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INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCE OF CARE LEAVERS AT PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY, 2013-14: FINAL REPORT

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Professor Debby Cotton, Professor Pauline Kneale, & Ms Tricia Nash
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Investigating the Experience of Care Leavers at Plymouth University

Final Report: Executive Summary, October 2014

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With sincere thanks to all who participated in this research.

The retention and success of non-traditional students in HE provides a counter to the narrative that the influence of early life experiences is so strong that university efforts at enhancing access are doomed to failure. Clearly, the actions of universities and staff can have significant impacts. However, in order to provide a HE experience which does not simply reproduce the 'social status quo', it may be necessary to make special provision for those students for whom entering university is simply the next stage in an ongoing battle against the odds.

Cotton, Nash and Kneale (2014)

Executive Summary:

Young people leaving care are one of the most under-represented groups in higher education (HE), and they often struggle to cope financially and emotionally unless provided with significant support. Whilst there has been some prior research on factors which influence participation in HE, there has been little which has looked at care leavers' experiences as students. For this group, accessing and succeeding in education is a significant achievement, and there are a number of measures which Plymouth University has put in place to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. These were supplemented for 2013-14 by a coaching scheme for care leavers, run in collaboration with an external partner.

This paper reports on a project which builds on the successful pilot study run at Plymouth University last year. Following ethical approval for the project, the PedRIO research team undertook an online questionnaire targeted at all known care leavers at the university (with 26 responses, a 41% response rate), nine interviews with care leaver students who volunteered from the questionnaire sample, two staff members with responsibility for care leavers at the university, and all five senior tutors from the university's academic staff. We also explored the outcome data for those students who responded to the survey (with their permission). As part of the project, two literature reviews were also conducted: one focusing on the experiences of care leavers in HE, and the other on the impact of coaching and mentoring more widely. It is hoped that the project outcomes and literature will feed into future developments at the university.

Key findings from the study include the following **(with recommendations for action in bold):**

- Pre-university experience is a key factor which may impact on these students' readiness for HE study. Four students had experienced more than 10 placements (and one student had 74 prior placements), which is clearly very disruptive. A recurring theme was of the importance of a dependable adult

relationship to enable consistency and to make up for lack of on-going family support for care leaver students. **R: Maintain and appropriately resource the care leaver service.**

- Local authority support for care leaver students is currently very mixed - almost 40% of our respondents got no financial support from their local authority. **R: Continue to enhance links with local authorities and campaign for consistency of support.**

- Money is a very serious concern for care leaver students (with a particular issue being payment for accommodation during holidays). The provision of bursaries has a very strong impact on students' ability to participate and remain in HE, yet not all had consistently received the care leaver bursary. A major positive impact was reported by almost 90% of those in receipt. **R: Ensure that the care leaver bursary is advertised as widely as possible to ensure the maximum number of students benefit.**

- Like many students, some care leavers felt ill-prepared for university level study and others believed that they weren't deserving of a university place. Additional support may be required to compensate for lack of confidence and/ or disruption to their prior educational opportunities. The care leaver service was very heavily used by respondents with nearly 50% of respondents saying they had 'lots' of contact and the other 50% 'some'. Only one person reported very little contact. **R: Maintain and appropriately resource the care leaver service as well as improving transition support for all students.**

- Encouraging a feeling of 'belonging' has been identified in this research – and our other work on non-traditional students – as being a key issue across the university. There are high levels of students reporting that they could 'disappear for days without anyone noticing' (45%), or that they 'wonder if they really fit in' (37%). This is exacerbated for the care leavers by the fact that very few live in halls (only 1 of our sample). There is some evidence that students who do not feel they fit in are less likely to be successful and more likely to withdraw from study. **R: Ensure the personal tutoring system is working effectively; encourage academics to provide an extensive induction period integrating academic and personal issues; promote the PALs scheme to care leaver students; encourage participation in extra-curricular activities and student voice.**

- Mental health issues were widespread in this group, as they are increasingly in HE more generally. Lack of available support may limit the achievement of students suffering from mental health issues. **R: Enhance support for students with mental health issues within the university and increase awareness of how this can be accessed.**

- Many care leaver students are highly motivated to achieve. Several interviewees were driven to attend university by wanting to prove themselves or make a better life than their parents or carers. This determination seems to be a distinguishing feature of those who succeed in accessing HE, and could be used as a springboard for success, yet the coaching scheme which could support this has not proved popular. **R: Consider potential developments to the coaching service to make it more widely accepted.**

- Another strong motivation for care leavers was developing their career prospects. This is an area in which research on non-traditional students indicates that outcomes can be weaker for these groups. When asked about what other support could be offered to care leavers, several also mentioned support after graduation, which was a frightening transition for them with little in the way of a safety net. **R: Explore greater links between the care leaver service and careers and employability service to give added value to HE participation; consider providing more help with finding accommodation post-graduation.**

- Awareness of care leavers appeared generally low, even amongst the senior tutors – and most likely across the academic staff population. Only one of the senior tutors was aware of any care leavers in their school. One of the care leaver respondents specifically requested that the care leaver advice officer should be given permission to inform teaching staff of their background. **R: Explore the possibility of a report system for care leaver students as with disabled students.**
- Feedback on the care leaver service was extremely positive (95% satisfaction, no dissatisfaction reported), but student reports of support from other staff were very mixed. Whilst senior tutors felt confident that they knew where to signpost students in difficulty they were less certain that all the personal tutors would be able to do so. **R: Provide more training for personal tutors around identifying vulnerable students, dealing with sensitive issues and supporting students in transition to the first year.**
- Reluctance to access support can be an issue for care leavers - exacerbated by a belief that others may hold negative views of them. Concern about stereotyping limited access to support, and some students were not keen to mix with other care leavers. **R: Consider broadening the horizon of the care leaver service to provide some events involving a more mixed group but with care leavers as key participants.**
- A high proportion of the survey respondents (72%) had considered withdrawal from their programme for a mixture of reasons including financial, health and academic issues. However, as of the end of the last academic year, only 3 (of the 18 who considered it) had withdrawn. The care leaver service was crucial in encouraging students to stay (it was the top reason, cited by 50%). **R: Maintain and appropriately resource the care leaver service, which is likely to pay for itself in enhanced retention.**
- Despite the tendency for care leavers to struggle in HE (as reported in literature), the outcomes for this group were surprisingly good (especially in the light of the fact that only 35% came in with traditional A level qualifications). Of the 26 students who responded to the survey, 8 had achieved a degree outcome within 4 years of commencing study, and of these, seven had achieved 'good degrees' (first or 2.1). Altogether 65% of the care leaver respondents were on target to achieve successfully in the usual time period, and the non-continuation rate was around 10%. **R: Provide more information to academic staff on the potential for student success despite difficult circumstances.**

The literature suggests that leaving care can be a positive turning point for young people and this is reinforced by our data. For this group of students, simply progressing into higher education is an amazing achievement, and the data show that many go on to complete their degrees very successfully. However, it is also clear that appropriate supports need to be in place. The great work of the care leaver service has the potential to be undermined if it is not properly resourced or if students do not receive consistent support elsewhere in the university. The research identifies a need for enhanced training and development opportunities for academic staff, together with some information about the kinds of issues which might arise for students on their programme. The role of the care leaver advice officer as corporate parent provides a lifeline for many students – but we need to ensure that the culture of the entire university also offers a welcoming space for care leavers.

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Investigating the Experience of Care Leavers at Plymouth University: Final Report, October 2014

Professor Debby Cotton, Professor Pauline Kneale, Ms Tricia Nash

With sincere thanks to all who participated in this research.

> *"Most students have parents, most students have siblings, have aunts, uncles, grandparents, have somebody."*
>
> *"It's my family at university and without it I don't think I would have stayed this year."*

Rationale:

Young people leaving care are one of the most under-represented groups in higher education (HE), and they often struggle to cope financially and emotionally unless provided with significant support (Cheung and Heath, 1994). Whilst there has been some prior research on factors which influence participation in HE, there has been little which has looked at their experiences as students. For this group, accessing and succeeding in education is a significant achievement, and there are a number of measures which Plymouth University has put in place to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. These were supplemented for 2013-14 by a coaching scheme for care leavers, run in collaboration with an external partner.

A pilot project by PedRIO in 2012-13 explored the experiences of final year care leavers at Plymouth University, investigating the impacts of their care leaver status, as well as their sources of support whilst at university. Findings suggested that, although care leaver students come into HE with a range of protective and risk factors which may influence their subsequent educational success, there are many ways in which they can be supported whilst at university which help them overcome difficult early life experiences. The research also illustrated the importance of measures put in place to support care leaver students: Despite all their previous hardship, these students offer inspiring success stories for the university. All students in the study successfully achieved a degree ultimately, despite the immense difficulties which they had encountered on the way.

Going forward, monitoring and evaluating the success of different measures put in place by the university should form an important part of the work associated with the Access Agreement and feed into future developments to ensure that policy and practice is underpinned by research findings. This project therefore plans to extend and expand on the earlier work to draw conclusions about how care leavers can best be supported in HE. The coaching scheme, as a new initiative, should be closely monitored and evaluation undertaken by a collaborative team.

Aims:

This small scale research project builds on the findings of the pilot study in investigating the university experience of final year care leavers. The research has been expanded to include a survey sent to all known care leavers, and incorporates interviews with students, staff members involved in care leaver support, and senior tutors across the university. The project also aimed to contribute to and support evaluation of the new coaching project. The research findings provide an enhanced evidence-base to inform the future direction of the university's support for care leavers through gaining a better understanding of their needs and what works best

for successful outcomes. This study will also feed into a larger longitudinal research project which is tracking groups of students - including care leavers - as they enter Plymouth University (PU), following them from induction to graduation and employment or withdrawal.

Methods:

i) Literature review
A full formal literature review was completed on the experiences of care leavers in HE for the pilot project. This has been expanded and updated to include new studies, and is included below. In addition, a full new literature review looking at research on coaching and mentoring is provided in Appendix 2.

ii) Online survey and interviews
An invitation to participate in the study was sent by email to all 63 known care leavers (via the Care Leaver Advice Officer), with a link to an online survey constructed in Survey Monkey. This provided a breadth of responses, and also enabled the researchers to recruit volunteers for interview. Incentives for completing the survey and participation in interviews were offered, and care leavers were given the opportunity to ask questions prior to agreeing to participate. Students were also asked if they were willing to allow access to their UNIT-e records to track subsequent outcomes and retention. The survey ran from 20th January to March 7th 2014. The responses were downloaded into SPSS. Once duplicates were removed 26 respondents submitted a survey with at least some of the questions answered (response rate 41%).

The questions used in the survey and interviews covered the following areas: university preparation; induction/transition; accommodation; financial and academic experience; social and personal experience; involvement in coaching; support from Local Authority; plans after graduation. Volunteers for interviews were given further information and asked to sign a consent form. Ten care leavers who had agreed to be interviewed were contacted. Of these nine (five female, four male) were interviewed during April and early May 2014. The students responding to the survey were studying a range of degree programmes: Business Administration; Child Health Nursing; Criminology; Education; Events Management; International Relations; Marine Biology and Oceanography; Psychology; and Social Work. All students were first generation although one student's foster siblings had been to PU. Five of the students had declared mental health issues (identified through Unit-e) such as anxiety and depression. Two of the students had young children of their own.

One senior tutor from each faculty (five in total) was also interviewed in February/ March 2014 (three male and two female). The interviews covered their perceived roles; the role of personal tutors with students; their experience with vulnerable students; awareness of care leavers and their needs; and awareness of the care leaver service. Two staff from the care leaver service were also interviewed. All interviews were recorded then transcribed. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

iii) Reflective diary for students engaged in coaching
A new development this academic year is the provision of coaching for care leavers. As part of this project, students involved were invited to complete a reflective diary, which will feed into the analysis of the effectiveness of different types of support if students agree to participate in the research. This aspect of research is led by the coaching team and is not discussed here. The contribution of the PedRIO team involved discussions and research planning, checking ethical protocols and reviewing and helping pilot interview schedules.

Ethical approval for all aspects of the study was gained through the Plymouth Institute of Education ethics committee.

Literature Review:

There is a large amount of literature about children in care and their poor educational attainment in compulsory education but relatively little on those who progress and experience further and higher education (FE and HE), although this is increasing. This report will consider the literature that pertains to care leavers and their early experiences both pre- and in care and how these impact on access to and experience of HE. It will include the reasons for care placement and the birth family experience; school experience; care experience; preparation for HE; whether first generation students; as well as personal factors such as motivation for HE, resilience, self-reliance, and identity.

