

Children in Care/ Care Leaver Strategy



Written by: Welfare Manager
Version 2 (Nov 2022)

1.0 Background

Exeter College (hereafter referred to as *the College*) is committed to supporting and improving the outcomes for all vulnerable learners. We aim to enhance their experience, personal development and progression opportunities. The College believes in opportunity for all and constantly strives to remove barriers to learning for those learners who may have been subject to negative life experiences: social, emotional and educational. This Strategy relates specifically to learners who are identified as children in care (CIC), and care leavers (CL).

The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Ensure - as much as possible - that young people in care and Care Leavers succeed in their chosen College place;
- Help Care Leavers and Young People in care to maximise their achievement, personal development and success in College;
- Facilitate the effective working of College staff and Care Leavers / Young People in care, to ensure the maximum levels of progress for each learner;
- Provide early identification of (and intervention for) additional support needs, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.

This Strategy will provide the vehicle by which the College can ensure a robustness of the systems and processes that are aimed at supporting the engagement, admission, support and progression of CIC/CL, whilst developing a consistent approach across all programme areas and with the Local Authority. This focussed approach aims to provide this particular cohort of learners with a supportive and inclusive learning experience whilst studying at the College, as well as providing them with opportunities to develop their confidence and motivation to succeed, and become well-rounded, well-prepared young adults.

The College has successfully gained, for two years running commended status in the AoC Beacon Awards, as a result of the systems, processes and support mechanisms specifically aimed at the admission, support and progression of CIC/CL. The College was instrumental in developing the original Protocol Agreement between FE Colleges and the local authority, with the guidance of the Permanence and Transition Team and the Virtual School. The agreement provides for the sharing between partners of information in relation to CIC/CL who have expressed a wish to study at the College.

2.0 Scope of the Strategy

This Strategy applies to all identified CIC/CL up to and including age 25 (in line with social care arrangements) studying a course at Exeter College, including full-time, part-time further and higher education courses, and work-based learning. It applies to all staff working with this group of learners, whatever their specific role. The Strategy also provides a framework to ensure an awareness and understanding of the particular needs of this group of learners.

3.0 The College Vision

The College aims to provide all learners with an equal opportunity to have a positive experience at Exeter College, and the support to reach their full potential, irrespective of their gender, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion, marital status, age, disability, learning difficulties, sexual orientation or preference, unemployment, language, culture or social background. The College vision for CIC/CL is to provide them with the necessary support and guidance to achieve an equal opportunity, so that they are able to progress to further/higher education and/or training or employment, and be prepared for wider life experiences. In order to provide CIC/CL with an equal opportunity, early identification is needed to provide them with a tailored experience from pre-entry through to progression. The College therefore aims to provide the following support to all CIC/CL:

- Provide impartial pre-entry guidance on FE/HE
- Ensure guidance events are accessible, e.g. open events, and that costs are not a barrier to participation. Wherever needed, the College will provide a flexible and bespoke programme of guidance, tailored to the individual needs of the learner.
- Effectively publicise college support for CIC/CLs to the Virtual school, local authorities, etc, who are supporting young people in their educational progression.
- Ensure early identification of applicants and establish contact with them and their support network (social worker, carer, previous school etc.) as appropriate.
- Ensure that the individual's circumstances are reflected in the support offered and accommodated within processes related to application and other funding provision.

- Offer personal support before the learner starts their programme of study and put in place arrangements for any continuing support (post-enrolment) as required.
- Have a Designated Contact ('DC') who is the College's Welfare Manager. The Welfare Manager has a lead responsibility for CIC/CLs. The Welfare Manager acts as a key point of contact and advisor for CIC/CLs, and works with the College Advice and Admissions teams to provide support prior to and upon entry, as well as with Tutors, Lecturers, Faculty Heads and support services throughout the individual learner's programme of study at the College.
- Ensure that the Designated Contact for CIC/CLs is the link between the young person, social worker and college staff.
- Ensure information on the full range of support offered to CIC/CLs is readily available and easily accessible (financial, welfare, wellbeing and academic).
- Work with the Director of Student Services and Virtual School to offer cross-college staff training on issues affecting CIC/CLs.
- Provide impartial progression guidance relating to further study (e.g. FE to HE) or employment, and where relevant, support transition to higher education or employment.
- Encourage academic progression onto further FE courses and HE provision.

