

REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting: 3 April 2019

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT - Higher Education amongst Care Leavers

Responsible Officer: Paul Hewitt, Corporate Director of People

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Christine Robson, Portfolio Holder for Young People and Schools

Exempt: No

Wards affected: All Wards

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel of the current position in respect of care leavers in higher education.

Recommendation: That the report be noted.

Reason: As a corporate parent we have a duty to ensure our young people are engaged in education, employment or training.

Section 2 – Report

National Context

The 'Moving On Up' Report prepared for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers found that 12% of care leavers entered higher education by the age of 23. This represents a significant increase on the pre 2017 estimates of 6%.¹

The percentage from this age group going onto higher education from the population as a whole is 42%.

Position in Harrow

The Harrow UASC and Leaving Care Team provide a service to 209 young people. Of these 40 are under the age of 18 and therefore too young to be at university and a further 35 could not attend due to personal circumstances or issues concerning their immigration status. Consequently there is a possible group of 134 that could attend University. From this group of 134 there are 22 currently attending University. This gives a percentage of 16.4% which is significantly higher than the national average for care leavers.

What we do to support young people to enter and achieve in higher education

- The Leaving Care and UASC Team actively encourages our young people to engage in higher education, training or work.
- The CMF Team employs an ESOL teacher who works individually and in groups with our UASC population to develop their language skills.
- The careers advisor works with young people to assist them with careers choices and academic courses to achieve that aim.
- The careers advisor assists in finding appropriate work experience placements.
- Educational achievement and the steps necessary to achieve academic success are a central part of Pathway Plans. There is a constant focus upon the education and training of our care leavers.
- Education is frequently an agenda item at our Leaving Care Forum.
- The Virtual School assists in providing tutors and educational materials, including money for laptops.
- While attending college all young people are entitled to travel and lunch money in addition to their weekly subsistence payments.
- Assistance is provided for child care to enable our young mothers to remain in education.

- Young people are given an academic achievement reward of £25 for passing exams.
- Allocated workers accompany our care leavers when they visit prospective universities.
- Assistance with support and accommodation is provided during the Christmas and Easter holidays and part of the summer holidays.
- Those at University are provided with funding for contact with home six times a year.
- Our care leavers are provided £120 a year to buy books.
- All those at University are given a bursary of £1000 a year for three years.
- Some students are currently receiving one to one tutoring support funded and sustained by the Virtual School to enable them to move forward into progression routes.
- All our graduates receive a gift of £250 for graduating.
- We assist our graduates with the cost of graduation.

Universities attended and subjects studied

	University	Subject		University	Subject
1	West London University	Midwifery	12	University of York	Environmental studies
2	North London University	Criminology	13	Brunel University	Accountancy
3	Westminster University	Property and planning	14	Nottingham University	History and archaeology
4	Westminster University	Animation	15	West London University	Criminology
5	Hertfordshire University	Psychology	16	Kingston University	Sociology
6	West London University	Social Work	17	Middlesex University	Psychology
7	West London University	Hospitality management	18	West London University	Public health
8	GSM University	Economics	19	Bedfordshire university	Business management
9	Hertford university	Law	20	Coventry university in London	Business management
10	Loughborough university	Mechanical engineering	21	West London University	Games design
11	ACE University	Music	22	Leeds university	History

Two case studies

T arrived in the UK in May 2014 as an unaccompanied minor from Eritrea. He lived in foster care until May 2015 when he moved to the Gayton. While in foster care he was given assistance with ESOL courses. When he moved to the Gayton the local authority assisted him to attend Uxbridge College where he studied maths, physics and chemistry. In July 2017 he was offered his own flat through the Locata scheme. Last year he achieved two B's and a C in his A levels and took up a place at Loughborough University in September 2018. T continues to have ongoing social work support.

J became looked after in 2005 and lived in foster care until September 2013 when he moved into semi-independent accommodation. J struggled with his A levels and needed to re-sit them. The second time around the local authority provided a personal tutor which assisted J to achieve the necessary grades to take up a place at the University of York to study the environment and ecology. While at university the local authority has continued to fund additional courses. J continues to be supported by the department.

What are the barriers/issues faced in accessing higher education?

There are a number of barriers which our care leavers face preventing them, or creating difficulties, in accessing higher education.

We are aware of the issues they face and work to minimise any negative impact.

- The attraction of cash in hand employment can be a factor diverting our young people from focussing upon their education. In addition they are often exploited by being paid below the minimum wage. Cash in hand payment is particularly strong among those who are prohibited from employment because of their immigration status.
- Often our young people have a lack of deferred gratification and have a lack of ambition arising from limited horizons as a consequence of low expectation.
- The limited English skills of many of our young people create a further hurdle to jump in achieving academic success.
- A number of our care leavers do not have the immigration status which would enable them to take up higher education.
- A number of our care leavers have problems with the misuse of drugs or alcohol.
- Early parenthood. Care leavers are at heightened risk of early and often unplanned transition into parenthood. Looked after teenage girls are 2.5 times more likely to become pregnant than other teenagers.²
- Prison or custodial sentences.

- Emotional well-being. One of the major barriers to progressing into higher education faced by care leavers relates to their emotional well-being. Looked-after children and care leavers are between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood. They are also at a five-fold increased risk of all childhood mental, emotional and behavioural problems, and six to seven times more likely to have conduct disorders.³

Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Barbara Houston, Interim Head of Service Corporate Parenting.
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Background Papers:

1. 'Moving On Up Report' November 2017 prepared by Neil Harrison from the University of West of England on behalf of NNECL.
2. Coram, Children in Care: Teenage Pregnancy Risk.
3. Department of Health. Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives. 2012.