Much of the literature relates to the reasons for poor educational attainment at school of children and young people in care. In 2010 for instance only 26% of children who had been in care for at least 12 months attained at least five GCSEs or equivalent qualifications at grade A*-C compared with 75% of those not in care (Driscoll, 2013) and, although this is an improvement on earlier figures, the gap between care leavers and non-care leavers has widened. Jackson and Cameron (2011), however, gave lower figures for both groups with 14% of those in care versus 65% not in care achieving at least five GCSEs A*-C (perhaps because equivalent qualifications were excluded) but there is no indication of the date of these statistics. Several reasons for the lower attainment of those in care are given in the literature with some authors emphasising the importance of the pre-care experience including histories of abuse and neglect, consequent missed schooling as well as the low socio economic status and relative poverty of many birth families as key contributing factors (Berridge, 2007, 2012; Welbourne and Leeson, 2012). Such experiences lead to mental health difficulties for young people (Driscoll, 2011) at a rate four or five times higher than those young people not in care. Young people who come into the care system are more likely to have learning disabilities as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties (Driscoll, 2011; Welbourne and Leeson, 2012), some of which could be attributed to their chaotic pre-care experience. These factors may contribute to low educational attainment whilst in the care of the birth family. Welbourne and Leeson (2012) concluded that some children taken into care may need specialist therapeutic interventions to improve their chances of success in education.

In contrast, other authors highlight in-care factors as an explanation for the low attainment of 'looked after' young people including the low expectations of teachers and social workers; poor communication between Social Services and Education Services; multiple placements and changes of school; school exclusions and truanting; bullying at school; insufficient focus on basic literacy skills at school; and the lack of educational encouragement and support from carers (Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson, 2006; Cashmore et al., 2007). Multiple placements were also associated with more extensive emotional and behavioural difficulties in adulthood (Dregan and Guildford, 2012) which could affect educational outcomes such as success at university. There is a concern however that if the status of being in care is blamed for the poor attainment of these children and young people that it could lead to children and young people remaining with birth families under great risk (Berridge, 2012).

Dixon et al. (2006) concluded that the experiences of young people before and in care are interlinked and will have a profound effect on their lives after leaving care:

> *How young people fare after they leave is, at least in part, shaped by previous experiences in placements, in schools and in their family and social lives. Improvements in these experiences while young people are looked after – especially by providing more stable environments in which young people can develop appropriate attachments to home, carers and school – are likely to make the task at the leaving care stage easier.* (p. 255).

Driscoll (2011) also notes the difficulty of disentangling pre-care and in-care influences on low attainment especially as some children move back and forth in and out of care.

Brodie (2009), in a review of the literature, focuses on what works in improving the educational outcomes for children and young people in care. She notes that many children and young people perceived care entry as having had a positive effect on their education. She also notes the importance of sustained emotional and social support from at least one significant adult, and of the recognition and celebration of achievements both in school and extracurricular activities. Regression analyses in a Canadian study found that the educational aspiration of caregivers was one of the best predictors of educational success of young people (12-17 Years) in care at school along with gender, level of behavioural difficulties and the number of developmental assets such as commitment to learning; positive values; social competencies; and positive identity (Flynn et al., 2013). A Scottish study (Happer et al., 2006) considered what factors were important in success more widely (not just in education) and found the most important five factors to be:

• having people who care about you
• experiencing stability
• being given high expectations
• receiving encouragement and support
• being able to participate and achieve

However, leaving care can also be a positive turning point for young people especially since the local authority now has a duty under the CLCA (2000) to support children through: staying in touch with the child; providing a personal adviser; preparing a pathway plan; and in some cases providing accommodation and maintaining the child (Dixon et al., 2006). The Children's and Young Person's Act 2008 also placed strong emphasis on education of care leavers and introduced provision of bursaries and duties to support students financially. Indeed Driscoll (2011) reports that some studies had shown that as a result of these Acts, more care leavers were entering FE, and higher numbers were in employment and training.

Cameron (2007), however, notes the difficulties that some care leavers had negotiating FE courses once they had left care, owing to the lack of support from social workers and other professionals, as well as difficulties with funding, housing, inadequate preparation for the course and family difficulties. The same author discusses how many of the young people who had not succeeded educationally did have an 'education ethic' and had tried to complete courses but had been overcome by one or more of these difficulties. The lack of emotional support provided for care leavers as they transitioned out of care into FE was identified as a difficulty for these young people at a particularly vulnerable time (Rogers, 2011). Connolly and Duncalf (2011) also explored the issues faced by many young people as they transitioned to life after care and the role of a college education in this process. There is some evidence at least in respect of some colleges in the South West that some practitioners within FE colleges lack awareness of the needs of care leavers and the challenges and disadvantage they can face (Leonard, 2011). There is also evidence from this report that some colleges are actively trying to address the lack of staff awareness through professional development.

Driscoll (2011) reported that the numbers of care leavers in HE had improved from 5% in 2004 to 7% in 2010, although it appears that this number has remained static since then (DfE, 2012). The percentage of care leavers progressing to HE however is tiny compared to the proportion of non-care leaver entrants (43%). This is obviously partly due to their low attainment in their secondary education meaning that they lack the required entry grades. Other factors, such as pre-care experience and the amount of time in care, also limit the numbers who try to access HE (Berridge, 2012). Finnie (2012) highlights the importance of cultural factors, such as the lack of early and fluent reading in the home and poor parent-child communication, as well as a lack of family

history of HE participation. He suggests that children in care should visit universities early in their primary education so that they might aspire to going there one day. He also advocates peer mentoring and academic support provision for those in care and help with completing application forms as the time approaches to leave secondary education and concludes:

> *What we do know is that equalising PSE[1] opportunities is central to equalising life chances for children in care, that "culture" is critical to this, and that we must make progress in this area to bring children in care more fully into mainstream society.* (Finnie, 2012, p.1170)

As a consequence of these factors, young people leaving care are one of the most under-represented groups in HE, and often struggle to cope unless provided with significant support. Two retrospective studies, however, have documented the ways in which some of those who failed in the school system made it to HE as mature adults returning to education in their 20s and 30s (Mallon, 2007; Jackson and Martin, 1998) with new-found educational resilience.

Building on earlier, small-scale projects, Jackson et al. (2005) studied over 100 care leavers in HE over a three year period through the use of regular in depth interviews with the students, the findings from which confirmed the range of constraints of this earlier research, but also identified other issues. These included academic difficulties because of poor preparation for HE such as a lack of basic study skills and difficulty in organising their work; and personal, social and emotional difficulties because of their previous life experiences. Additionally it was found that several students were unable to participate fully in university life because of lack of financial support from the local authority (LA) with consequent problems in meeting normal educational expenses such as books, stationary and equipment. This resulted in the need to undertake extensive paid work to survive financially which impacted on their academic work and success. These students often took longer to complete their studies than others, needing to repeat assignments, modules or even years of study and some withdrew (10%) because of such difficulties. A perceived lack of interest from University student support services was identified and some students did not even have the support of a personal tutor. Few universities at the time had dedicated polices with regard to students who were care leavers or any specific support for them. Students interviewed from the second and third years of the study were less likely to withdraw, an indicator perhaps of the better support provided by local authorities because of new duties laid down in the CLCA of 2000.

Ajayi and Quiqley (2006) discuss the motivation of care leavers who make it to University and identified three different groups of students depending on their source of motivation. The first group were in a school where a large number of students went on to HE so were consequently swept along with them. A second group responded to the views of others such as encouragement from birth family or role models whom they wished to emulate such as a respected birth or foster sibling. The third group were strongly self-motivated, wanting to show others that they could succeed and making people proud of them, but they also saw HE as a way of bettering their future in providing career and lifestyle opportunities that would not otherwise be available. The authors highlighted the ways in which different motivations could influence HE outcomes - with those who were self-motivated more likely to succeed than those who followed the crowd or wanted to please others. These authors also classified the care leavers in their project into four groups depending on the students' reports of their experience of HE. These groups were: Flourishing, surviving, struggling, and dropping out. Outcomes for this final group were obviously poor, but the authors concluded that the most important causes could probably be traced back to the individual's family background and care history as the majority of those who dropped out had been subject to severe abuse during their childhood. It was felt that whilst these young people had been

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[1] PSE (Post secondary education)

able to push this to the back of their minds during their schooling and time in care, it had come to the fore at university. Support was lacking both from their local authority and the university.

A European funded study across five countries, including England, explored the educational pathways after the end of compulsory schooling of young men and women who had been in care, and considered how their access to FE and HE might be improved. Jackson and Cameron (2011, 2012) reported on the findings which were surprisingly consistent across the countries despite very different education and welfare provision. As with the earlier UK research, young people in care across these countries had chaotic backgrounds, generally lower educational attainment at the end of their compulsory education than their peers and only 8% accessed HE. The authors summed up the research by outlining the most important facilitating factors for educational attainment and progression to HE: strong personal motivation; stability of care and school placements; close support from a significant adult; high expectations from carers, teachers and social workers; and financial support. Fear of debt, they noted, deterred many care leavers from accessing HE. Several researchers in this area conclude that welfare authorities should be taking these factors into account and targeting measures which promote social mobility for care leavers by giving them greater opportunities to access higher levels of education (Jackson and Cameron, 2012; Johansson and Höjer, 2012) The importance of social relationships for young people's educational success was highlighted by other partners in the project who called on professionals to assist young people in accessing and engaging in social communities (Bryderup and Trentel, 2013).

A recent English phenomenological study of nine care leavers in their first or second year of university particularly focused on their transition to HE (Bluff et al., 2012). Students were interviewed about their application to HE, support from their local authority and their first few weeks of university. Three themes came from the analysis: negative care leaver identity; the lack of positive care leaver role models; and corporate versus normal parenting. With regard to identity, the participants were all aware of their care leaver status but some were very negative about this and wished to dissociate from it and not mix with other care leavers. Few students had any positive care leaver role models from whom they could gain information, guidance, confidence and support and the authors felt this could be a limiting factor in applications to HE. The care leavers' experiences also illustrated that there was a mismatch between their perception of 'normal' parenting (driving children to interview, helping them move in etc.) and the parenting that they had received from their 'corporate parents'. The corporate parenting they received in this respect was negligible with students having to face new experiences on their own:

> *Throughout these care leavers' experiences of parenting, it appears that care leavers feel they are disadvantaged through the process of applying for university because of being through the care system and being parented by 'corporate parents'*. (Bluff et al., 2012, p. 7)

The lack of support at the time of transition from care to the next stage of their lives was also identified as a potential stumbling block for all care leavers (Hiles et al., 2013). They did not necessarily have the support of their local authority, foster carers or birth parents to support them through this process unlike other young people leaving home for the first time.

A recent study used Bourdieu's theory on transformation and reproduction in society and the concepts of capital, field and habitus to explore care leavers' experiences of HE (Hyde-Dryden, 2012). It considered how the support available to care leavers from their local authorities and HE institutions had developed since Jackson et al. (2005) first highlighted the poor level of support provided to care leavers. The author notes that the provision of adequate support from local authorities and universities can overcome care leavers' disadvantage:

This support can help positively impact care leavers' habitus and provides the economic, social and cultural capital necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities available in the field of higher education in a similar way to their peers (Hyde-Dryden, 2012, page 238)

A number of studies reported on the resilience of care leavers who do access HE and successfully graduate, and note that many more care leavers could do so if they were able to overcome the difficulties (risk factors) that they face, through having access to so-called protective factors that help them overcome adversity (Jackson and Martin, 1998, Jackson et al., 2005; Stein, 2006, 2008; Gilligan, 2007; Driscoll 2011, 2013; Munson, 2013). Stein (2008) defines resilience in this way:

Resilience can be defined as the quality that enables some young people to find fulfilment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone or the pressures they may experience. Resilience is about overcoming the odds, coping and recovery. (p.3)

Stein summarised the protective factors which appear to contribute to this resilience, including: a positive relationship with a significant adult; positive school experiences; feeling able to plan and be in control; a positive identity; being given the chance of a turning point; supportive social networks; undertaking extracurricular activities to develop competencies and emotional maturity; having the opportunity to make a difference through volunteering, for example; and the development of coping and problem solving strategies by being exposed to challenging situations in safe environments. More recently, Munson (2013) investigated the role of protective factors in the success of care leavers at one English university and identified three types of protective factors: individual, such as self-motivation; personal relationships, such as foster carers valuing and encouraging education; and environmental, such as a stable school experience. The emotional intelligence of successful care leavers could also be assisting them to achieve educationally (McLafferty et al., 2012).

