a designated safeguarding officer on site.

 **TOP TIPS: Use clear, transparent and jargon-free information** to describe an activity or event.

- **Tell everybody.** Use multiple channels to promote your activity, include designated teachers, headteachers, virtual schools, local authorities and foster carer networks. The more people who can help you access LAYP/CL the better.
- **Advertise.** Often local authorities, virtual schools and fostering teams have newsletters that go out to workers, carers or young people. They may welcome articles or 'adverts' to include and may do so for free.

 **TOP TIP: Engage LAYP/CL students to help deliver activities as ambassadors.**

Students can either be from your FE or HE college section or external HE students if you have strong relationship with a local university. Contacts in universities responsible for care-experienced students can be found on the Propel website (www.propel.org.uk).

Resource 9: Template for planning outreach activities

Examples of activities

- **Pre-entry visits and taster days**, to familiarise potential students with the college and/or a specific course. This can help to dispel any fears of going into a new environment. LAYP/CL should meet the designated member of staff and course tutors. Always invite foster carers/guardians and local authority/virtual school support staff along as well.

Resource 10: Middlesbrough College Transitions Day (leaflet and itinerary)

- **Summer activities** can be a useful way of keeping new LAYP/CL students engaged over the holidays. Some LAYP and CL can be at a loose end during the summer months without school to give them structure during that time, especially if they do not have foster families or other close networks around. These young people are therefore at risk of losing sight of their plans to go to college in the autumn. Engagement activities can help to keep LAYP/CL on track and also provides an opportunity for them to get used to the college environment,

 Some colleges offer early interviews as part of their support to care leaving students and also summer programmes or tasters, which can help students to stay involved and motivated before the start of college term. **Sheffield College** for example run summer transition events and taster days when LAYP/CL meet key staff and determine whether they have made the right course choice. The college also keeps in touch with LAYP/CL over the summer holidays.

 **East Kent College** reports that transition support through the summer is really important. This is carried out by full time support staff who are committed to building relationships with all the relevant external agencies.

TRANSITION SUPPORT INTO COLLEGE: APPLICATION, ENTRY AND INDUCTION

Effective transition support into college enables a provider to:

- Identify LAYP/CL support needs and provide opportunities for LAYP/CL to self-identify
- Create environment of trust and support for LAYP/CL
- Be proactive in offering support to LAYP/CL

Application and entry arrangements for LAYP/CL

Offering flexibility around application processes and entry requirements can enable some LAYP/CLs who would not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in FE to apply for college. This might include relaxed entry requirements, guaranteed interviews or even guaranteed places for LAYP/CL applicants.

 At **Peterborough Regional College** all LAYP/CL applicants are offered an interview and the guarantee that a suitable course will be found for them, if not internally, then through an outward referral to another provider.

You may also want to consider offering courses with different start dates throughout the year to LAYP/CL. LAYP/CL may not be ready or in a position to start a further or higher education course in the autumn and so having alternative starting dates in the spring reduces the risk of a student not starting their course.

 **Sheffield College and Peterborough Regional College** have roll-on roll off programmes and many colleges offer January intakes.

Designated member of staff (DMS)/key contact

The role of the DMS or Key Contact for LAYP/CL is to build a strong relationship of trust with individual LAYP/CL students and provide advice and support throughout their learning journey. It is important the relationship stays constant throughout a student's course.

Many LAYP/CL have had numerous changes

in the professionals supporting them and may feel let down by the authorities due to their experiences by the time they enter FE or HE. As a result, they may not be confident in asking for support or advice and may find it hard to trust and build relationships. The DMS/key contact therefore needs to be proactive in managing individual LAYP/CL students. At the same time most LAYP/CL do not want to be 'singled out' as different from other students so the DMS and the support available needs to be visible at enrolment and throughout the year.

 At **Northbrook College**, LAYP/CL are introduced very early in the year to the designated member of staff. She emails students, letting them know who she is and what she can offer, stressing that she will not 'push herself on to them' but is there to help if they need it. She believes that if you try to overdevelop the relationship then the learners back away. Students with care experience want to be perceived as 'just the same', they want to get on with their lives, gain qualifications, go to work and get a home; they want to 'start their lives'. Northbrook has all the support mechanisms in place and highlights them but the college does not draw attention to the learners - and doesn't make assumptions about them.

The role of the designated member of staff/key contact varies from college to college, especially if the college has multiple campuses. Some are a curriculum manager, others a senior member of support staff, such as the senior safeguarding officer or the senior learning support manager. Some providers have student support teams that cover a range of areas and students are allocated one named worker who they can seek out first, but others are also there in the event that the named person is unavailable.

Sometimes LAYP/CL will form a relationship with a tutor or a mentor as the key contact. The role of the DMS is then to manage and support the tutors/mentors and liaise with other members of staff in student services including the SEND and safeguarding teams.

There should be procedures in place to pass over responsibility for supporting the LAYP/CL from the tutor/mentor to the DMS and any other specialist staff in the college.

 At **Hugh Baird College**, the student support team works as a whole. There is a range of staff who are involved in supporting students entitled to bursaries, which forms the entry point for their access to support.

 At **Sheffield College** the main day-to-day responsibility for LAYP/CL students lies with tutor mentors in each of the curriculum areas. They will monitor individual students, i.e. their attendance, behaviour and academic performance, etc, and provide practical support through tutorials and one-to-one meetings. The tutor mentor also coordinates the PEP reviews.

Whichever set up works best for your college, the roles of the DMS and key contact for LAYP/CL should be embedded into the college's staff structure and the responsibilities of these roles reflected in job descriptions.

