

# Care Experienced (Looked After Children), Care Leaver Policy and Young Carer

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## 1. Introduction

At Hugh Baird College we aim to promote the achievement of every student. This policy is in place to provide specifically for all the needs of learners who are looked after children (LAC), care leavers (CL) and young carers (YC) and whom we feel may be particularly vulnerable members of our college community.

Sefton MBC have determined that Experienced Care is a protected characteristic. Research shows that Care Experienced students often need additional support to fully participate and achieve their potential in education.

The object of the Policy is to ensure that students are Care Experienced, Cared For and Young Carers, are fully supported throughout their time at college.

## 2. Definition of Looked After Children (LAC), Care Leavers (CL) and Young Carers

Definition of 'in care' is children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis, or under a care order (section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014)

A 'care leaver' is defined as:

- a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or
- a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after.

\*This definition has been taken from 16-19 bursary fund guidance.

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps look after a relative who has a condition, such as a disability, illness, mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol problem.

## 3. Named Staff and Responsibilities

The Head of Student Services is responsible for overseeing the work of the members of staff with responsibility for the day-to-day care of Looked after Children, Care Leavers and Young Carers at all the College Campuses. Within the Student Services Department there are three key staff members from the Retention and Progression team who coordinate the support of LAC and CL and the Health and Wellbeing Coordinator supports YC.

The Role of these staff is:

- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by young people who are 'looked after', care leavers or young carers and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome the barriers these young people will face.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of young people who are looked after, care leavers or young carers, and to promote the involvement of these students in extracurricular activities, for example trips and visits, enrichment opportunities, UCAS, etc.
- To hold a supervisory brief for those students being looked after, e.g., to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to college staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with Careers Connect, Carers and Social Care in monitoring attendance and achievement and so acting to address these issues if they arise through early and positive intervention.
- To ensure the names of all students who are Looked after Children, Care Leavers or Young Carers are included in the colleges list of learners possibly at risk of under achieving or not completing their full programme.
- To work with individual young people, possibly through a carer or Careers Connect, to arrive at a statement about their circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or students.
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Social Care planning meetings or other necessary meetings.
- Monitor on the progress of all looked after children, care leavers and young carers.

#### **4. Role of the Named Governor**

The governor with responsibility for safeguarding is the named governor and they will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- The number of looked after, care leaver or young carers students in the college.
- A comparison of achievement as a discrete group, compared with those of other students.
- The attendance of students as a discrete group, compared to other students.
- Analysis of the Student Discipline Process in relation to looked after young people, care leavers and young carers.
- Student destinations.

The named governor, should be satisfied that the College's policies and procedures ensure that looked after students, care leavers and young carers have equal access to:

- The curriculum
- Public Examinations
- Careers Guidance including UCAS and advice on employment
- Extra-Curricular Activities including Enrichment
- Additional Educational Support (if required).

## **5. Responsibilities for Looked After Children, Care Leavers and Young Carers in College**

### **Pre-entry to College (Transition)**

Working in partnership with the local authority, Virtual School, secondary schools and wider partner agencies, the college can identify and support students who are Cared For, Care Experienced or Young Carers. Transition to college can be daunting and working in partnership with the multi-agency team will allow us to identify any barriers and begin the transition process early to enable students to adapt. We encourage self-declaration during the college admissions process and on the college's enrolment form.

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the young person are aware that they are being looked after by the Local Authority, is a Care Leaver or a Young Carer, with the student's permission. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be through the Retention and Progression Team.

#### **As a college we offer:**

- Bespoke transition work, including an individual campus tour.
- Opportunities to meet the college support team.
- A guaranteed interview, which can be flexible to meet the needs of the young person.
- Priority access for Student Financial Support, including help to complete the application.
- Dedicated support at enrolment
- Support with the Personal Education Plan meeting (usually within 15 working days of the start of the course) with the local authority.

#### **Sefton Virtual School will:**

- Ensure the college is informed of all applicants who are care experienced (at student's discretion) prior to enrolment.
- Provide a single point of contact to the college for all care experienced students during the transition phase to ensure any pre-enrolment issues are addressed.

#### **Support during the Course or Programme:**

Care Experienced students will have a dedicated pastoral welfare officer. This member of staff is responsible for providing pastoral and welfare care, monitoring progress and intervening when barriers or issues arise and will be the main point of contact when the student needs help and:

- Support with bursary, kit and travel applications.
- Advocate for the learner.
- Signpost to external and internal services.
- Formally/informally liaise with social workers and other agencies.
- Secure support for the young person that may be available through the Virtual School or Local Authority.
- Report student attendance through the Local Authority Welfare Call system.
- Support the PEP (Personal Education Plan) process by attending termly meetings and ensuring that needs and targets are conveyed to relevant staff.
- Be the single point of contact for all mental wellbeing support.
- Update the Virtual School Post 16 co-ordinator promptly of any issues.

## 6. Involving the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances and that this is shared with them. The explanation should emphasise that the College, Social Worker, Careers Connect and their carers(s) are working together to promote their education and well-being.