Stein (2008) argues that developing this resilience, so that more care leavers access and succeed in HE, will require comprehensive services for young people across the life course:

This will include, first, better quality care, providing more stability, holistic preparation, a positive sense of identity and assistance with education; second, opportunities for more gradual transitions from care, less accelerated and compressed, and more akin to normative transitions; and third, the provision of better quality and more extended support. (p.2)

Mallon (2007) argues that protective factors appear to be the result of chance rather than systematic planning by local authorities and that much more could be done to promote these factors. Similarly Jackson and Cameron (2011) urge social workers and other professionals to focus more on the positive features of young people in care, rather than on the problems and risks in their lives. They suggest (yet again) that a key factor in contributing to educational success is the support of a significant adult who can offer advice and point out opportunities that will help them develop into successful learners.

Another personality construct identified amongst successful care leavers as well as high motivation, positive identity and resilience was self-reliance or initiative taking (Cameron, 2007). Self-reliance was seen to have two dimensions that of having confidence in oneself, and preferring not to have help. These dimensions can operate together or independently in care leavers meaning that whilst some could accept help and still feel independent, others rejected offers of help after being frequently disappointed in the past. Cameron and Driscoll (2013) both warn that although self-reliance can be similar to resilience as defined by Stein (2008), being overly self-reliant can be interpreted negatively by those offering help when it is continually rejected and care leavers are then perceived as difficult. Similarly Samuels and Pryce (2008) argue that although self-reliance can be a source of

resilience it also can prevent the development of supportive relationships that can lead to positive outcomes in adulthood. This self-reliance can lead to the isolation of care leavers which can impact on their studies at university as they struggle with limited guidance and support (Cole et al., 2012).

Findings:
i) The care leaver student survey

The respondents to the survey have a range of background characteristics as shown in table 1:

Table 1: Respondents

Gender		Age		Current year of Course				Fee Status	Full or Part time
Male	Female	Young	Mature	1st	2nd	3rd/4	Final	Home	Full
10 (38.5%)	16 (61.5%)	8 (31%)	18 (69%)	8 (31%)	7 (27%)	1 (4%)	10 (38%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)

Living Circumstances and Caring Responsibilities

The majority of the care leavers 19 (73%) lived in privately rented accommodation off campus during term time and another four (15%) lived in their own homes. Of the other three, one lived in PU Halls, another in their foster carer's home and another in a local authority flat. Half of the students (13) lived with other students during term time, another six with their partner, six with their children (four of these also lived with their partner and another with their foster carer so probably one single parent) and five with their foster carer whilst another five lived on their own. During University vacations some of the students reported staying in more than one place so while 12 students also lived in privately rented accommodation in vacations as in term time, three of these also stayed with birth parents or anther birth relative, and one other lived with their foster carer. Five other students also reported staying with foster carers, whilst another lived with their legal guardian during vacations, and two students who lived either in Halls or rented accommodation in term time lived with friends in the vacation.

Some students reported difficulties with their accommodation especially during vacations. Paying for accommodation during these times was a concern, as these three students described:

> *finances for accommodation out of term times.*

> *I have to rent accommodation during holidays as I work away so I can save up money for term time*

> *other accommodation has to be set up and i have to actively make sure that the paperwork is put through as it has been forgotten about on a couple of occasions.*

Another student reported finding it difficult to contribute to their keep when staying with foster carers over the vacations and another talked of the loneliness in the holidays when her student flat mates went home to their families and she was left alone having no family to return to:

> *Just gets really lonely by yourself, you don't have the opportunity to leave Plymouth really*

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Of the care leavers who had caring responsibilities 5 reported a slight negative impact:

> *trying to get in to all my lectures and complete a placement has been difficult as childcare is so expensive and hard to come by.*

Paid Work

Eight (31%) of the care leavers undertook paid work throughout their course, another eight had done so through some of their course. The remaining ten students had not undertaken any paid work in term time. Of the 16 who had undertaken paid work during term time, eight reported doing 1-10 hours, three had done 11-20 hours and five reported doing more than 20 hours. Of those that worked 1-10 hours, three reported a major (1) or slight (2) positive impact, four others reported no impact and one reported a major negative impact. Of those that had worked 11-20 hours, three reported a slight (2) or major (1) negative impact; of those that had worked more than 20 hours, four reported either a slight (2) or major (2) negative impact. The main negative impact reported was on the students' studies as these quotes illustrate:

> *Doing a day's paid work is a day where I should be studying. With working full time on nursing placements and working to earn, trying to get assignments done is next to impossible. This is particularly disheartening when you consequentially lose childcare money because you have earned.*

> *Over worked, always tired but at least I could always pay the rent.*

Positive impacts included the following:

> *Made a lot more confident and taught me responsibility. (slight positive impact)*

> *I was struggling for money, especially having to pay so much for NHS prescription and a medical condition, working helped me support myself and I can now afford healthy food and to travel home now and then. (major positive)*

One student reported no impact although at times they had worked more than 20 hours per week on their course, but qualified their response in this way:

> *I only work when I know that my studies are all up to date, I would not jeopardise my course.*

Other Finances

Twenty four (92%) of the students had received the care leaver bursary at some point during their time at PU. Twenty one (87.5%) of these reported a major positive impact while another three (12.5%) reported a slight positive impact because of it. Some related how they had used the money to buy books and other course resources while this student also mentioned the impact on their mental health and consequently their studies:

> *It has meant I have been able to get the equipment I need for my course plus meaning that I could live in a nicer property which helps with my OCD. I would have seriously struggled without the care leaver's bursary. I get high anxiety which severely impacts my studies and because of the care leavers bursary I can travel home to visit which keeps my anxiety to a reasonable level.*

Other students had used the bursary for paying accommodation costs or travel expenses such as car repairs. Two students reported that it had meant they had more time to study without needing to do so much paid employment. Another two had used the bursary to help with child care costs. Importantly, five of the students commented that they would not have been able to get to or through University without the bursary:

> *Without having the care leavers bursary, I do not know how I would of been able to get through my course financially.*

Six of the care leavers had not received the bursary every year of their time at PU most usually in their first year when they had not known about the care leaver service and the bursary although one student on a four year degree programme was not receiving the bursary in her fourth year despite having received it in the previous three years. Two of the 26 students did not indicate that they were receiving the care leaver bursary at all. For four of the six students who had not received the bursary every year of the course, three reported a major or slight negative impact as a result such as financial difficulties. Nine (35%) of the students also indicated that they had received the NSP scholarship during their time at PU and four (15%) had benefitted from an NHS bursary.

Pre entry to PU

The majority of the students had been in care for more than three years with 18 (72%) reporting this; a further six (24%) had spent between one and three years in care; and only one indicated that they had been in care for less than year. Most had involved between two and five different care placements with eleven (46%) of students reporting this, a further seven had experienced either six to ten placements (3) or more than ten placements (4). Additionally the number of schools attended by the care leavers could be several with eleven (46%) experiencing between three and five schools and three students attending as many as six to ten schools. The remaining ten (42%) students were more fortunate in that they attended only 1 or 2 schools during their time in care. Ten (42%) of the students were local students having most of their schooling in either Devon or Cornwall. The remainder were from further afield.

The students were then asked what their circumstances were prior to entry to PU which indicated that 12 (48%) had been attending FE college; six (24%) were in a job or career of some kind; six had come straight from school and one had been raising a family. The care leavers were also asked to indicate all their pre entry qualifications and from this it was shown that nine (35%) had A levels; nine (35%) had BTechs; eight (31%) entered with an Access course qualification; five (19%) had NVQs of some kind; two had foundation degrees and one an HND. Only one student entered PU through the clearing process. Seven (28%) of the care leavers had experienced any pre entry outreach activities such as a summer school or Open Day before coming to PU.

Four of the care leavers reported that at least one of their birth parents had been to university, of the remaining 22, five (19%) were unsure but the majority of 17 (65%) reported that neither of their birth parents had been to university. Similarly 21 (81%) of the students reported that their siblings had not been to university either. Only three of the students reported that their foster carers had been to university and only four that foster siblings had done so.

Motivations for University study

The students were asked why they had decided to enrol for University. Table 2 gives a breakdown of their responses.

Table 2: Reason/Motivations for University Enrolment

Reason/Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
To generally improve my career prospects	23	88%
To qualify for a particular career/job	19	73%
To increase future earning capacity	18	69%
I enjoy learning and studying	18	69%
I was encouraged by foster family	7	27%
Teachers encouraged me	5	19%
Social worker/personal adviser encouraged me	5	19%
All my friends were going to university	2	8%
Impact of pre entry activities at school/college which inspired me	2	8%
To delay starting in employment	2	8%
To prove to others that care leavers can do it.	1	4%

The main reasons are in regard to career prospects and earning power although a love of learning is also important for several; a factor identified in the literature as key to care leavers' educational success. As also shown in much of the literature, social workers and teachers do not feature highly as sources of encouragement and motivation, although as seen later teachers were key in helping some of the care leavers apply for University.The care leavers were also asked why they had chosen their particular course or programme of study at PU, the response breakdown is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Reason for Course Choice

Reason for Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Interest in the subject	21	81%
Want to get a particular type of job	16	61%
Attracted by course title	14	54%
Wanted to help others/children in care	8	31%
Want to get a well-paid job	7	27%
Reputation of this course	6	23%
Advice of family/friends	5	19%
Advice of teacher/careers adviser	2	8%

The intrinsic motivation of interest in the subject was the most common response followed by the extrinsic motivation of a desire to get a particular type of job. Eight care leavers had altruistic reasons for undertaking their courses such as helping others.

A number of sources of help in applying for University were reported. The most common were teachers or tutors with 15 (58%) of the care leavers indicating them as a source of help. Help from friends was reported by six (23%) of the care leavers; a similar number received help from a partner or boyfriend/ girlfriend; five (19%) had the assistance of a social worker or after-care worker; four reported the help of foster carers. Only four received help from birth parents (2) or other birth relatives (2) while one had the help of a foster sibling and another from the care leaver service at PU. Finally seven (27%) reported having no help from anyone.

Only seven of the care leavers had had information from their local authority about the support they provided for care leavers at university before starting at PU. One of these care leavers spoke of the important role of both the local authority social worker and the care leaver service at PU at this time:

> *My social worker is fab! Her and (care leaver advice officer) sorted everything out for me before   I even got to uni!*

During their course however, 15 (58%) students did receive some form of local authority financial support but ten (38%) did not and the remaining student was not sure whether they had or not. Those that did receive some financial support reported a variety of financial assistance but the most commonly reported, a Leaving Care Grant, was received by only six students whilst another six reported that accommodation costs were either fully or partly paid for by their local authority. Other financial support indicated by five students included some course costs such as books; the same number reported that their tuition fees were paid or partly paid; four students received a living allowance; and four students also reported that some University set up costs such as for cutlery and plates were covered by their local authority. Finally three students reported that some of their travel costs were paid by their local authority; two students reported that their foster carers were paid to look after them during vacations and just one student was provided with a student loan.

These two students fared better than many of the other students:

> *£2000 per year for living allowance and £2000 per year off tuition fees*

> *My rent has been paid for for the full four years of study and accommodation is always set up for me when i return home, usually as supported accommodation in a new place but occasionally it is at my previous foster carer's. I was also given a book allowance to use over the four years but I haven't needed it all. Having my rent paid for makes a big difference.*

The students were then asked if they had had any other type of support from their local authority during their time at University. In answer to this only two revealed that they had had support from a social worker or personal adviser at the start of their course; seven had support from such a professional regularly throughout their course but another six reported they only had annual contact with their social worker or personal adviser. Two other students spoke of very minimal contact with these staff, one seeing it just as a tick box exercise, the other had only received help from someone with her CV which her leaving care worker had organised. Eight of the students however reported that no other support at all was provided by their local authority.

Highlights of the University experience

The care leavers were next asked to indicate the three main highlights of their time at PU. The most commonly reported highlight was making new friends which 15 (58%) of the students selected:

> *Before enrolling on my course at Plymouth university, I was extremely petrified about moving away from home, leaving my friends, not knowing anybody on the course and living independently. Now that I'm in my final year, I have made some amazing friends, have had several opportunities to do some amazing things and most of all have gained many new skills.*

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Other highlights included becoming independent (9, 35%); placements (8, 31%); the social life (8,31%); extracurricular activities and new interests (6,23%); the academic course (5,19%); and working as a student ambassador (2,8%); whilst one student highlighted the advice support officer from the care leaver service. This student mentioned several of the above:

> Course trips to Spain and Mexico, making new mates and improving social skills, gaining confidence and finding my own way in the world, learning about me and being independent.