The type of general skills and experiences that staff in these roles should have, include:

- Experience of working with vulnerable (young) people
- Understanding of issues that may influence young people to disengage from education and to become NEET
- Behaviour management
- Appreciation of relevant college and statutory processes and procedures
- Pre-existing knowledge of LAYP/CL is not necessarily a requirement but staff training on LAYP/CL provided by the college should be mandatory.

Identify LAYP/CL prior to or during application and enrolment

Identifying LAYP/CL and their individual support needs prior to their enrolment at the college can help you to put effective support in place at the beginning of their learning. This can be done in a number of ways.

Work with external partners to identify LAYP/CL

In most colleges, it is the role of the DMS to establish close links with all the external stakeholders involved in a LAYP/CL's life but that will depend on the structure of the college. The DMS should liaise closely with stakeholders prior to enrolment to put in place tailored support before a LAYP/CL starts their course and should continue that relationship while the student is on course. These stakeholders include local authorities, local schools and other FE/HE providers (see the section on networking in

'strategic and organisational approach').

There are a number of local authority duties that the DMS/key contact should be involved in or kept informed about:

● **Pathway Plans**

A care leaver's personal adviser must help the young person keep to their Pathway Plan, help the care leaver access services, and provide advice and support. Care leavers up to the age of 25 who tell their council they have returned, or want to return, to education or training should be given the support of a personal adviser while they are studying or training.

● **Personal Education Plans**

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) sets out the educational targets for attainment and achievement, and recommendations for how this will be done. Social workers must liaise directly with colleges and all other relevant parties to arrange PEP meetings on a termly basis. The PEP includes the contact details of the Virtual School Head for the authority that looks after the child.

Resource 11: Middlesbrough College PEP process for staff supporting the pre-enrolment stage of a learner's journey.

● **LAC reviews**

This is a regular meeting that brings together all stakeholders who are closely involved in the care of the Looked After Child/Young Person. It is an opportunity to review the LAYP's care plan – the document which sets out how the LAYP will be cared for while they are looked after – and discuss the LAYP's progress and plans for the future. Education institutions may participate in LAC reviews.

Being involved in these processes will enable a DMS to identify LAYP/CL before they apply for college, and therefore provide appropriate support through this process and their time at the college.



Derby College aims to identify LAYP/CL students before enrolment. Once the student does arrive, the college builds a dialogue between the intervention team and the academic staff. Providing they give their consent, every care experienced learner is allocated a personal coach and a named member of the academic staff in the appropriate curriculum area, where the young person is studying.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

Working with external partners can be particularly important in the identification of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The number of UASC entering the UK has increased substantially: between

8 From: *Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – Health and Wellbeing Needs Assessment October 2016, Halton Borough Council*

9 From: 'ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5: Special Thematic Report on UASC, Nov 2016' http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_UASC_Report_Final_FOR_PUBLICATION.pdf

A CHILD'S JOURNEY: 'R' – AN UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILD

The vignette below illustrates the experience of just one of the many children that arrive in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child.

1. Describing R and his situation then:

R presented 18 months ago (April 2015) as a 14 year old boy from Iraq, having been found by Police in the carpark of a local motorway service station. He did not have any documentation.

R was wary of contact with adults. He was hungry, confused and scared, but otherwise looked physically well. On appearance, he looked relatively mature for a 14 year old. He said he had been in the back of the lorry for a 'long time' but he was unclear about his journey up to that point.

2. Needs were assessed as:

- Immediate need for somewhere to live and be safe.
- Be reunited with family, if family members are identified and this in his best interests.
- Understanding his journey, his current circumstances and learn about living in England. Improved emotional well-being.
- Better skills in English language to help him attend and thrive in school.

3. What happened:

- Social Worker allocated to work with R to undertake assessment to further understand his needs and his views and wishes.
- Placement with agency foster carer (no in-house foster care placements available).
- Health assessment undertaken (no specific health needs identified).
- Establishing if there are any family members that R may be reunited with if it was in his best interests. However, no family members have been identified.
- For the first two months, R had weekly counselling sessions to help him come to terms with what he had experienced and the loss of his family.
- Foster carers provide support for R to continue his faith.
- Enrolled in ESOL classes until start of new school term.
- Asylum process with Home Office commenced including solicitor to assist R through the asylum process.
- Merton age assessment undertaken in light of his 'older' appearance, which confirmed his age as 14-16 at the time.

4. Describing R and his situation now:

R initially struggled with school, but as his English improved he began to make rapid progress and is taking some GCSEs. R has decided that he wants to pursue a career in accountancy which his foster carers are supporting. He is settled in his foster care placement.

As his fluency in English increased he also became more sociable and outgoing, with peers and with adults.

A small local Kurdish community group offers drop-in sessions, but R's enthusiasm for attending is variable and he prefers to spend time with his own peer group from school.

R's asylum application is not yet resolved.

2014 and 2015 there was an increase of over 53%. In 2016, a total of 3,043 UASC applied for asylum⁸. Local authorities have a duty of care for these children/young people. Due to their circumstances and past experiences their needs may be different to other LAYP/CL as illustrated in the example of a UASC's journey below.⁹

Encourage self-declaration during application and enrolment

Including a question on the college application and enrolment forms can be an effective way to identify LAYP/CL. The question could be:

- Pre-16: 'Are you in Local Authority Care?'
- Post 16: 'Have you ever been in Local Authority Care?'

TOP TIP: Some colleges also find it helpful to use the question: Who do you live with? This can help identify whether a student is living independently or with foster carers.

Hugh Baird College work hard in the run-up to enrolment to ensure that application forms are fully completed by all students so that any students who might need extra support are able to be reassured. Many LAYP/CL need support in completing the form, particularly in understanding the implications of disclosing or not disclosing information.

TOP TIP: Include a question that enables a CL to disclose their status on enrolment forms for Higher Education courses, in addition to the CL question on the UCAS application.

