Case study information

This good practice example shows how important it is for Care Leavers to receive support in making an informed choice regarding the transition to university.

Student A was contacted through email, by the Senior Widening Participation Development Officer in her role as Care Leaver Coordinator (CLC) to introduce herself and provide information on the support available at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). The email which goes to all Care Leavers who have applied to UWS also invited students to come and meet the CLC to discuss any problems that may affect their transition to university.

Student A replied that she was worried about coming to university and wasn’t sure whether she would take up the offer of a place on the course for which she had applied. The CLC asked if she would like to come for a chat and at she could bring someone with her. The student brought her mother along and through the discussion it became apparent that coming to university at that point was not going to be viable for her. The student had moved home many times in the past five years and her confidence had suffered. After discussing the options available, the student then spoke to the Admissions Manager and it was agreed that her place on the course would be deferred for a year.

Student A was happy with this decision and contact was maintained throughout the coming year. For the second meeting with the CLC, the Student brought along a friend and for the consequent meetings came along independently. During this time appointments were made with a Funding Advisor to make sure that the student was receiving the correct benefits and also With a Disability Advisor to assess how much help student would need for her academic work as she had dyslexia.

In order to maintain academic writing skills, Student A participated in an access module, Next Steps at University, over a period of 10 weeks to develop study skills, essay and report writing and critical thinking. The module has helped to ease Student A into learning again a year after having left school and has enhanced her existing skills which will make it easier to study at degree level.

The CLC was able to provide information on trust funds that were available and was able to provide guidance on the application. Help was also provided on applying for the new Care Experienced Students Bursary.

The student’s confidence has grown and she now can’t wait to start her degree programme in September. A tour of the campus is planned so that Student A can find their way around during Induction Week, again making sure that the transition to university is a positive experience.

Key benefits:

- Pre-entry support and ongoing communication from the Admissions Team, the Care Leaver Coordinator, the Funding Advisor and the Disability Advisor were essential to providing the student with the information needed to make an informed choice on whether to come to university or defer for a year.
The relationship with the Care Leaver Coordinator has proved to be beneficial in helping the student build their confidence again and the student is better equipped to cope with barriers that may prevent them from coming to university.

Working in partnership with other colleagues is essential and this make is easier to provide good service to students that face multiple barriers to learning.

Information is also available through a dedicated applicant's website: [www.youruniversity.uws.ac.uk](http://www.youruniversity.uws.ac.uk) and on the main UWS website: [www.uws.ac.uk/careleavers](http://www.uws.ac.uk/careleavers)

**Case study information 2**

Not all Care Leavers come straight from school. Many have had a chaotic lifestyle which impacts on their education. Having a named contact that can provide support and guidance can make a big difference to the student making an informed choice.

Student B studied at a local college and after successfully gaining a Higher National Certificate (HNC) applied to UWS for advanced standing and entry into year 2. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the student was not able to take up the offer of a place on the degree programme and contacted the Admissions Manager who confirmed that her place at university could be deferred for a year. At this point the student had already received the email from the CLC but chose not to meet with her. However, the student contacted her the following year to say that she was thinking about coming to university but was worried about how it would affect her financially.

Student B met with the CLC and was given information on the new Care Experienced Students Bursary and given assistance with an application to a trust fund. The student was also directed to a new module that has been created by the Funding & Advice Team at the University which helps them manage their finances: [http://uwsfinancialcapabilitymodules.weebly.com/](http://uwsfinancialcapabilitymodules.weebly.com/) The CLC guided the student through the Funding & & Advice website highlighting how the budget planner could help and also explained about the Discretionary Fund to which Care Leavers have priority access.

The student has now completed a Higher National Diploma (HND) and will enter year 3 of the degree programme. In order to prepare for the transition from college to university, Student B is participating in the Next Steps at University module and has maintained contact with the CLC.

[http://www.uws.ac.uk/fundingadvice/](http://www.uws.ac.uk/fundingadvice/) provides information and support for students from pre-entry to after graduation.

**Key Benefits:**

- Student B is more confident about the financial impact going to university may have, particularly with the new bursary for Care Experienced Students.
- The new module created by the Funding & Advice Team is helping to prepare the student for managing their finances
- The CLC provided guidance and support for the student which helped them to make an informed choice to take up their place on the degree programme

**Policies and definitions**

We have traditionally used the term Care Leavers within HE in Scotland but more recently we have had Care Leavers refer to themselves as Care Experienced. This seemed to have become the accepted term for Care Leavers.
Admissions Policy Relevant sections:

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 This Policy has been developed to provide transparency in the admissions processes and practices of the University of the West of Scotland, ensuring that a quality service is given to all applicants. Our priority for admissions is to match prospective students with the programme of study that best meets their academic needs, vocational needs and individual circumstances, while ensuring that our institutional strategic objectives are met. In achieving this, we make a commitment that our approach to the admissions of students is transparent, fair, honest, consistent, accessible, personalised and timely.