Difficulties with the HE experience

The students were also asked to identify three main difficulties during their at PU. The most commonly reported were personal difficulties (14, 54%); then financial difficulties (13, 50%); health difficulties (10, 38%); academic difficulties (8, 31%); travel difficulties and social difficulties (both 5, 19%). Some respondents reported that they had experienced all of the options given as most of the difficulties could lead to others so that for instance mental health issues could contribute to personal, social and academic difficulties as these 2 students conveyed:

> Travel expenses - road tax, insurance etc. Accommodation - previously stated Academic difficulties - working and studying Health difficulties - Went a bit mental working and studying and then borderline failing. Personal difficulties - going a bit mad was a shock as conflicted my personal views of bucking up and getting on with things. Social difficulties - losing touch with friends etc. through having no spare time

> Coming to university was difficult for me, fitting in with social groups, being able to open myself up to form new relationships. previously finding the money for summer accommodation i.e new deposits and a months rent was difficult. struggling to understand what is being asked of you academically, until I had support from disability assist for dyslexia. I had previously explored through counselling my ability to cope on a social work course..

Support from Student Services

The care leavers were asked if they had used the student support services at PU and how useful they had found these. The results are provided in Table 4 (below). It is clear that those that had used support services were usually satisfied with the support received especially the care leaver service. They were also asked what other support they would like, though few answered. Two that did respond however felt that more awareness raising of the support available would be helpful especially with regard to personal and financial support.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Support Services

Support Service	N	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Never Used
Care leaver service	22	17(77%)	4(18%)	1(4%)	0	0	0
CAKE meetings	19	11(58%)	3(16%)	2(8%)	0	0	3(16%)
Personal Tutor	22	10(45%)	5(23%)	3(17%)	0	1(4%)	3(17%)
Disability Assist	18	5(28%)	3(17%)	1(4%)	0	0	9(35%)
Counselling	16	4(25%)	3(19%)	0	0	0	9(56%)
Learning Development	16	4(25%)	3(19%)	3(19%)	1(6%)	0	5(31%)
Student Funding Office Support	17	3(18%)	7(41%)	3(18%)	1(6%)	0	3(18%)
Sum Up	17	4(23%)	2(12%)	1(6%)	0	0	10(59%)
Library Support	20	4(20%)	10(50%)	2(10%)	1(5%)	1(5%)	2(10%)
Named member of dept staff for non academic support	17	2(12%)	0	3(12%)	1(6%)	0	11(65%)
Coaching	12	0	0	1(6%)	0	0	11(73%)
Chaplaincy	16		1(6%)	2(12%)	0	0	13(81%)
Accommodation office	17	1(6%)	1(6%)	2(12%)	0	0	13(81%)
Career Service Support	16	2(12%)	1(6%)	3(19%)	1(6%)	0	9(56%)
PALs	16	0	1(4%)	2(12%)	0	0	13(81%)

The students were also asked to respond to a 'Belonging Scale' consisting of a number of Likert type scale items to assess how comfortable they felt in the University environment. The responses are set out in Table 5 below. Although there are some distinct negative responses within this scale, it should be noted that research using this scale in the wider university population has also identified a significant minority of students who respond negatively to questions on the belonging scale.

Table 5: The Belonging Scale

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Fellow students accept me	9(36%)	10(40%)	4(16%)	2(8%)	0
What I offer is valued	4(16%)	12(48%)	7 (28%)	1(4%)	1(4%)
I often meet or contact other students	7(28%)	10(40%)	7(28%)	1(4%)	0
I wonder if I really fit in *	1(4%)	8(33%)	7(29%)	6(25%)	2(8%)
I feel like an outsider at University *	2(8%)	5(21%)	4(17%)	7(29%)	6(25%)
I could disappear for days without anyone noticing*	4(17%)	7(29%)	1(4%)	6(25%)	6(25%)
I feel part of the University	5(20%)	12(48%)	5(20%)	2(8%)	1(4%)
I prefer to observe life at University rather than join in	3(12%)	2(8%)	9(36%)	9(36%)	2(8%)
I have no place here at the University	0	0	9(36%)	9(36%)	7(28%)
Few people would care if I left University	2(8%)	3(12%)	7(28%)	7(28%)	6(24%)
I feel included in life at University	3(12%)	10(42%)	7(29%)	2(8%	2(8%)
I think people would miss me if I didn't turn up to lectures	3(12%)	6(24%)	8(32%)	7(28%)	1(4%)
I don't feel valued or important	1(4%)	1(4%)	9(37%)	9(37%)	4(17%)
I rarely feel homesick	7(32%)	4(18%)	3(14%)	5(23%)	3(14%)

It is clear that on some of the items (those especially with *) some of the care leavers are showing signs of not being fully comfortable in the University environment.

Retention and withdrawal

The care leavers were asked if they had considered withdrawing from their course, and/or transferring to another course or university. Eighteen (72%) had considered withdrawing at some point during their course,five (20%) had considered transferring to another course and four (16%) to another university. Four out of the seven in their first year who responded to this question, had considered withdrawing, all of the seven respondents in their second year had considered this and six out of the ten in their final year. So in each year group the majority had considered withdrawing at some point. The students were then asked why they had considered these options, giving the three most important reasons. Of the 18 who had considered withdrawing, the main reasons are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Reasons for considering withdrawal

Reason	Frequencies	Percentage
Financial concerns	7	39%
Health difficulties	7	39%
Not coping with academic work	6	33%
Poor choice of course/course not up to expectations	6	33%
Became interested in another course	5	28%
Dissatisfied with quality of teaching	4	22%
Social Difficulties	3	17%
Travel difficulties	2	11%
Dissatisfied with student experience	2	11%
Unhappy with timetable	1	6%

These 18 students were asked why they had eventually decided to stay on their original course; the most usual reasons were because they had received support from the care leaver service and their determination to stick it

out. Others had received support from family/friends, tutors or student services as Table 7 shows below. The impact of bursaries was also reported but by fewer students.

Table7: Reasons for staying

Reason Stayed	Frequencies	Percentages
Received support from care leaver service	9	50%
My career aims haven't changed	8	44%
I received support from friends/family	7	39%
I received support from student services	4	22%
I received support from my tutors	3	17%
The care leaver bursary money	3	17%
The National Scholarship money	1	6%

This student reports on the importance of the care leaver service support in keeping her at university but she also expresses concerns about changes to the service:

> *The support from (care leaver advice officer) at the care leavers service has been invaluable to me and without her I would not have been able to stay at university, however the constant threat that she would have restricted times whereby we could contact her was upsetting and worrying.*

Other students also expressed their gratitude to the care leaver services and its staff as well as the student funding office in keeping them on their course:

> *My student finance has been very difficult to say the least, the service and paperwork is 'unfriendly' and has created problems with my funding. Only due to the help by the university finance officer and care coordinator have I been able to continue at university in my second year*

The following two students' accounts demonstrate their determination to stick it out:

> *I want to qualify as a nurse more than anything, and will do whatever it takes for me to achieve   this.*

> *i wouldn't quit*

The Care Leaver Service

A number of questions revolved specifically around the care leaver service. Firstly the care leavers were asked when they had first become aware of the service. Thirteen (52%) of the students had been aware of the service before they came to PU, another six (24%) in their first term and another five (20%) at some time after their first term. One respondent reported that they had not heard of the care leaver service! Most of the students reported either having lots (11, 46%) of contact with the service or some contact (12, 50%). Only one reported very little contact. The most commonly reported involvement with the service was applying for the care leaver bursary as set out in Table 8 along with the various other types of support received from the service.

Table 8: Involvement with the Care Leaver Service

Types of Involvement	Frequency	Percentage
Applying for care leaver bursary	23	88%
Attending CAKE meetings	17	65%
Support with personal concerns	13	50%
Support with financial concerns	13	50%
Attending social events	13	50%
Working with Service as student ambassador	11	42%
Support with health concerns	6	23%
Support with social concerns	6	23%
Support with accommodation concerns	3	11%
Support with travel concerns	3	11%
Employability support	3	11%
Graduation advice and support	2	8%

The students were then asked to indicate how helpful the care leaver service had been and the breakdown of their responses is given in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Helpfulness of Care Leaver Service

Support	Very helpful	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Not applicable
Applying for care leaver bursary N=23 *	22(85%)	1(4%)	0	0	0	0
Support for academic concerns N=15	6(40%)	4(27%)	1(7%)	0	0	4(22%)
Support with Personal Concerns N=18	10(56%)	3(17%)	0	1(6%)	4(22%)	0
Support with Social Concerns N=17	5(29%)	2(12%)	2(12%)	1(6%)	0	4(41%)
Support with Accommodation Concerns N=16	4(25%)	0	3(19%)	1(6%)	0	8(50%)
Support with health concerns N=16	5(31%)	1(6%)	2(12%)	1(6%)	0	7(44%)
Support with Financial Concerns N=19	13(68%)	0	2(11%)	0	0	4(21%)
Support with travel concerns N=16	4(25%)	2(12%)	3(19%)	0	0	7(44%)
Employability support N=16	3(19%)	2(12%)	3(19%)	0	0	8(50%)
Attending Social Events N=19	10(53%)	3(16%)	2(10%)	0	0	4(21%)
Attending CAKE meetings N=18	12(67%)	3(17%0	1(6%0	0	0	2(11%)
Working with care leaver service as student Ambassador N=17	10 (59%)	2(12%)	0	0	0	5(29%)

*These percentages are out of those that gave a response, given in LH column for each option.

Clearly the support provided by the service was mostly very helpful only very occasionally were there any cases of the service not being able to help. Just three care leavers reported little or no involvement with the care leaver service, all said that this was because they lived some distance from PU so were unable to attend meetings and events later in the day.

The care leavers were asked some specific questions about the CAKE (Care Advisory Knowledge Exchange) meetings. Only three (13%) indicated that they had attended most or all of the meetings, the majority of 13 (56%) reported that they attended a few meetings while seven (30%) declared that they had not attended any meetings. The main reason given for attending only a few or no meetings was that they clashed with lectures.

This was the reason given by 15 (58%) students. Seven (27%) students indicated that meetings clashed with their placements. This student gave both these reasons:

> *unfortunately my course is full time and also placement based therefore the meetings fall on days where it clashes*

Three students reported that the meetings clashed with care responsibilities and the same number indicated that they clashed with work responsibilities. Finally two students reported that they wanted to leave their care experiences behind; one of these also indicated that that they weren't interested in any of the activities provided. One student spoke about living out of the area, and another that they just had a bad memory for times and dates!

Those students who had attended most CAKE meetings were asked what they thought of the meetings. In this instance ten students responded (although earlier only three had indicated that they attended most of the meetings!) Of these ten, six indicated that the meetings were very helpful and another four that they were helpful. The students then reported why they found the meetings helpful and responses focussed mainly on the meeting of new people who had been through the same experiences:

> *It's a relaxed environment where we as care leavers can discuss concerns both about the courses we are on and about home life, without feeling judged*

> *Just nice to feel part of a group of people that have been through what you have*

> *The support of other students, support of the care officer, involvement in projects and to discuss current affairs. I feel the CAKE group is more than just a meeting, its a chance to share an identity that is stereotypical judged and within CAKE no one is judged.*

Four of the students also remarked on the support of the care leaver advice officer at these meetings:

> *We all feel we have the support of (care leaver advice officer) and can come to her with any ideas or worries. She listens to us and understands why sometimes care leavers struggle. Without this service the care leavers would never find each other and could not seek and offer support.*

The other staff that came to meetings to offer advice were also appreciated as was reported by two of the students.

The Coaching Service

This was a new element that was being trialled by the care leaver service this academic year whereby care leavers were offered six sessions of a life coaching programme. A few questions were included in the survey to gain feedback on the programme so far. In fact only one student indicated that they would be having coaching but this had not started as yet. Another reported that she was having helpful coaching but in fact this was from an employee mentoring service of some kind. Students were then asked why they had chosen not to sign up to the coaching scheme to which three students responded that they didn't need it and two students indicated that they were too busy so had time constrictions. Other reasons given by just one student each included: not understanding what the scheme would be providing; not knowing what needed coaching with; not heard of the scheme; not knowing if there was a right area for them; that didn't want to talk to more professionals; and that

don't want to ask for support as self reliant. Some of these responses would seem to indicate the need for more information about what the scheme was actually providing.

The care leavers were then asked to indicate one element of the care leaver service that had been the most useful to them. The care leaver bursary was chosen by ten (45%) of the students, and eight (36%) chose the support provided by the service. Of the remainder one appreciated the CAKE meetings most; another one chose working as a student ambassador with the service; whilst another felt it was just great to know that there was support available when needed. Finally one student wanted to choose all elements of the service as all had been so useful.