Bournemouth and Poole College HE students who identify as CLs on their UCAS application are contacted by the student welfare officer in September to explain the financial support options available and how to apply for them.

Provide a safe space for LAYP/CL to self-declare during enrolment

Interviewing staff and admissions tutors should be trained to be able to sensitively explore a student's status and, if appropriate, ask for the name and contact of their social worker.

Some colleges will interview and enrol LAYP/CL students in advance of the main enrolment days to be able to dedicate enough time to each individual and give them the space to disclose their status.

In general, colleges tend to involve their specialist staff in enrolling and interviewing LAYP/CL in advance of the main enrolment days. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that all college staff have an understanding and awareness of care experience.



TOP TIP: Record application and enrolment data on LAYP/CL as part of the overall college tracking and monitoring procedure and the college impact measurement and improvement strategy for this cohort of students.

Middlesbrough College, the student support team compile a list of Vulnerable Young People (VYP) based on information received over the summer and the last academic year from local authorities and applications. (A VYP includes a young person in their own right. They need to provide evidence of this through either a letter from their social worker or evidence of their income support). The Safeguarding and Welfare Team meet with VYP students but instead of just having an informal chat the college has developed a 'VYP information sheet' which acts as a conversation making tool. It enables Safeguarding and Welfare Officers (SWO) to get important contact numbers, gain an understanding of why the student is doing the course they are doing, their experience of school and an understanding of their background. This enables the SWO to start developing a relationship with an individual student from the start of the year, and it makes it easier for the students to approach the SWO with any issues they may have throughout the year. The Information Sheet holds all the information on the VYP in one place for all the team.

Resource 12: VYP Information Sheet Template

Include information on confidentiality at all stages

The right of a student not to disclose their status is paramount. It is important to ensure therefore that students understand that information will be treated confidentially and only shared on a 'need-to-know' basis.

[Resource 13: Sheffield College LAYP/CL pre-entry information leaflet and LAYP Promise](#)

It is good practice to have a consent form for the sharing of information for LAYP/CL to sign.

[Resource 14: Information Sharing Consent Form Template](#)

 Form which asks for information under 'Safeguarding Information' and a second, which is the Interview Form. The Interview Form is filled out by curriculum tutors during a one-to-one interview. The third page is dedicated to Additional Learning Support and Medical Support, which includes LAYP/CL information. The form captures as much information as possible at this early stage. This information is then flagged on the college internal system for tracking purposes and is followed up at enrolment.

[Resource 15: East Surrey College application form and IAG interview form](#)

Risk assessment and safeguarding

Prior to the start of term, it is recommended that providers carry out a risk assessment for each LAYP/CL student. This could be part of the college safeguarding policy or a separate policy specifically for this cohort and should include:

- Housing needs and support when living in local authority housing/private housing
- Pastoral support needs – behaviour management, mental health
- SEND
- Child care needs
- Financial support for living expenses (food, travel) and course materials

Your college should liaise not only with local authority social services but also with other stakeholders such as the police, probation officers, youth service, housing providers and mental health support services.

It's important to create joined up working processes across all relevant departments of the college to put in place and monitor support for LAYP/CL, including academic tutors, based on the risk assessment.

[Resource 16: Northampton College Safeguarding Policy](#)



 **East Kent College** maintains a risk register of vulnerable students, overseen by a Vice-Principal and LAYP/CL are included. There are termly meetings with all relevant staff to review the register. The college also runs a college campus food bank to help address issues of poverty, which is particularly helpful for young parents or others living independently who struggle financially.

- How to fill in forms such as finance forms and where to get help
- Vouchers for meals and/or local transport
- Stationary freebies
- Basic course materials for specific courses

Promote the support available to LAYP/CLs at application and enrolment

To ensure learners are aware of their entitlements and the full range of support available to them, promote information about the support on offer to LAYP/CL during application, enrolment and induction. Knowing about the support on offer can encourage young people to declare their status if they have not done so already.

- Include information on support for LAYP/CL in all college marketing materials (see section on marketing, recruitment and outreach.)
- Make sure enrolment and induction staff advise LAYP/CL students appropriately and correctly on the support available to them and how to access it.

 **TOP TIP:** Ensure that the DMS / key contact is available during enrolment and induction for an informal chat with a LAYP/CL

Make sure the pack is adapted to the needs of different groups: LAYP (14-16 years old), CLs (16+ years old), mature CL students, FE and HE students.

 At **Uxbridge College** every LAYP student is given a rucksack with stationary, a calculator, USB stick and a 'cooking on budget' book as well as information leaflets about the support available to them at college.

- Peer mentors
Many colleges find that young people from a care background can be very effective mentors for others. In some areas, LAYP/CL may already know each other as they may meet in other forums or at school, so can help encourage others into college, and support them while there.
- Welcome Pack
To help LAYP/CL students settle in to college life, a welcome pack could include:
 - Information about support available and where to find it
 - Students' rights and responsibilities at college
 - Information about consent to pass information to relevant stakeholders

ON-COURSE SUPPORT

Effective on-course support aims to:

- Provide comprehensive, pro-active and timely support for LAYP/CL linked up across all college departments
- Ensure that the needs of LAYP/CL is fully embedded in the support that is available for all students

An awareness of different care backgrounds is vital if staff are to have a clear understanding of LAYP/CL's life circumstances. As well as young people coming through the care system in its various guises, different issues may face young people arriving as unaccompanied minors from other countries and this requires the adaptation of support systems accordingly.

Colleges should work closely with the student's responsible local authority and virtual school and formalise data sharing and support agreements. Adult students must also give their consent for the sharing of information about them with third parties and it is good practice to also give younger students the opportunity to do so.