3.2 Admissions Policy Objectives -

3.2.1 Ensure our applicants receive an applicant-focused service.

3.2.2 Admit students who have the potential to succeed and benefit from our programmes, thereby supporting student progression and success.

3.2.3 Widen access to higher education to encourage applications from students from under-represented groupings; working in partnership with:

- Schools;
- Colleges - ensuring our courses are accessible and capable of receiving articulating students at a variety of entry levels;
- Communities;
- Other HEIs.

3.2.4 Support industry-led, work-based learning.

3.2.5 Promote equality of opportunity and diversity.

4.1.6 Widening Participation and Transition

UWS is actively involved in working with applicants from courses/initiatives designed to support transition e.g. the Top-Up Programme; Articulation provision, Care Leavers, Routes for All; Step-Up; Lothians Equal Access Programmes for Schools; Access to a Career in Teaching and Scottish Wider Access Programme. Applicants must confirm their involvement in Access provision on their application.

Outcome Agreement 2016/17
http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Outcome_Agreements_UWS1617/UWS_Outcome_Agreement_2016-17.pdf

Widening Access and Retention Funding

The University of the West of Scotland acknowledges the SFC’s Widening Access and Retention Funding which allows the institution to implement a range of initiatives aimed at continuing its strong performance in widening access and participation.2 These initiatives include: • Investing in the role of Programme Leaders (as part of a wider Student Attainment Project) and other support staff • Providing support for care leavers • Developing partnerships with local colleges • Widening the approach to contextualised admissions • Transition programmes to support school pupils’ move to university. As part of the 2016/17 Outcome Agreement refresh, UWS recognises the widening scope of the funding to focus on student retention. The university has implemented a range of initiatives to improve retention rates with help from this funding.

Support for Care Leavers at UWS

In recent years, UWS has increased the number of offers to care leavers, and there has been a steady increase in applications, offers and enrolments since 2008. We currently have 35 care leavers enrolled at UWS. UWS has a high standard of support in place for care leavers from pre-entry until two years after graduation. UWS’
Buttle UK Quality Mark expired in December 2015 as it is being phased out nationally, but UWS is working in partnership with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and other universities and colleges through the West of Scotland Care Leavers Forum. It is intended that this forum will merge with a similar forum in the east to work within a common national framework which will share good practice and address the barriers to learning that Care Leavers encounter in Scotland.

The majority of care leavers are identified at the application stage at which point UWS contacts them to discuss what support the university can provide to help them make the transition to higher education. UWS has established procedures in place with local schools, Activity 16+ Co-ordinators, relevant colleagues within local authorities and the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum to provide support so that pupils who are considering going to university can receive information, advice and guidance to make informed choices regarding their education. A meeting with the young person and their teacher or Throughcare Support Worker is encouraged to ascertain the level of pre-entry support needed and to identify provide an opportunity for them to meet with the Care Leaver Coordinator and any other relevant services within the university in order to make a successful transition from school, college or the community.

Contact with the Care Leaver Coordinator is ongoing throughout their studies to ensure that support can be provided quickly if there are any indications that the student is having problems. The Care Leaver Coordinator works in partnership internally with colleagues from the Funding and Advice Team, Disability Support Services, Counselling Services, Careers Service and Academics, Education Guidance Advisors and Student Enhancement Developers within the University to provide pre-entry and ongoing support for Care Leavers. We help raise awareness of support available through working with colleagues from Focus West which includes Routes for All which is hosted by UWS and with colleagues in the Access to a Career in Teaching (ACT) Project which both engage with S5/6 school pupils. By working with our College Engagement Advisors, we support articulating students with their transition from college to Higher Education.

UWS is committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities and other HEIs in the West of Scotland to provide activities, mentoring and to provide opportunities for Looked After Young People and Care Leavers. We also working in partnership with HEIs in the West of Scotland and Glasgow City Council in a new initiative, MCR Pathways, to target Looked After Young People in Glasgow schools and engage with them at an earlier age to provide information, advice and guidance to them and their Carers to help them prepare for the transition to college and university.

UWS has been a Corporate Parent for some time and continues to work with local authorities to help create and contribute to their action plans to support Care Leavers. We also work with Who Cares? Scotland who provided Corporate Parent training for staff and help to raise awareness of the barriers to leaning for Looked After Young People and Care Leavers. The University is committed to engaging in further training and to working with our Community Planning Partners as a Corporate Parent to help them provide support and help to increase the number of Care Leavers going to university.