The students were next asked if there was any other support that the care leaver service could provide in the future. Three suggestions were around graduation and afterwards:

> *graduation is a daunting prospect. We lose all input from the university and from social services and that's terrifying. Perhaps it would be nice to have a meet up or a drop in for the year post graduation.*

> *Help with graduation costs.*

> *Support with moving on or linking in with local authority again.*

Other suggestions included friendships; more information when start university so know what student services are available; a closed facebook page to encourage more participation; and finally that the care leaver advice officer should have the authority to give background details of care leavers to other members of staff:

> *She should be allowed to communicate with other members of staff, would make life so much easier. The authority to give background detail to other members of staff.*

The care leavers were also asked to give any further comments they wished about their experience of the care leaver service. These were all very positive and are reproduced here so as to illustrate the success of the service in supporting this vulnerable group of students:

> *A helpful service which I was not aware of when I applied at Plymouth University.*

> *The support and bursary received is most appreciated and has made life a little easier. Many thanks to all involved.*

> *From the interaction I have had, it has been good.*

> *I cannot thank the university enough for implementing this sort of support for care leavers. I did   not realise this was available until my second term due to my own fault, and feel that this service has made my experience at university as fulfilling as it should be. The team are fantastic at what they do and should be commended for the support they provide.*

> *I did not know that this service existed when i applied to come to PU but was contacted by a care worker after application. I am very impressed this happened and thank them for their support. It is very comforting to know that there is someone at university that understands your situation and issues that are likely to arise.*

(The care leaver advice officer) is just outstanding, really she is amazing

Thankyou

The care leaver service have been absolutely brilliant. They are kind, thoughtful, fun and again always there if you need them. Such a huge support.

The care leavers service and (the care leaver advice officer) have helped me through university and to stay in university when I fell out of love with studying, a friend of mine left university as he didn't have the support from his family which I receive from the service!!!

After Graduation.

All the care leavers were asked what they planned to do after graduation, and most selected more than one option as Table 10 shows.

Table 10: Plans after graduation

Plans after Graduation	Frequencies	Percentages
Get a job relevant to my degree	21	81%
Postgraduate study	9	35%
Get any job whether relevant to degree or not	7	27%
Go travelling	6	23%
Don't know too early to say	6	23%
Take time out	5	19%
Other study	3	12%
Another undergraduate degree	2	8%

The most prevalent response was to get a job that was related to their degree course and over a third indicated the desire for more study of some kind.

ii) Care leaver student interviews

Pre University experience

The students interviewed had been placed in care either because of neglect, alcoholism or abuse. Rebecca placed herself in care because of her alcoholic mother and physically violent father. Some of the students had multiple care placements resulting in many school changes. In one such case the care leaver described how she had had 74 placements in total, travelling all over the country from Scotland to Devon. Others had more stable backgrounds with only one or a few placements. Most of the students were placed with foster carers although two had spent some time in residential homes and one had spent most of his time in kinship care with his uncle. One student had been sporadically privately fostered by a range of acquaintances of her alcoholic mother, who changed frequently as they realised that the birth mother was continuing to claim child benefit. The students gave mixed reports about their carers' encouragement for their schooling, though some had received little or no support. Unsurprisingly therefore, some of the students had poor school attainment and two were expelled from school because of their behaviour. Others missed large chunks of their schooling through constant family changes or because of their pre-care experiences.

Nonetheless, there were students who reported how much their carers had encouraged them with education:

Then there were other foster carers who were absolutely fantastic, and who would sit me down at the kitchen table and say, "Okay, you're going to do some homework." And they would incorporate learning into things like holidays, so we'd go and visit castles, and they would make the effort to talk to us about who lived there, different battles, and various things.

Some students were also encouraged by teachers and/or social workers so achieved well at school, as in the case of Donna, who clung to education for some normality in her turbulent life:

I was always encouraged by my teachers to work hard. And that was my route out of the cycle, you know, otherwise the cycle continues.

One student even had a life coach provided when the college discovered she was in care. The coach had helped to organise her studies and encouraged her to succeed and go to university. Most of the care leavers completed their UCAS applications on their own although a few had help with personal statements from their school or college. Not all the care leavers had visited Plymouth University before they applied or even arrived, chiefly because of the travel expense. Those that did visit beforehand had not always found it helpful as Nancy commented:

It was a little bit difficult, only because I was surrounded by people who were with their parents or in groups.

The students entered with either A levels, Access to HE qualifications or BTechs. Some of the students felt well prepared for University by their school or college but others, like Natalie, did not:

Well when I came here I didn't actually know how to do an assignment. I know that sounds silly but because we had lots of support in college and it was different assignments to A Levels, all my friends did A Levels so they knew how to do Harvard referencing and things like that, but obviously doing a BTech you don't get taught any of that.

All the students had worries before they came to university, mostly around finances; whether they would be able to cope with the workload; and whether they would fit in. Rebecca had a negative identity as a care leaver and wondered whether she was worthy of going to university:

So I think it was more feeling it wasn't justified for me to have a place, it wasn't right. I even thought that they'd only given it to me just because of the discussion about social classes and people not being allowed into university. So I almost convinced myself that I was let in just to prove a point, which sounds awful.

Motivations for participation in HE

The most common reason for going to university was to prove to others that they could do it when teachers and social workers had thought they could not. Other reasons given less often were to provide a better life for their child; wanting to improve their own life chances and to get a good job or career or simply to give them time to work out what they really wanted to do with their lives. Where people such as teachers had encouraged the young people in their education it was instrumental in some of the students deciding to go University. Another student was inspired by some of the people he worked with in a NEETs charity who all had degrees. Local authority support varied hugely from little or none, to generous financial and social work support.

The most usual reason (6) for choosing PU was that it was near the students' foster carers' home or their own home in the case of some of the mature students. In contrast, however, one student wanted to get as far away as possible from his former residential home and birth family which had been extremely destructive. Four of the students claimed they chose PU because of the care leaver service; three came on recommendations of friends or colleagues; and three because it offered the course they wanted. Finally one student loved the university when first visited and another admitted it was because his poor grades were accepted.

Highlights and difficulties with the university experience

The main highlights identified were:

- meeting new people and making friends (5);
- academic course/placements (4);
- the care leaver service (4);
- being independent (2);
- extracurricular activities (2); and
- being a student ambassador (1).

The majority of the students were happy that they had to come to University although one student, (who has since failed his final year), wished he'd gone straight out to work instead of coming to university. Three students however wished that they had not come to Plymouth: all three were unhappy with aspects of their courses such as it being poorly structured, badly taught or simply not as expected.

The care leavers were also asked about any difficulties encountered during their course. Several were described, including:

- mental health difficulties (6);
- course difficulties (5);
- not fitting in (4);
- social difficulties (3);
- poor physical health(3);
- financial difficulties (2) and
- accommodation difficulties (2).

Four of the students had considered withdrawing because of one or more of these difficulties but had finally stayed mainly because of the support of the care leaver service:

Being able to go and speak to her and have a good old cry or have a chat and just say, "Look, this is what's happening, I don't know what to do." Or, "The nursery are asking me for money, I'm absolutely panicking, I haven't got a clue what I'm supposed to be doing. I need to get my child into nursery so I can go to this placement, that placement and, ah, help." And she's able to signpost us in the right direction and say, "Look, it's okay." Family concerns, if we're having difficulties, I know there have been students who have had difficulties because of being care leaver and having family issues, and she's their main port of call. And it could be argued that, 'oh well, every student could do with that, but I would say that most students have parents, most students have siblings, have aunts, uncles, grandparents, have somebody'.

The students had also received support through other services such as DAS for enablers, study tutors and note takers; counselling for the treatment of anxiety and depression; learning development for help with essay writing and giving presentations; and sometimes supportive tutors.

Experiences of the Care leaver Service

Nearly all the students had received the care leaver bursary although one had not received it in their first year and another wasn't sure if had received the bursary each year. All but one of the students had received the support of the care leaver advice officer to a greater or lesser extent. This included support with academic issues, health and personal concerns and financial difficulties. Specific highlights included: providing a point of contact for the local authority on students' progress; encouraging students to keep going; referring to counselling, DAS and other student support services; support with finances such as paying for a dyslexia test; and appointing some of the care leavers student ambassadors so as to provide them with finance and building their confidence. In some cases also the care leaver officer even accompanied care leavers to services such as counselling, in an attempt to overcome possible reluctance to ask for support:

Talking to [care leaver officer] and realising that, you know, I could get through it and there was a lot of support available. And there were times when I found it really difficult to fund everything and she signposted me, and she actually came with me for some of the different things that I was applying for so that she could just be there as a support, even if she didn't need to say anything, just having that extra person there.

The care leavers who had not sought the advice officer's support so frequently described how they wanted to leave their care leaver experience behind them; they were reluctant to ask for support from new professionals; or they wanted to see if they could cope on their own.

Most of the care leavers had attended at least 1 CAKE meeting, but one student had not attended any – again because he was very keen to leave his care experience behind him. Others had only attended 1 or 2 because of care responsibilities or clashes with lectures. Only one of the students interviewed had tried the new coaching service and he had not found it particularly helpful and felt more information beforehand would have been useful. None of the other students had signed up for coaching either because they had not heard of it, they did not have enough time before their exams, or they were not sure how it could help them, as in David's case:

……. because when I initially looked it seemed kind of if you wanted to do business we can get you and it was that kind of sector, so I think and I didn't know if it would kind of, because obviously doing social work it would be ideal if you could be within that kind of role and I didn't know if there was or not. From what I could see there wasn't, but yet I didn't investigate it.

However another student, Rebecca, had not known about this new service but felt it would be really helpful for care leavers:

I really need some of that. I think for children in care you've built like pathways in your brain and it's all negative and it is trying to rebuild new pathways.

Paula was also disappointed not to have heard of it as she had benefitted from coaching at her college previously.

A few suggestions were given for the future of the care leaver service. Most important was that it should continue, as it was a lifeline to students – in particular through the advice officer, as described by Clive:

….obviously she's made a massive difference and I can't stress enough how important it is if there's ever any looking at budgets, what can we cut, what can we save, if I cannot stress the importance of keeping (care leaver officer) in place. Not just the role, but (care leaver officer) herself, because there's care leavers here now like me and other care leavers who have been here a while, who trust her and care leavers don't want to trust somebody else, they don't want to talk about what's happened with other people. She's good at what she does, massively important.

Paula too spoke of her dismay at hearing rumours that the service might be scrapped:

And then they're going to get rid of it, and it's just like, it makes such a difference. Because we haven't got families to just, like…Yeah, like, "I'm really stuck, can I have help?" Or anything like that, because we haven't got that it gives us somebody to do that with, it gives us a family at university. That's what I class it as, it's my family at university and without it I don't think I would have stayed this year. After everything that I've gone through this year with, like, my tutor and just everything else, I don't think, without (the care leaver advice officer) I wouldn't have stayed here at all.

A fee waiver or scholarship was also suggested, in addition to the existing bursary, as this might attract more able care leavers.

Another student felt it would be helpful if the service could alert academic staff to the difficulties care leavers have, particularly during the first year transition period as they were without the support of their family. Finally one student mentioned how it would be reassuring to know that one could contact the care leaver service after graduating for support after leaving the security of the university and its support services:

In one sense I'm relieved to be going, but in another sense it's a big world out there and I think whilst you're at university you're very much cocooned, it's like a little world of its own. And so if you're struggling financially there's somebody that you can go and speak to, and you can apply for certain things within the university. If it's counselling you need there's a counselling service, there are a whole manner of supports within the university. So I think that's a little bit daunting that you don't have that on the outside, I'm going to have to grow up a bit

Impact of Care on HE experience

Most of the care leavers felt being in care had had a positive impact on their education. Five of them responded in some way that they wanted to prove people wrong about children in care being unable to succeed in education. For Paula, whose mother was an alcoholic, it was important to overcome stereotypes, and also to improve her own life-chances compared to her birth mother:

Yeah, that's it, it's just the thought in my head that… I've had people tell me that I would never do this, and then my mum, she's such a mess, and I look at her and I'm just like, "Oh my god." Like, that's the only thing that she's taught me in my life is that I never want to become her, that's it, and yeah.

Three of the care leavers emphasized the fact that being in care had meant they had been given the support of the care leaver service which had had a very positive impact on them. However, three other care leavers spoke of some negative impacts, such as their emotional lows or destructive behaviour which meant they were not ready for HE. Finally one student described how going to university had made him feel out of place and different. This particular student has since failed some of his final year modules.