Keep in touch with LAYP/CL students throughout the year. Many colleges send regular text messages to remind LAYP/CL of the support they can access and set up regular one-to-one meetings throughout the term. However, it's also important not to make assumptions about a LAYP/CL student: not all struggle to stay in college and not all have the need for extensive support.

 **TOP TIP:** Have all the support mechanisms in place but don't draw attention to LAYP/CL students. **Make sure the LAYP/CL feels supported and secure. By making sure they know you believe in them they will increase their belief in themselves and be motivated to help themselves.**

Remember: not all LAYP/CL will feel comfortable asking for support during their time at college. The DMS/key contact needs to be aware of how to spot signs of change in a student's behaviour and know the procedure for referring the student for help within the college.



The importance of quick intervention is emphasised by **East Kent College**, Sheffield College and Peterborough Regional College. Two key points are made: firstly, every attempt should be made to ensure the LAYP/CL can continue to attend college unless it becomes too difficult for them, and that secondly the colleges ensure the young people know that, even if they have to withdraw in extreme personal circumstances, they can return to try again the following year.



At **Hugh Baird College**, once identified, LAYP/CL are supported by Retention and Progression Coordinators (RPC) and the college's Safeguarding Officers, whose role is to support learners to stay and achieve in college. RPCs work directly with LAYP/CL to ensure they have appropriate support in place at college and to help if they have a crisis outside of college, working closely with Leaving Care teams to achieve this. Each RPC is allocated to a particular curriculum area to ensure that learners have consistent support from one contact, though they can share information through a confidential system so they can cover each other's work and provide tailored support to any learner. RPCs also run regular training sessions with college staff to raise awareness of the support needs of care leavers.

Financial support

Financial pressures often push LAYP/CL to get a job as soon as possible - sometimes because they can't manage without extra income, sometimes because they want to gain greater independence and control over their lives. The financial support LAYP/CL are entitled to both from their local authority and from the college therefore needs to be in place before the course starts, so that these young people do not feel that they have to get a job instead of continuing in education.

 Throughout their time at the **Hugh Baird College**, LAYP/CL are eligible for both financial and pastoral support. The financial support comes in the form of an Individualised Costed Action Plan (ICAP). The ICAP provides up to £1200 per academic year, and can be used for anything, for example uniforms, kit and equipment including a winter coat, food, etc. Learners have to achieve 85-90% attendance each week to get their ICAP payment. Care leavers were the original group identified to be recipients of the ICAP, and during the pilot year retention for this group increased from 33% to 88%. Due to its success it has now been rolled out across the college for learners on income support, young carers and other disadvantaged groups. It is now promoted widely, for example on the college website, their prospectus, their freshers' fair app and posters.

All 16-19-year-old LAYP/CL are automatically entitled to the enhanced 16-19 Bursary. Bursaries should be well-organised, and put into place very quickly. Getting access to money is often key to young people attending college and for some it is the bursary that persuades them to stay in education.

Colleges should also explore how to put in place additional financial support for mature CL who cannot claim the 16-19 Bursary. You may also want to consider identifying LAYP/CL as a priority cohort for any college hardship funds.

 **North West London College** have put in place an enhanced financial support package for 19+ Care Leavers and updated their financial support policy to reflect this. At **Bournemouth and Poole College**, care leavers over 19 years can receive additional financial support such as a travel pass, meal card or specific items for their course.

Most colleges offer flexible ways of administering financial support that meet the individual's needs. This can include, for example, dividing the bursary into smaller amounts and paying it weekly rather than monthly, to help with budgeting.

LAYP/CL may be particularly vulnerable to transport problems as they lack other support or may be unfamiliar with local geography. You should consider directly funding LAYP/CL's travel costs to attend college.

 **Peterborough Regional College** provide 'in kind support' such as luncheon vouchers and local transport vouchers. The college also tailors the payments made for the 16-19 Bursary to meet the needs of the students. For example, weekly payments are made throughout the academic year over 44 weeks rather than 36 weeks. This prevents financial barriers when returning to study after the half term breaks.

Housing support

Many LAYP/CL will be living with foster carers or independently in housing provided by the local authority, which is sometimes run by a private provider. The statutory 'Staying Put' arrangement enables a CL to remain living in the same household where they had been fostered, after the age of 18, if both parties agree.

Housing, including foster care arrangements, may break down and leave LAYP/CL in need of emergency housing at short notice. A good relationship both with the local authority social worker and with local housing organisations is vital to be able to respond quickly and effectively.

Colleges may also need to be aware of the impact of life issues, such as young parenthood and independent living, which can characterise the lives of some care leavers.

 **Hugh Baird College** is mindful of the different living situation of LAYP/CL when arranging timetables and activities. A particular time of difficulty is often the end of the second year of college, when a student is leaving but cannot yet take up other accommodation; having nowhere to store belongings is just one of the many problems if the only accommodation available is a hostel.

 **Peterborough College** organises cookery classes, particularly useful for those at distance from any support networks.

Mental health and wellbeing

LAYP/CL are among the most vulnerable students within a college student population. The increase of mental health issues amongst young people in general has been observed by the college sector in recent years and LAYP/CL are disproportionately affected. Particular crisis points can be when a student is planning to

leave care and move towards independence or at different stages throughout the academic year, such as during exam periods.

Young Minds (youngminds.org.uk) have a series of resources and training tools available on their website. One of these is the 'Pyramid of Needs', a tool to help identify levels of risks and needs of children and young people.

 At **East Kent College** many care leavers have been identified as experiencing mental health difficulties, including depression and anxiety. Difficulties may emerge before the start of the academic year, but often come to light later. The college response relies on access to effective and quick referral routes. To properly support looked after and care leaving students, East Kent College has excellent relationships with external agencies, and it is by working together that they can arrive at solutions to support the young person most effectively. College support staff are critical to successful support, especially during the transition period.