## 7. Communication with other Agencies

Ideally, the social worker and the college named person should meet when the young person joins the college. This will enable information concerning the student's progress and circumstances to be shared. Career Connect have a central role in facilitating such liaison. The College will ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year) should be forwarded to the young person's social worker in addition to, for example, the foster carer or residential social worker.

The College, the Virtual School, Social Care and Career Connect will endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, where possible. However, it is for the student to nominate who they feel should be their college representative at any such meetings.

Social Care, Education and the College will exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if the college is considering a withdrawal, there is a change of care placement, or there are significant attendance issues or under achievement.

In relation to YC, the college will work in partnership with Barnardo's for Liverpool YC, and Sefton Young Carers for Sefton YP. Designated staff from Hugh Baird College's support teams will meet with external colleagues to discuss progress in college and any additional support necessary to remove barriers to education.

## 8. Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each looked after, care leaver or young carers student will be monitored, in line with all learners, to review:

- Robust attendance

- Achievement
- Behaviour
- Progression
- Homework/assignment work
- Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities
- Special Educational Needs (if any)
- Development Needs (short- and long-term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences)
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations).

Liaison will be undertaken with Education Welfare/Education Psychology/Social Care, etc. in the assessment and review processes as appropriate. The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the key indicators outlined under section 4 above.

## 9. Careers and Guidance

The college will provide a high-quality Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIAG) programme, supporting and adapting to the differing needs of care experienced young people.

This includes:

- Priority access to careers and guidance teams, ensuring access to the most up to date information, advice and guidance.
- Termly career updates (in PEP meetings).
- Exit interviews to ensure students have a clear written progression plan.
- Attend regular career events with external agencies, employers and universities.
- Support student access to progression and readiness for work opportunities within the Sefton 'Caring Business Charter, if appropriate.
- Access to experienced 1:1 support for applications and interview preparation for those aspiring to university.

**Sefton Virtual School will:**

- Ensure exit guidance is offered through the Local Authorities early intervention and NEET reduction service, Career Connect for Sefton young people and the Virtual School for students living in other authorities.
- Provide bespoke opportunities for Higher Education Care Experienced students.

## 10. Learner Voice

- Learners will be encouraged to be part of the colleges learner voice activity including pulse surveys, focus groups, enrichment development groups and volunteering opportunities including ambassadors.
  - It is recommended that a specific learner-led support group for care experienced students is developed, whose remit is to represent the views and aspirations of the learners, ensure that the needs of the group are known and understood and to advise on the development of the learner experience and college provision. This will be supported by the pastoral lead.

- Develop ways for existing Care Experienced students to offer mentoring to new Care Experienced students.

## 11. Financial Support

Students who are Care Experienced have very different financial needs. Many are living alone or semi-independent, without the support of shared housing costs or the budgetary advantage of living in a family home.

The college has adopted the Sefton FE Bursary Protocol

- Weekly bursary
- Travel Pass
- Free Lunches
- Inform the Virtual School immediately regarding any financial factors that impact the learner.

## 12. Disciplinary Process

At every stage of any disciplinary process, staff should be aware of the Cared For or Care Experienced status of the student, and consider any additional SEND, SEMH or other factors.

- For any formal disciplinary process which involves a Care For or Care Experienced Student, the Virtual School and the student's pastoral welfare officer must be informed at the earliest opportunity and invited to any meetings.
- 16 to 18-year-old Care Experienced students should be accompanied in any disciplinary meetings by a parent/ guardian or professional, unless the young person declines for a parent/guardian or professional to be present.
- Students who may be disadvantaged by a formal and written process need an adapted process, with advice from the Supported Learning Team and/or Safeguarding Team, so that they are treated fairly and equitably.
- If the disciplinary process results in a warning about unacceptable behaviour, attendance, or academic performance, then relevant support must be offered to help the student to reach the required standards. The student will be expected to engage fully with the support offered.
- Issues relating to student academic performance should be addressed via the appropriate college policy/procedure. Only where demonstrated that this has taken place and reasonable adjustments have been made, should any necessary disciplinary procedures be instigated.
- For Cared For and Care Experienced students at risk of being suspended or excluded, the Social Worker and Virtual School need to be notified. Where appropriate, the suspending manager will also notify parents/carers of a suspension. (Students aged 18 or below).

- Students who are suspended must receive work to complete at home. This work should be monitored.

## **Care Experienced Student Protocols**

- Students should not be moved to another course or level without consultation with the Virtual School Post 16 Co-ordinator.
- Students should not be moved to another provider without consultation with the Virtual School Post 16 Co-ordinator.
- Students should not have their place withdrawn from college without consultation with the Virtual School Head Teacher and, as appropriate, the social worker and parent/ guardian.

## **Inclusion Statement**

Hugh Baird College is proud to promote an inclusive environment for all students regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. As a college it is recognised that diversity of all forms should be celebrated. This is promoted to ensure all staff, students and stakeholders feel proud to explore and share their own identity.

## **Hugh Baird College**

Balliol Road  
Bootle  
Liverpool  
L20 7EW

### **Telephone**

0151 353 4444

### **Email**

[enquiries@hughbaird.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@hughbaird.ac.uk)

[www.hughbaird.ac.uk](http://www.hughbaird.ac.uk)