The care leavers were asked about their perceptions of why they had been successful in education. A number of factors were given but a key area for seven of them was the encouragement from carers to work hard. Two students mentioned their resilience or their determination to beat the system as Clive observed:

If I wasn't brought up in care I wouldn't have had the experiences I had, I wouldn't have wanted to come to university, I wouldn't have wanted to beat the system to go to university because I wouldn't have been part of a system to beat to go to university. So that's what the care system has done for me.

The birth of her child had been the turning point for Nancy who had had many care placements all over the country which meant her education and her behaviour suffered:

I went back in year nine for about eight months, came out of school, so I didn't have any GCSEs, I didn't have anything. And I've got a little one who's six, so just after she was born I found myself, kind of, having a lot of time on my hands and wanting to make sure that, you know, I'm not one these people that's just on benefits for the rest of my life and that's what she's got to look forward to. So my first act was calling the college and finding out how I could possibly come to university.

iii) Student Outcomes

A full table of outcomes for the students who responded to the survey (suitably anonymised) is provided in Appendix 3. Of the 26 students who responded to the survey, 8 had achieved a degree outcome within 4 years of commencing study, and of these, seven had achieved 'good degrees' (first or 2.1). Another nine students were due to achieve within the usual period for their programme (they had no repeated years to date). This means that 65% of the care leaver respondents were on target to achieve successfully in the usual time period. Of the remaining nine students, one has since withdrawn and two have left with a Cert HE, thus the non-continuation rate for this group is around 10% to date. Four more students are repeating their most recent year, with two progressing this year but somewhat behind the usual schedule.

iv) Staff interviews (senior tutors)

Role of the Senior Tutor

The senior tutors all viewed their role as one of managing the personal tutors that they were responsible for such as allocating tutees to the tutors; informing them of their responsibilities towards tutees by providing guidelines and in the case of at least one person, advising personal tutors on how to support students:

……….the Senior Tutor role in our School has always been at the top of the School referral system for support issues for students, both academic and pastoral and the role of the Senior Tutor in our school remains that that they're a person who can advise other staff about support networks and the route for remediation and the route for support for students. So it's a very important role, basically to support staff with issues related to student support and a gatekeeper for referrals to other systems really.

But the role does not appear to involve them formally training personal tutors as such:

…but we don't really want to move down the route of this is exactly how you should be a personal tutor.

One of the senior tutors also pointed out that new staff would have undertaken the PGCAP course (a Post-graduate Certificate in Academic Practice which is taken mainly by new lecturers) which covers personal tutoring to some degree.

Role of the Personal Tutor

All the senior tutors agreed that personal tutors should be providing both academic and personal support to their tutees. However, when shown a list of what students would like from their personal tutors (produced from the findings of a recent survey), the five differed in what academic support they thought should be provided. For example, one felt that s/he could only advise on certain subject areas:

Yes, but academic is limited, we're personal tutors not academic tutors. So in terms of generic study skills, I had one of my first year tutees come along showing me he'd got a poor mark for a [different subject area] essay, and he was showing it to me. Now, I am absolutely not qualified to talk about [that subject area] at all, and I made that clear. But I am qualified to look at the way he's referencing, how well it's structured, if the ideas appear to me to be coherent, you know, when there are gaps, all that kind of thing, yes.

Two of the others felt that some of the academic support requested should be the domain of other staff such as module leaders and year tutors (particularly queries about coursework or assignments). However, one senior tutor felt that all of the academic support listed should be provided through personal tutors except for employability support. The interviewees agreed that generic academic skills could be embedded in personal tutoring at individual or group level, and that pastoral care was appropriately the role of the personal tutor.

In terms of the skills needed to be a personal tutor, there was agreement that some staff were much more effective than others owing to their personality and their workload. There was also a view expressed that some disciplines might be more likely to have empathetic tutors than others (e.g. the social sciences compared with the physical sciences). In addition, it was felt by one respondent that staff from large schools might have less time to give to personal tutoring.

Models of personal tutoring are somewhat different between the schools currently: For instance in some schools, students would have the same tutor over the whole of their degree; in others, they had a different tutor each year so they always had tutors who actually taught them in that year. However, some of these processes were in flux to ensure alignment with the university personal tutoring policy.

Vulnerable Students Needing Support

Examples of students who had come to the respondents with concerns which were affecting their academic work included an increasing number of students with high social anxiety and those with depression and homesickness especially in the first year. One of the tutors felt this was because schools and colleges were not preparing students well enough for independent learning but were focusing more on raising attainment for league tables Another suggested that because of the DDA, students were being admitted who although they might have the academic potential could be suffering from anxiety difficulties which would not necessarily be alleviated by university admission but could be exacerbated. All these senior tutors appeared to know where to signpost students if they, themselves could not provide the necessary expertise. However, they were not sure if all their personal tutors would have this information to hand, although they did try to inform them in various ways.

Only one of the senior tutors was aware of any care leavers in their school and they knew of the care leaver service because of that. The other four were not aware of any care leavers in their school although one thought one of her tutees who was estranged from his family, might be one. Interesting, given their key role in supporting vulnerable students, they were not aware of the needs of care leavers, the care leaver service or the Frank Buttle Quality Mark.

Enhancing Support to Vulnerable Students

In terms of enhancing support to vulnerable students all the senior tutors would value training for all tutors around meeting students' needs (including care leavers). The training offered through Learning Support and Well Being around mental health issues was recognised and appreciated but this group felt that more was still needed. There was also a need for training about dealing with sensitive issues such as sexual and other physical abuse of students and how to support them.

Two of the senior tutors particularly suggested that workshops on providing appropriate support to first year students during their transition to university would be valuable for personal tutors. Training also on how to identify vulnerable students was also suggested, since if students do not disclose information, it could be difficult to recognise those who are having difficulties. Another suggestion was to introduce a professional 'triage' system prior to accepting students. This would involve medical services, including clinical psychologists, assessing students and providing support once they were admitted rather than leaving students to rely on support from their home medical services:

I think that having actual professional triaging systems I think is very important. There's - we're having more and more students with difficulties and I think there doesn't appear to have been any triaging system when they applied, do you know what I mean? In terms of nobody had the discussion of whether or not they were able to take part in the next part of their learning journey at this time.

There was also a call for more student counsellors and more efforts made to inform students of support services such as Learning Development. One of the senior tutors recommended that information about the care leaver service should be made available to all students to provide a greater chance of reaching all care leavers students.

v) Staff interviews (The Care Leaver Service)

The two members of staff heading up this service were also interviewed in March 2014 about the service's progress this year and any issues and developments that may have arisen as well as future practice.

Recent changes identified included the fact that social workers are increasingly contacting the service to find out how the students in their care are progressing, as the service becomes more widely known. Invitations to case conferences by local authorities are also on the rise. The new coaching service was trialled but with limited success. There had been no uptake of the 'transition' coaching at the time of interview (coaching open to local authorities across the region for looked after young people in transition from school to university):

so it was actually focussed on young people who had already decided to apply to Plymouth or were kind of in that application stage where they were waiting to apply. So to almost help with the transition side of things, but we haven't had any responses on that.

There was also limited up take by care leavers at for the coaching offered at the university, hence this opportunity was offered to other groups such as student mentors in school (with more success). Different ways of marketing the coaching service (including a different name) as also being considered, as is group coaching. Such coaching may be particularly targeted at final year care leavers next year to upskill them prior to graduation. The feedback from final year students this year was that that the individual coaching was too close to exams so there was just not time to do 6 coaching sessions.

The future of the care leaver service is currently secure after some concerns in the light of restructure and redundancies across the university. The two staff members are both part time, but have only been able to harness limited additional administrative assistance despite the ongoing increases in workload. Despite these limitations, there are a range of plans for future interventions to improve outreach, retention and success at PU for care leavers. These might include providing academic mentoring in schools to enable more long term academic support for applying to university. There is also the possibility of having outreach events with a wider remit than solely care leavers, but with places ring fenced for this group. Another idea is to campaign for personal educational plans (PEPs) to include a question about going to HE. Currently the question tends not to be present so conversations around the topic do not take place:

Plus it ideally needs to be on their form or some of their PEP form or whatever it may be, that if they don't go into education when they leave school at 18 now and they go and get a job, if it's on their plan and they come back before they're 25, they can still get support from their Local Authority, but it needs to be on their Personal Education Plan to say they were thinking about it. If it's not on there that's a bit of a get out clause, they can say well you didn't really think about it, we can't support you.

So we're trying to say to students you need to think about it, even if it's not when you're 18 maybe go away - so they're starting to think about it and they're starting to speak to their social workers so it goes on their plan, just to help them.

In terms of the service at Plymouth University, the staff would like to align and integrate their management systems with other university systems (such as DAS) to make notification of eligibility for the care leaver bursary easier. There have been difficulties in the past picking up care leavers who enter via the partner colleges but a tick box has now been included on the direct entry and transfer forms in an effort to improve uptake of services from these sources. The service is also working directly with the partner colleges in an effort to identify future direct entry care leavers.

The service would also like to do more work on transition and settling into the university. One possibility is drawing up a partnership agreement with care leavers as to what they can expect from the service and what the service expects of them – for example a termly meeting where targets are set which are reviewed the following term. On a more domestic note, the storage of care leavers' effects is being considered when they go back to foster carers during vacations or when they have to vacate their university accommodation once a year for cleaning week. Closer collaboration with other south west HEIs is also on the agenda and a project to encourage students from pupil referral units to come into the university for taster sessions and shadowing is underway.

There are plans to make a video about the service to go on the PU website in an attempt to improve staff awareness which is currently poor:

Not at the moment, although we're currently doing a video, a day in the life video with Young Devon and a group of looked after young people that will show all the similarities and differences of their life hopefully and that

we're hoping to use as a tool that it could be up on our bit of the website, where we could actually start running some sessions, some information sessions.

Many staff have little understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups and further work is needed on education and encouraging greater empathy for students at risk, or those with mental health problems. Finally there is an attempt to get consistency of support packages and collaboration with local authorities as this is currently very patchy.

Conclusions:

It is clear from the findings described above that the experience of care leavers at Plymouth University is mixed. Whilst they are mostly happy with their choice to come to university – and to choose Plymouth as a destination – they nonetheless encounter varied levels of support both within and beyond the university. There is without doubt some excellent work taking place at Plymouth and the offer from the care leaver service is vital in supporting and retaining these students. The care leaver advice officer offers a very successful alternative to the rather ineffective coroprate parenting models seen in much of the sector. But there is more work to be done to ensure that we can continue to offer this level of support as numbers of students from this group increase. The fact that some students are still unable to access the care leaver bursary raises questions about how we can increase awareness of this important financial benefit. In addition, support across the university for students at risk is not yet as consistent as we might like, and the concerns about 'belonging' which have been reported in this research (and in our other work on other non-traditional students) require a concerted response by all university staff. It is important to note that care leaver students are achieving well despite their difficult life circumstances – but the need for further support on graduation is an area which should be explored more fully.

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Appendix 1: Support Provided by Universities to Care Leavers

As part of this project, examples of the support provided at other UK universities were examined. The Who Cares Trust has published a handbook that sets out the support provided for care leavers by HEIs throughout England and Scotland in 2 separate editions (Who Cares Trust, 2013). Each institution has a page outlining their support including a checklist of support which includes: Website for care leavers; Outreach; Pre-application help; Contact offer holders; Financial advice; 365 days accommodation; Careers and post-graduation support; Named officer for care leavers. There is also a box to outline other support or to enlarge on the checklist supports. Some universities offer much more than others.

The use of action learning groups for instance has worked favourably for STEM care leaver students at Kingston University (Cole et al., 2012). The approach involves a small group (action learning set) of care leavers, managed by a facilitator, coming together to discuss current experience on their work such as study and environmental factors. The group will question, analyse and explore each of the tabled issues being presented by its members so providing a multi-faceted perspective on the issues and ideas are suggested for possible solutions.

Several universities provide mentoring support to care leavers either from existing care leaver students or staff such as at Greenwich University:

> *Mentoring projects which are specifically aimed to help care leavers settle into university life and to provide academic support throughout their time at university* (The Who Cares Trust, 2013, p. 105)

Edinburgh Napier University has 3 dedicated documents specifically in respect of care leavers and their support (Chirnside, 2009).

1. Care Leavers Plan of Commitment which sets out plans of action at every stage of the care leavers' journey to and at the University such as, recruitment; admissions; support for living; academic Support: pre-entry, transition, ongoing; training for staff; and the monitoring of commitment.