 **Blackpool and the Fylde College** have developed a series of programmes and support strategies to promote the mental health and wellbeing of their LAYP/CL students, including initiatives that are specifically designed to build confidence and self esteem.

Counselling and pastoral care

LAYP/CL should have access to counselling provided by the college and should be considered as a priority group for access to sessions. Referral pathways across the college need to be linked up effectively to identify 'at risk' students and the need for mental health support. Mental health support provided by external organisations is a good way to increase the number of sessions and type of support accessible to LAYP/CL students.

 **Sheffield College**, for example, refers LAYP/CL to drop-in sessions at the local youth homeless charity 'Roundabout'.

Peer Mentoring schemes

As mentioned above, young people from a care background can be very effective mentors for other LAYP/CLs. These mentors can play a particularly important role in promoting positive wellbeing and mental health.

 **North West College London** creates opportunities for LAYP/CL students to become a mentor or buddy for other care-experienced students and they can help with supporting positive mental health.

Attendance and academic success

Ongoing monitoring of attendance and achievement of LAYP/CL students is key to improving academic success. Data should feed into the development of more effective college strategies and enable colleges to recognise the support needs of individual students more quickly. A strong reporting relationship, reinforced by a SLA, with the local authority enables a collaborative system of support for LAYP/CL students.

[Resource 17: West Midlands Post-16 LAYP/CL Learner Support Partnership Agreement](#)

 **Middlesbrough College** keep a 'Vulnerable Young Person' spread sheet to monitor students throughout the year. Attendance rates are recorded and low attendance is flagged for intervention using the traffic light system. Special needs and service involvement are also recorded.

[Resource 18: VYP monitoring spread sheet template](#)

 **Peterborough Regional College** reports weekly to the local authority on attendance which is forwarded to social workers/PAs who will meet with the LAYP/CL. Termly meetings with the local authority have allowed the college to develop and implement smarter strategies and ways of working and has led to the introduction of enrichment activities/courses designed specifically for the needs of LAYP/CL students.

 At **Derby College** the support teams become involved if attendance drops below a level deemed acceptable. The approach to rectifying the problem is tailored to meet the individual needs of the care leaving student, rather than moving quickly to disciplinary. Individual support is essential. One young person who had recently left care spoke about difficulties managing her money. She didn't have enough money to pay for her bus fare to the college. Through discussion with the designated member of staff she was directed to a short course on money management at the college and provided with emergency funds in the short term.

Policies, structures and procedures

Ensuring that the right policies, structures and procedures are in place to provide coherent and comprehensive support in crisis situations is crucial. LAYP/CL should be a named cohort in college safeguarding policy.

Colleges should have crisis management and emergency response plans in place, usually as part of a safeguarding strategy. As LAYP/CL are some of the most vulnerable students and likely to be 'at risk', the college needs to define what are considered as 'critical situations' in relation to LAYP/CL, taking into account the unique personal and behavioural characteristics of this cohort. Individual safeguarding risk assessments for individual LAYP/CLs will alert staff to the level of risk of potential crisis of that student.

Colleges most effective in supporting LAYP/CL in a crisis situation, are those where there is a clear procedure of strong cross-departmental collaboration across the college. Quick and coherent responses by different departments led by the DMS (or the lead safeguarding member of staff responsible – in some cases one member of staff holds both positions) leads to effective interventions.

 If a LAYP/CL is in a crisis situation, at **Sheffield College** the DMS for LAYP/CL, key contact staff (at Sheffield College these are tutor-mentors) and the safeguarding team hold '**urgency meetings**'. At this meeting it is also decided, depending on the situation, whether the college is the right place for the student to remain in or whether they should be (temporarily) referred to an external support provider.

a list of emergency contacts, both internal and external, which is centrally accessible by all staff, are essential for an immediate response. Consider:

- Agreeing referral pathways with the Local Authority: Social services, Personal Advisers, Virtual School.
- Establishing referral systems with other external agencies and support providers, e.g.
 - Local housing organisations
 - Youth Justice
 - Police
 - Childcare services
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other local mental health & wellbeing support organisations
- GP

Resource 19: Crisis/emergency response plan for LAYP/CL template

Blackpool and The Fylde College.

The college ensures that LAYP/CL are provided with holistic support through a cross-college team approach, which covers all departments of the college to ensure that there is wraparound support for each LAYP/CL. There is a Careers Team which all students can access for information, advice and guidance on all aspects of employability and careers related queries. LAYP/CL have access to 1:1 careers interviews and also a plethora of employability information through the internal Moodle site. All LAYP/CL in FE are automatically entitled to the 16 to 19 Bursary of up to £1,200 a year, and CLs in HE are offered an Access Scholarship of up to £1,000 per year of study. In addition, they may be able to access hardship funds, which are assessed on an individual basis, and CLs in HE are offered a resources and studies pack, which includes vouchers for books and other materials. The support team will also act as advocates for LAYP/CL externally if needed, for example speaking to landlords or childcare providers if they need help with rent arrears or childcare fees.

Strong relationships with external partners and

PROGRESSION SUPPORT

Well-planned and effective progression support is important. It enables LAYP/CL to:

- Receive timely and coherent information, advice and guidance about progression options and pathways
- Make smooth progressions from college
- Be less at risk of becoming NEET at the end of their course

Careers advice

Providing effective Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to LAYP/CL can be crucial in raising their aspirations and helping them to consider the wide range of progression routes available to them once they complete college.

It is good practice to classify LAYP/CL as a priority group for careers advice and IAG by the college's careers service and to establish regular points of contact throughout the course. It is also advisable to encourage proactive liaison between the DMS/key contact and the careers department to ensure that LAYP/CL benefit from this regular contact. With the young person's permission, ensure that IAG staff are aware of their status and can tailor their advice accordingly.