2. Care Leavers at Edinburgh Napier University, Guidelines for Staff. The purpose of these guidelines was to: update staff on developments regarding care leavers joining the University, specifically Edinburgh Napier's Plan of Commitment to Care Leavers; to inform staff about the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark; to raise staff awareness of the potential needs of students who have spent time in local authority care; to offer guidance to staff for working with students who have been in care; to signpost additional sources of help across the institution.

3. Meeting the needs of Care Leavers Code of Practice. The purpose of this document is to set out the actions identified in the Plan of Commitment to Care Leavers. The document is designed both to inform internal and external readers about the provision for care leavers and to ensure those responsible within the Institution are aware of the actions required of them.

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Appendix 2: Coaching and Mentoring Literature Review

This short review was undertaken to inform the care leaver service of current coaching practice particularly life coaching practice and relevant academic research about its use and impact. In undertaking this review over 80 research articles and books were accessed as well as relevant websites such as that of the International Coaching Federation. The key authors are located in the UK, the US and Australia although articles from other countries were also accessed such as from Denmark and Germany in the growing life coaching literature. Key areas that will be discussed include: Origins and History; Definitions and Approaches; and Coaching Research Literature.

1. Origins and History

The term coaching itself is thought to have derived from the early forms of transportation, i.e. stagecoach or rail coach and literally means to transport someone from one place to another (Starr 2008) cited by Bora et al. (2010, p. 460). The origins of coaching practice are also discussed by Bora et al. (2010) who cites Skiffington and Zeus (2003) noting that present day coaching approaches:

> *"grew out of the theories and practices of Rogerian counselling based on humanistic   psychology and have philosophical roots in constructivism and existentialism."* (p.459).

Other authors describe how coaching draws upon several different areas of science particularly the behavioural sciences as well as adult education and philosophy (Grant, 2005).

2. Definitions and Approaches

The literature abounds with different definitions of coaching (Grant, 2005, Lindgren, 2011, Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011) as practitioners and researchers endeavour to give credence to it as a discipline. Grant (2005) defined professional coaching as:

> *an emerging cross-disciplinary occupation, its primary purpose being to enhance wellbeing,*
> *improve performance and facilitate individual and occupation, its primary purpose being to*
> *enhance wellbeing, improve performance and facilitate individual and organisational change*   (p.1)

More recently Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) defined coaching after reviewing other authors' definitions as:

> *a Socratic based dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (Client) where the*
> *majority of interventions used by the facilitator are open questions which are aimed at   stimulating the self awareness and personal responsibility of the participant.* (p.5)

These authors also argue that both group and team coaching could also be covered by this definition as similar coaching techniques could be used despite different coach-coachee relationships.

There are also a number of different coaching approaches, models and frameworks involving a range of client or coachee populations and their issues or concerns such as relationship difficulties, careers coaching and performance coaching (Grant, 2005, Passmore, 2010). The latter author distinguishes between skills coaching, performance coaching and developmental coaching as well as discussing the features of executive, workplace and life coaching. Executive Coaching refers to coaching of top management in organisations to improve strategic planning and presentation skills, anger and stress management, team building and leadership

development. Workplace Coaching entails day to day coaching by line managers to improve their staff productivity, work force skills and job requirements. Life Coaching on the other hand is centred on more personal issues and usually is not conducted in the workplace. Its more holistic approach often focuses on work/life balance, managing finances and developing new career directions (Grant, 2005). There has been however reportedly persistent confusion in the literature as to the definition of life coaching with terms such as life style coaching, personal coaching and relationship coaching for instance also appearing in the literature around this time (Campbell and Gardner,2005). Spence and Grant, (2005) claim that, despite the range of definitions, approaches and applications around professional coaching there were common themes:

…the core constructs of professional coaching include a helping, collaborative and egalitarian rather than authoritarian relationship between coach and client; a focus on finding solutions in preference to analysing problems (p.1)

They also outlined further features such as the clients in coaching being from non-clinical populations (i.e. without high mental health issues); the coaching process involving collaborative goal setting and attaining; and the coach needing expertise in facilitating learning but not needing necessarily an expertise in the client's particular area of concern. A later article by Grant et al. (2010) describes the goal setting involved in the coaching process in more detail:

*In essence the coaching process facilitates goal attainment by helping individuals to: (i) identify desired outcomes, (ii) establish specific goals, (iii) enhance motivation by identifying strengths and building self-efficacy, (iv) identify resources and formulate specific action plans, (v) monitor and evaluate progress towards goals, and (vi) modify action plans based on feedback. (*p.3)

Bora et al. (2010) outline various stages in the coaching process: Set the scene for coaching; get to know the person, their present state and their desired state; support the person in setting goals and jointly agree action; review progress and learning, reflect, give constructive feedback, work out what is working, explore options; and then continue learning through self-coaching.

Mentoring and coaching sometimes get confused but there are key differences (Greif, 2013). The mentor is often a senior in their occupational field and has not necessarily received specific training in mentoring. The coach in contrast has usually received a professional education, but does not come from the same occupational field as the coachee. The expected outcomes of both interventions also differ. Mentoring mainly aims at career development and building social networks. Individual coaching is wider in its scope. It can support the coachee in a variety of goals, such as effective self- and stress management, team communication, conflict resolution, better work-life balance and in some cases also career developmental goals, amongst others (Passmore et al. 2013). As with coaching, however, there are varying definitions of mentoring in the literature. Mendes (2011), for instance, who particularly focuses upon mentoring for care leavers, defines mentoring in a broader sense:

Mentoring is generally defined as a one-to-one relationship in which a committed voluntary helper provides support and encouragement via role modelling to a younger or less experienced person. (p.1)

Another similar definition in respect of mentoring for care leavers, cited by Clayden and Stein (2005), was that used by the Princes Trust in their original Leaving Care Projects:

Mentoring is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual mentor voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This is typically developed at a time of transition in the

mentee's life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period of time. (Active   Community Unit, Home Office, www.mandbf.org.uk/mentoring_and_befriending/25) (p. 12)

Differing types of mentors have been used with care leavers including transitional life skills mentors who help young care leavers coming out of care by providing social support and business mentors who help care leavers with job placement and career development for instance (Mendes, 2011). Key characteristics identified in the literature around mentoring are its voluntary and non-judgemental nature and the trusting relationship with the mentor which brings a different relationship to professional help (Mendes, 2011). This is very important for care leavers who often mistrust professionals because of their previous negative experiences with them while in care.

Mentoring programmes with care leavers can aim for soft outcomes such as self- esteem and personal development (Clayden and Stein, 2005) or hard outcomes such as improving literacy and numeracy skills (Mendes, 2011). Most literature around the use of mentoring and the education of care leavers seem to focus on encouraging care leavers to continue with their education after they leave care (Clayden and Stein,2005). Most mentoring programmes in the UK appear to be conducted within specialist leaving care teams which provide ongoing assistance not just with education but also other areas such as housing, health, employment, and relationship building (Clayden and Stein 2005). It is recognised in the literature that mentoring programmes alone cannot improve the life chances of care leavers but they can increase their resilience and encourage them to access other support services (Mendes, 2011).

3. Coaching Research Literature

Coaching is a relatively new discipline in the research literature (Lindgren, 2011; Grant and Cavanagh, 2007). The need for evidenced based research has been seen as vital to establish a theoretical base and therefore credibility for coaching research (Grant, 2001, 2005, Linley, 2006):

> *If coaching is to overcome the potential stigma of "faddism", then it needs to rest on a solid foundation. This foundation should be one of shared empirically validated knowledge, rigorous   peer-reviewed publishing, a common language, and clear and explicit links to the wider   knowledge base. In short, coaching needs to be evidence-based.* (Grant, 2005, p.1).

Grant (2004) also noted that coaches themselves increasingly need *"to ground their practice in a solid theoretical understanding and empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of "one size fits all" proprietary coaching system."* (p.1)

A number of challenges have been identified in establishing a body of knowledge on coaching including foremost the need for a formal definition (Stober and Parry, 2005, Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Other challenges include the need for a community of coaching researchers, forums for dissemination and publication of research and sources of research funding. Areas identified for research included developing appropriate methodologies; including measures to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching; developing coaching process theories and identifying what makes for effective coaching. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) discussed the maturation of coaching research in establishing its theoretical base in the literature starting with efforts to define itself followed by:

> *A shift from exploration through survey and case studies to theory development using grounded theory and similar qualitative techniques to quantitative studies using random control trials with   large sample sizes, and ultimately to meta-analysis studies.* (p.2)

A number of areas of coaching have been researched during the past 15 years such as Coach Behaviour studies; Coach-Client relationship studies; and Coaching Impact studies (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). An overview of the peer-reviewed academic psychology literature on coaching, in normal adult populations in 2003, showed only 98 citations, with only 17 of these being empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of coaching interventions. All of these were concerned with evaluating work-related or executive coaching within work or organisational settings; none were in relation to life coaching (Grant, 2003). Jackson (2005) discusses the lack of empirical studies as being a product of how coaching was being defined in arguing that definitions at that time provided an inadequate foundation for theoretical and evaluative research. A bibliography undertaken in 2011 however showed the dramatic increase in academic workplace, executive and life coaching research studies in the previous ten years (Grant, 2011).

Types of outcome measures from coaching are numerous (Greif, 2007). This author discusses such measures under two headings: (1) general measures of success; and (2) specific outcome measures. Client satisfaction and degree of goal attainment assessed by ratings for instance are given as examples of general measures. The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) is an example of a specific outcome measure. The author sets out a number of validated outcomes measures which have been used successfully in coaching research to that point in time. Spence at al. (2007a) discuss the development and validation of a specific scale for measuring goal attainment from coaching. In addition, a self-report measure to assess the skills of coaches has been developed and validated, the Goal-focused Coaching Skills Questionnaire (GCSQ) (Grant and Cavanagh, 2007).

Life Coaching
Life coaching became very popular with those seeking to improve their personal life experience whether in relationships, work or health. However the increased popularity of life coaching was not initially matched by related theory and research so it came in for much criticism (Spence and Grant, 2005, Grant, 2005). Life coaching has attracted practitioners from several fields such as psychology and educational learning development but because there is currently no regulation of the life coach industry, life coaches differ in levels of training and experience and hence skills and methods (Senior, 2007). It is only recently that psychology has embraced life coaching and it is increasingly being aligned to the new emerging areas of coaching psychology and positive psychology (Kaufman, 2006, Green et al. 2007, Grant and Cavendish, 2007, Biswas-Diene, 2009) which focus less on problematic areas *'but more on identifying the behaviours, thinking patterns and emotional functioning that leads to positive wellbeing and goal attainment.* (Grant and Cavendish, 2007, p.1).

Life coaching and its research base appears to have undertaken a similar but later journey to other coaching studies such as executive and work place coaching over the past 15 years or so (perhaps because of confusions over definition), but has now progressed from case studies to randomised control trials and meta analysis with the increasing involvement of psychology academics, covering similar areas as those mentioned by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) above. Life coaching and accompanying research has been practiced most commonly in non-workplace environments but is increasingly being used in the work place. It has less often been used in educational settings (Lindgren 2011) although this is increasing as with health settings (Newnham-Kanas et al., 2009).

Attributes of a coach
The results from a small scale qualitative UK study involving executive coaching concluded that coachees seek certain behaviours but also particular personal attributes in a coach (Passmore, 2010). Key behaviours and attributes identified, which also could be applied to life coaches, were:

……. common sense, confidentiality, being collaborative, setting take-away tasks, balancing challenge and support, stimulating problem-solving, effective communication, staying focused, containing emotions, helping develop alternative perspectives, use of a variety of focusing tools and techniques and use of self as a tool. (p.1)

Grant and Cavanagh (2007) developed a scale to measure the attributes needed in coaching, which was successful in distinguishing between professional and non-professional coaches and was adapted for coachees to give their ratings of their coaches. Greif (2007) describes a questionnaire instrument for a summative evaluation of coaching quality and by clients which could be used for any coaching approach. More recently peer coaching in educational settings where older students coached younger students was investigated in the UK to explore the benefits of being a secondary school student coach rather than the benefits to the coachee (Nieuwerburgh and Tong, 2013). Findings from the study suggested that coaching training could produce a range of benefits to the students undertaking the training, such as improved study and communication skills as well as increased emotional intelligence.

There is a risk to clients where coaches are not trained in mental health issues which could mean that they do not detect mental illness such as depression or anxiety and could do more harm than good (Cavanagh, 2005):

> *One example of where coaching may cause harm is the case of depressed clients. Coaching involves goal-setting, often using stretch goals. However, depressed clients face significant difficulties in initiating and maintaining goal-directed behaviour. The coach can unknowingly encourage them to set goals beyond their current capability — indeed, such clients may seek to set such goals unprompted, hoping this will help them overcome their lack of energy and motivation. Failure to achieve these goals can further entrench a sense of despair and hopelessness* (Cavanagh, 2005, p.22)

Grant (2007) also cited research that showed that some coachees have high levels of depression, anxiety or stress (Spence and Grant, 2007b). Consequently it is crucial that coaches have a high level of understanding of the issues related to mental health. Interestingly Bora et al. (2010) demonstrate the positive outcomes for patients with mental health concerns from life coaching rather than from traditional mental health services which try to diminish their symptoms *rather than towards life coaching, which seeks to develop resilience, strengths and performance.* (Bora et al., 2010, p.459).

A few but increasing number of studies have focused on coach-client relationships and which particular elements prove successful. For example, O'Broin and Palmer (2008) discussed empathy as a key element of the relationship. A recent study showed that the best predictor of coaching success was a goal-focused coach–coachee relationship rather than other aspects of the relationship such as satisfaction with the coaching relationship (Grant, 2014).

Impact of coaching
The first peer reviewed empirical evaluation of the impact of life coaching (i.e. coaching in a non-work or organisational setting), was Grant's 2003 paper in which he demonstrated that a life-coaching programme at an Australian university with 20 post graduate students in groups of 10, positively influenced self-reported mental health, quality of life and goal-attainment (Grant 2003). Similarly another later Australian study reported that life coaching with self-selected adults from a non-clinical population, enhanced their striving for goals, wellbeing and hope (Green et al., 2006). Both studies used so called cognitive behavioural solution focussed (CB-SF) approaches to life coaching (Grant, 2001, 2010). Grant (2001) described this approach as:

> *a collaborative, solution-focused, result-oriented systematic process during which coaches facilitate coachees' self-directed learning, personal growth, and goal attainment* (p.1)

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A later study found greater effectiveness in enhancing the goal approach with solution focused coaching questions than with problem focused questions (Grant and O'Connor, 2010). The Green et al. (2006) study used a randomised control trial (RCT) methodology in studying the impact of such coaching while both studies used various validated quantitative measures to ascertain the impact of the coaching programme.

Another RCT study of the CB-SF approach used in both individual professional life coaching and group peer coaching but using the same coaching content, indicated that individual life coaching with a professional coach was more effective than peer group life coaching although significant improvements in goal-attainment were noted for both coaching groups (Spence and Grant, 2005). However, only two of the subjective and psychological wellbeing variables used to measure impact showed any significant improvement (satisfaction with life and environmental mastery), perhaps because the groups were screened for psychopathology prior to being selected to take part. A later RCT study in the UK that used only group peer coaching with a coach facilitator, found significant effects on various self-report measures for general happiness, psychological well-being, satisfaction with life, self-efficacy, positive emotion and hope for those self-selected participants who undertook the coaching compared with the control group who did not (Style and Boniwell, 2010).

An American study with college students used a coaching approach called Co-active coaching which is similar to the CB-SF approach used in the above studies (Newnham-Kanas, 2009). The study used an experimental/ control group design and found a significant change in the experimental group in terms of general self-efficacy as measured by pre and post-test questionnaires. Interviews with the experimental group also indicated that coaching had improved academic performance and personal lives (Steinwedel, 2001). Another American study in 2006 used the same co active approach as well as qualitative methods to study the moment at which client participants experienced the desired change through the coaching experience. Diaries were used to capture this experience as and when it happened and questionnaires and interviews were employed to study the after effects of the change moment on beliefs and behaviour (Longhurst, 2006 cited by Grant, 2011, p. 68).

A Danish study used a different type of group coaching with high school students called narrative collaborative coaching with the intention of the participants sharing with and learning from each other. The authors describe this approach in this way:

> *Narrative-collaborative group coaching can be understood as a community psychological intervention that supports the development of durable social networks which help the individual strengthen his/her ability to handle challenging career situations and life in general* (Stelter et al, 2011, p.123).

The group process has three main dimensions: Focusing on and reflecting about values; providing opportunities in meaning making; and allowing space for the unfolding of narratives. The approach was used in an RCT involving 77 high school students who were also talented at sports with multiple commitments in both academic and sporting worlds. The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the group coaching approach on career development, self-reflection and the general functioning of these young athletes. A pre and post questionnaire was used for this purpose, measuring recovery/stress, motivation and action control and qualitative interviews were also conducted with a sample of the coaching participants. Results showed that the group-coaching intervention had a significant effect on the scores for social recovery and general well-being. The qualitative study showed that group coaching participants particularly valued the shared process of meaning-making.

Two other recent studies used approaches based on Coaching Psychology and Positive Psychology. Firstly a recent UK study was set in a secondary school where coaching for learning was given by teachers trained in coaching psychology. It investigated how the use of coaching strategies in enquiry-based learning would influence the development of students' positive learning dispositions and their identities as learners (Wang, 2012). The outcomes from the coaching included increases in critical curiosity, meaning making, creativity, learning relationships and learning engagement. The author concluded however that coaching for learning may be different to life coaching:

> *I discovered that students expected a balance between 'teaching' elements and 'coaching'*
> *elements, which indicated that coaching for learning in secondary education could not be the   same*
> *as life coaching or executive coaching in terms of the knowledge construction approach.* (p.182).

In Australia, a recent RCT compared the CB-CF approach to coaching with interventions from Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology with high school students from 2 different schools (Green et al., 2013). The findings indicated that both types of proactive mental health interventions have great potential to contribute to the well-being and academic goal striving of an adolescent population. A very recent meta-analysis of coaching impact studies including life coaching studies indicated that coaching has significant positive effects on performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes and goal-directed self-regulation (Theeboom et al., 2014).

A number of studies have focused on the use of life coaching in schools for both academic development and other outcomes for students such as improvements in levels of hope and hardiness with some significant findings (Campbell and Gardner, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Passmore and Brown, 2009). Few studies exist however which involve university undergraduate students as coaching participants. An exception (aside from those in Australia and the US mentioned above), was a UK study using peer coaching of third year psychology undergraduates in an experimental/control group trial to measure the impact of the coaching on the students' well-being (Short et al., 2010). The five sessions of coaching came before an examination period for both the experimental and control group. The students who were peer coached had significantly lower levels of distress and enhanced problem solving abilities than the matched control group. The authors concluded that peer coaching had potential value in helping students manage wellbeing during potentially stressful periods.

Another study in the US used life coaching with university athletes. The aim was to foster hope in these young people through the coaching intervention and so improve athletic and academic performance (Rolo and Gould, 2007). However, the programme encountered only limited success. Nonetheless, the use of professional coaching of college and university students in the US has been found to improve retention rates (Bettinger and Baker, 2011), and a Canadian study involving co-active coaching to support female university students in reducing obesity reported some positive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Zandvoort et al., 2007). Several other studies have also focused on various health-related outcomes (Newnham-Kanas et al., 2009). These have included studies involving students with learning difficulties such as ADHD in higher and further education in the US (Parker et al., 2013; Field et al., 2013; and Richman et al., 2014). The studies highlighted various positive outcomes for students with ADHD including improvements in self-awareness, self-management and subjective well-being as well as positive academic experiences and outcomes.

Only one study was found that used a similar technique to that used at Plymouth University in that the programme was delivered online (Poepsel, 2011). This study was a PhD thesis set in the US. The aim of the study was to measure the effectiveness of an online evidence-based coaching programme in regard to goal attainment, subjective well-being and level of hope as measured through pre and post-test of validated measures. Internet users were recruited via various web sites and randomly assigned to an experimental or control group. The coaching was delivered over an 8 week period exclusively online through a series of

structured exercises and open discussions. Significant findings included the goal attainment and subjective well-being of the experimental group compared with the control group but there was no such significant finding in relation to levels of hope.

No research literature was found that featured coaching specifically with care leavers either at university or elsewhere. There was however some literature about mentoring of care leavers, some of which reported successful outcomes (Mendes, 2011) including educational aspects. Mendes (2011) reviewed the literature on mentoring and care leavers noting the origins of such programmes in the UK established by the Prince's Trust and the National Children's Bureau programme which now operate successfully also in Canada and the USA. He summarized the research findings as follows:

Mentoring programs may add a new dimension to existing leaving care supports. They appear to assist with achieving both instrumental goals such as improving access to education and employment and reducing at risk behaviour, and expressive goals such as enhanced self- confidence and social connection. (p.8)

The use of mentoring with care leavers at university does not appear to have been researched at present although several universities in the UK offer peer or staff mentoring to care leavers. University students with a care background have also been used to mentor school age young people in an effort to encourage them to university.

Conclusion

In conclusion coaching is an emerging discipline which has gone through some uncertain times but is now increasingly aligned to Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology with research underpinning it. The impact studies of coaching discussed here have showed some impressive results and it is clear that there have been some significant positive outcomes for coachees in several areas including academic learning, well being, quality of life and health related outcomes. Research into the requirements of a successful coach is less prevalent but the training and skills of the coach must include knowledge and understanding of mental health issues so that if needs be a coachee can be referred elsewhere if coaching might make matters worse although there is some evidence that life coaching can improve mental health if delivered by appropriately trained professionals.

The research literature also shows that mentoring can prove successful with care leavers in several areas as they transition from care to independent living:

The rationale behind mentoring programs is that care leavers are often socially excluded from mainstream social and economic systems. They lack the social support networks typically utilized by young people as they transition from child welfare dependence to adult independence. Many face independence alone and isolated without a safety net of extended family, friends, and wider community supports such as neighbours, school teachers, sports coaches, and religious or cultural acquaintances. Mendes, 2011, p.1)

Care leavers often have a mistrust of professionals and are reluctant to seek support so an unknown coach introduced at university might mean they decline to take part in a programme of coaching in contrast to mentoring with a known and trusted person. This may indicate that the role would be better taken by trusted university staff as mentors, or older care leaver students mentoring younger ones.

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Appendix 3: Enrolments Summary for Care Leavers (as of 30/09/14)

Faculty	School	Programme	Outcome	Latest APM
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Computing and Mathematics	BSc (Hons) Mathematics	3 years, successful	1
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Nursing and Midwifery	BSc (Hons) Nursing (Child Health)	3 years, successful	2:1
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Nursing and Midwifery	BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult)	3 years, successful	2:1
Faculty of Business	Plymouth Law School	BSc (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies	3 years, successful	2:1
Faculty of Business	Plymouth School of Government	BSc (Hons) Public Services (Policing)	Stage 3 direct entry, successful	2:1
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Psychology	BSc (Hons) Psychology	4 years, successful	1
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Computing and Mathematics	BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering	4 years with FD, successful	2:1
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Biological Sciences	BSc (Hons) Conservation Biology	4 years, successful, changed prog	2:2
Faculty of Business	Plymouth School of Tourism and Hospitality	BSc (Hons) Events Management	3 years, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Health Professions	BA (Hons) Social Work	2nd year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	Plymouth Institute of Education	BA (Hons) Education Studies	2nd year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Business	Plymouth School of Government	BSc (Hons) International Relations	2nd year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Business	Plymouth Law School	BSc (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies with Psychology	1st year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences	BSc (Hons) Extended Science	1st year, on track	MAY PROCEED

Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Health Professions	BA (Hons) Social Work	1st year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Computing and Mathematics	BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering with Foundation Year	1st year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Business	Plymouth School of Tourism and Hospitality	BSc (Hons) International Hospitality Management	1st year, on track	MAY PROCEED
Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry	School of Biomedical & Healthcare Sciences	BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science	2 years, needs to repeat 2nd year	REPEAT
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Health Professions	BA (Hons) Social Work	4 years including 2 year FD	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Psychology	BSc (Hons) Psychology	4 years, changed prog. & retook 2nd year, needs to do 3rd year	MAY PROCEED
Faculty of Business	Plymouth Business School	BA (Hons) Business Administration	3 years, changed prog., needs to repeat final year	REPEAT
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Marine Science and Engineering	BSc (Hons) Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology	3 years including extended science. Needs to repeat 2nd year	REPEAT
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Marine Science and Engineering	BSc (Hons) Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology	6 years, needs to repeat final year	REPEAT
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Marine Science and Engineering	BSc (Hons) Marine Biology and Oceanography	1st year, outcome CERT	CERT
Faculty of Science and Environment	School of Computing and Mathematics	BSc (Hons) Computer Science	2 years, changed prog. CERT outcome	CERT
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences	School of Psychology	BSc (Hons) Psychology with Sociology	1st year, withdrawm	WITHDRAWN