 **East Kent College** sees its internal information, advice and guidance provision as critical to the progression of LAYP/CL. This is supported through strong ongoing contact with local networks and results in positive outcomes for LAYP/CL. Progression meetings are held with CLs and relevant stakeholders to review choices, options and pathways.

 **North West College London** target LAYP/CL for specific IAG at regular points throughout the year.

Progression to HE

Raising aspirations of CL to progress to HE and supporting them to achieve their goal is important whether they will continue at your own college or move on to an external HE provider.

Appointing HE student ambassadors as role models is one of the most effective ways of working with LAYP/CL to raise their motivation

and aspiration to progress. Consider enlisting a couple of your own care-experienced HE students or work with your local university.

Working with local universities to raise aspirations and develop collaborative transition support for individual CL students can be an effective way of enabling progression. Universities offer a wide range of outreach activities and are keen to work with colleges to identify LAYP/CL to attend their aspiration raising activities and recruitment events.

You should encourage and support LAYP/CLs to attend open days/taster events for further learning opportunities in FE/HE. A key barrier to LAYP/CL attending these events is the cost involved in getting there, so make sure financial support is available for travel to open days, residential events, taster sessions and so on.



Peterborough Regional College cover travel expenses to university visits and open days.

You can join your local FE/HE network to link up with other HE providers in your area and arrange aspiration-raising activities for your LAYP/CL (see the section on networking in 'strategic and organisational approach'). This can also enable you to provide transition support for students who progress onto a local HE provider.



TOP TIP: Developing relationships with higher education institutions, and raising aspirations, is rated highly by OFSTED. LAYP/CL are often held back because they simply don't know what's available and possible.

If your college is a higher education provider, care leavers should be included in your HE Access Agreement each year and make sure your college is included in the Propel online guide (see below).



TOP TIP: Propel is an online IAG resource about higher education for CL run by the charity Become. In addition to information about HE, how to get there and why to go, you will also find the contact details for the key member of staff and the support on offer for CL at each Higher Education Institution (HEI).



 **Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)** kick started their support for care leavers through a widening participation network in Merseyside, originally convened by Aim Higher, which brought together local authorities, Further Education providers and Higher Education institutions. This network is now coordinated by LJMU and has been renamed the **Greater Merseyside Care Leavers Network**. Since its inception, the network has enabled its members to share good practice, develop a more joined-up approach with schools and ensure that care leavers remain on the agenda at their respective organisations.

Progression into employment

Local authorities and virtual schools offer different schemes to support their LAYP/CL into employment and it is important that you as a college are aware of which of your students are taking part in such schemes or how you can encourage them to do so. Collaboration between

the local authority, provider and the college to support LAYP/CL students is key, including effective and timely sharing of information.

 Preparation, progression and overcoming individual blocks/barriers are at the heart of **Nottingham City Council's Leaving Care Service's employability programme**. The majority of young people who have been engaged to date have progressed into further volunteering, mainstream training or personal development programmes, traineeships, apprenticeships and in some cases a return to education. Significant transition planning takes place with each young person and agencies or partners that are appropriate to their stage of development, to ensure they are supported to continue their positive momentum towards regular training or employment.

Because of their previous experiences, LAYP/CLs often lack the skills and self-esteem necessary to impress employers. They will therefore benefit from work-focused training at college to prepare them for their next step.

 For LAYP/CL, **Blackpool and The Fylde College** is focused on developing their resilience to help them improve their employability. They run a programme called B&FC Inspire, which is open to all students. This scheme works with a range of community, voluntary and employment organisations who run themed events on campus and encourage students to think about issues such as mental health, staying safe and wellbeing, as well as running more career-focused activities such as employability workshops and careers sessions.

The college also helps LAYP/CL to prepare for their futures after college. They offer bespoke careers sessions and help with applying for funding and university, together with future employability pathways and skills.

Work with HE institutions, employers and training providers to share information on LAYP/CL

If you are working with an external education provider or employer to support the transition of your LAYP/CL, agree an information sharing protocol with them. This can ensure a smooth transition for the young person and remove the need for them to explain their situation to a new provider or employer. CL students will need to provide their consent for any sharing of information with any third party.

 **Sheffield College** developed a consent form to be able to share information on individual students with their next education provider. You could also adapt this for moving on into employment.

Resource 20: Sheffield College VYP Progression Information Form.

Universities will appreciate knowing about any LAYP/CL who apply for a place at their institution. They will be keen to work with you to support their transition, ensure that financial support is in place before the start of the academic year, and put in place any other support required before enrolment.

 **Hugh Baird College** has developed a network of connections with local universities, employers and providers, and have a Retention and Progression Coordinator sitting on the local care leavers network. Collaborating with these external contacts allows the college to help care leavers make an informed decision about what they want to learn at college and ensure that appropriate support is put in place for care leavers who progress onto further learning. For example, the college works with employability agencies and career services to put on tailored taster days which help care learners make an informed decision about the course they want to enrol on, decreasing the chance of them dropping out in their first few weeks; RPCs speak to local universities about the support needs of learners progressing onto their courses, and get in touch with their next provider to explain the support they've put in place for them at college and request similar support at university. In addition, the college prepares the way for their next set of students by sending Care Leavers booklets to head teachers and local organisations and working with schools through their school liaison officer to promote the college's support for care leavers and encourage them to come to taster days.

GLOSSARY

If a young person has been in care for a total of 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16, and for at least 1 day after they are 16, they are:

- an '**eligible**' child if they are 16 or 17 and still in care
- a '**relevant**' child if they are 16 or 17 and have left care
- a '**former relevant**' child if they are 18 or over.

Attachment: A secure relationship with a main caregiver, usually a parent, allows a child/young person to grow and develop physically, emotionally and intellectually. Many LAYP/CL will have experienced unmet attachment needs which may lead to social, behavioural or emotional difficulties and affect their physical and emotional development and learning.

Care Plan: This is the main plan; it outlines a young person's needs, how those needs will be met and the plan for the young person. It should include named contacts for health and support and be thoroughly integrated with the pathway plan and personal education plan.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017: This Act is intended to improve support for Looked After Young People and Care Leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers. The legislation requires councils to provide personal advisers to care leavers up to the age of 25. The Act has also extended the role of the virtual school heads and designated teachers to certain previously looked-after children, as they continue to experience educational challenges after leaving care. These new duties apply to children/young people who leave care as a result of adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders and children/young people adopted from state care abroad. At the time of publication of this resource, the government was consulting on an update of the statutory guidance to reflect this change.

Corporate parent: A local authority is the 'corporate parent' responsible for the children and young people who are looked after or in care.

Designated Teacher/Designated Member of Staff: The member of staff who has the lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the young person's Personal Education Plan within their school/college and is a central point of engagement between

social workers, head of virtual school and other stakeholders. They also have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand factors that affect how LAYP learn and achieve.

Head of Virtual School: Because LAYP are being educated across a large number of schools, the Head of Virtual School has a powerful role in tracking their progress as if they were in a single school. The core purpose of this role is to improve the educational progress and attainment of all children looked after by their local authority, including those who have been placed in schools in other authorities.

Independent reviewing officer: The role of the IRO is to protect children's/young people's interests throughout the care planning process, ensuring children/young people looked after by the local authority have regular reviews to consider their care plan and placement.

Kinship care: Care is provided by relatives. Recent government guidance uses the term 'connected care' for care by family and friends.

Leaving care service: The role of the leaving care service is to prepare and support LAYP when they are leaving care to live independently. Sometimes also called 'transitional support services'.

Looked after child (LAC) review/Review meeting: This is a regular meeting that brings together people who are closely involved in the care of the young person. It is an opportunity to review the LAYP's care plan – the document which sets out how the LAYP will be cared for while they are looked after – and discuss the LAYP's progress and plans for the future. Education institutions may participate in LAC reviews.

Multi-agency: Services that involve more than 1 agency (e.g. NHS and social work). Children's services carry responsibility for the care plan of a LAYP and different agencies and professionals contribute to it, including the education institution and GP.

Out of authority/out of area placement: A LAYP is looked after outside the geographical boundaries of the local authority legally responsible for them.

Pathway Plan: Explores a young person's wishes and aspirations for the future and outlines steps to prepare the young person for leaving care, ensuring relevant preparation and support. It takes into account relevant information from the PEP and integrates with the young person's care plan.

Personal Education Plan (PEP): This is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school. It is a record of what needs to happen for the young person to fulfil their potential and reflects any existing education plans. The PEP should set out clear objectives relating to academic achievement and out-of-school activities as well as other personal and (if appropriate) behavioural targets. With the rise in the participation age to 18, all LAYP and CLs should now receive a PEP until they are at least 18. This has led to the introduction of Post-16 PEPs in many local authorities.

Placement: The foster or residential home where the LAYP is living. A child or young person may also be placed with their family at home if they are in care under a court order.

'Staying Put': Fostered young people in England have the right to stay with their foster families when they reach 18, if both parties agree.

Trauma: Defined as an "event outside normal human experience". These events are generally emotionally painful and distressing, and overwhelm a person's ability to cope, leaving him/her powerless. Feeling powerless is an important concept when trying to understand trauma – especially when applied to trauma in children. Many think of trauma as the result of a specific "event". But **early childhood trauma** is just as likely (more so actually) to fall into the realm of chronic traumatic stress, especially in situations where children are exposed to repeated neglect, abuse and maltreatment. Long-term neglect or repeated verbal abuse and poor early childhood care can have a significant impact on a child's emotional health and their neurological development.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC):

This is a child or young person under 18 years who has arrived in the UK without a parent, carer or other adult who by law or custom, is responsible for them (Department for Health, Social Services Inspectorate 1995).

RESOURCES

Templates and examples of college documents/forms accompanying this Guide:

- 00 Action Plan Self Assessment template
- 01 Middlesbrough College LAYP Policy
- 02 Coleg Gwent Strategy for LAC CL
- 03 FE and HE data collection templates (based on the Buttelle UK Quality Mark statistical return)
- 04 Sheffield College Focus Group Questions
- 05 Stakeholder Engagement Plan template
- 06 Coleg Gwent Protocol Agreement
- 07 Middlesbrough College Local Authority Educational Policy
- 08 Middlesbrough College LAYP/CL leaflet
- 09 Outreach activity planner template
- 10 Middlesbrough College Transition Day leaflet and itinerary
- 11 Middlesbrough College PEP process flowchart for college staff
- 12 VYP Information Sheet template
- 13 Sheffield College LAYP Promise and pre-entry information leaflet
- 14 Information sharing consent form template
- 15 East Surrey College application form and IAG interview
- 16 Northampton College Safeguarding Policy and staff guidance
- 17 West Midlands Post-16 LAYP/CL Learner Support Partnership Agreement
- 18 VYP monitoring spread sheet template
- 19 Crisis Response Plan template
- 20 Sheffield College VYP Progression Information Form

Referenced websites and documents:

- Become. The charity for Looked After Young People and care leavers: <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk>
- Care Leavers Association: <http://www.careleavers.com/>
- Catch 22: www.catch-22.org.uk/offers/looked-after-children-and-care-leavers/
- DfE: 'Promoting the education of looked after children - Statutory guidance for local authorities': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>
- DfE guidance on UASC: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-of-unaccompanied-and-trafficked-children>
- East Surrey College LAYP/CL website: <https://www.esc.ac.uk/looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>
- Government legislation and information: <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=looked+after+children> and <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=care+leavers>
- Kent and Medway Care Leavers Progression Partnership (CLLP): <https://careleaverpp.org/>
- LAC Attachment Theory: <http://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/looked-after-children-and-attachment-theory/152305/>
- Learning and Work Institute's Employer guide to supporting Care Leavers in the workplace: www.learningandwork.org.uk/employer-guide-to-supporting-care-leavers-in-the-workplace
- The Rees Foundation: <https://www.reesfoundation.org/>
- The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children Statutory guidance for school governing bodies: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269764/role_and_responsibilities_of_the_designated_teacher_for_looked_after_children.pdf
- Moving on Up: Pathways of care-leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education: <http://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>
- North West College London LAYP/CL website:

<https://www.cnwl.ac.uk/college-life/looked-after-children-care-leavers>

National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL): www.nnecl.org

NNECL regional HE/FE networks: <http://www.nnecl.org/contact/contact-your-regional-nnecl-repr>

NNECL Guide for HE Care Leaver contact staff: <http://www.nnecl.org/resources/nnecl-guide-for-those-taking-on-?topic=guides-and-toolkits>

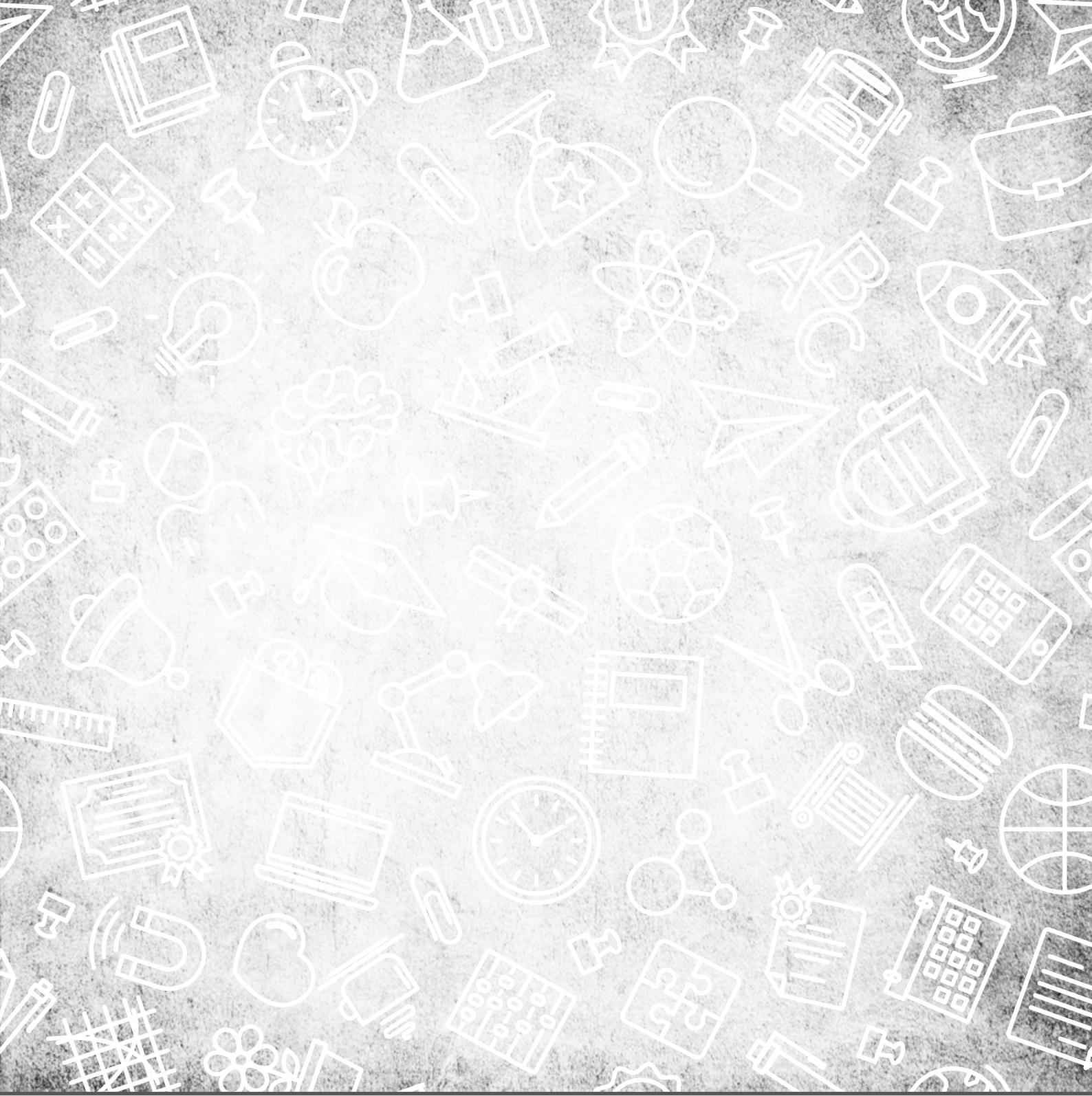
Propel: www.propel.org.uk

Skills Support for Care leavers: skillssupport.org.uk

Swindon College: <https://www.swindon.ac.uk/Student-Information/Support-for-Looked-After-Children.aspx>

REED Foundation Report 'From Care to Independence' – Improving employment outcomes for care leavers: <http://www.reedinpartnership.co.uk/media/68137/from%20care%20to%20independence.pdf>

Young Minds: youngminds.org.uk/resources and youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/academic-resilience-resources





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