4.0 Transition Support

Support for young people who are vulnerable starts pre-enrolment. Applications are filtered, and where a young person has declared that they are a CIC/CL, then their application will come to the 'transition panel'. The transition panel meets on a regular basis and looks at each identified application and what support needs there are for the applicant. The Designated Contact (Welfare Manager) sits on this panel, along with other cross-college members of staff.

The transition process allows the college to request further information, with the aim of ensuring maximum support for young people from the outset. Identifying this group of students at this early stage also allows the College's Welfare Manager to make contact with the CIC/CL in the months leading up to the start of term, set up the Vulnerable Bursary, put in place travel arrangements, order kit and essential uniform, and talk to the young person about any concerns or issues that they have in relation to starting at college. The Welfare Manager has regular contact with

the PEP Support Officer and Post 16 Advocate at Devon County Council, and attends the last Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting at the young person's school.

'Transition' also refers to the process of leaving the college onto next steps. The Welfare Manager works with the young person, their Social Worker/Personal Advisor and the Future Steps Team (where appropriate) to ensure a smooth transition and progression. This can include assisting the access to any financial support or putting the young person in contact with the Care Leavers' representative at a University.

5.0 Supporting learners through admissions and enrolment

Issues for CIC/CLs can include:

| SYMPTOM | PREVENTATIVE/RESTORATIVE ACTIONS |
|--|---|
| Feeling different or fearing being singled out because they are a CIC/CL – so they do not disclose | Early meetings with the DC (designated contact) to dispel any areas of mistrust or fear of education caused by previous experiences |
| Coming (or returning) from another borough and therefore not having friends in the college – no social network/isolation | Encourage social interaction, e.g. clubs, youth forums, extra-curricular activity (EXtra), to promote the development of friendships |
| Financial support needs | Targeted financial support via the vulnerable bursary for things like travel, equipment, trips, and lunch. This is tailored to each individual's needs through liaison with the Social Worker and Carer |
| Not knowing what support is available (pastoral or academic) | Enhanced IAG through a discreet meeting with the DC or wellbeing team and/or any other support person |

| | |
|--|--|
| Not sure which course they want to study or what career they want to aim for | Early links with careers/progression team ('Future Steps'), as needed |
| 'Nomadic' education experience, leading to disengagement with learning | 1:1 support and encouragement with a view to facilitating independence, monitoring progress, involvement in decision making regarding their own performance and progress |
| Learning needs | Targeted support at the earliest opportunity, e.g. referral to Student Support. |
| Potential not being realised | Targeted support at the earliest opportunity, e.g. 1:1 check-ins and support |
| Lack of concentration or inability to stay on task | Targeted support at the earliest opportunity, e.g. assessment of additional learning needs |
| Behavioural/emotional issues | Targeted support at the earliest opportunity, e.g. from their Tutor, the Wellbeing team, Counsellor, or DC |

6.0 Involving CIC/CLs in decision making and review of support

| ACTION | RESPONSIBILITY | WHEN |
|--|--|--|
| The DC will work with the young person, their tutor and the identified social worker, to ensure that all support is in place and that learners are involved in decision making about their support and progression within the college. | DC, Tutor, Virtual School Head, Social Worker, Carer | Pre enrolment/on entry, throughout programme |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The DC will pass on relevant support information to the young person's tutor to ensure that they get the correct support with their learning. | DC, Tutor, Virtual School Head, Social Worker, Carer | Pre interview, on entry, throughout programme as needed |
| When required, the DC will carry out a mentoring role and liaise with personal tutors as part of the pastoral support system. This will provide an opportunity for learners to shape their learning experience, e.g. agreeing relevant targets. | DC / Tutors | As required |
| The DC will ensure learners' satisfactory progress by taking part in discussions with other stakeholders regarding their programme of support. This will offer further opportunity to review the impact of support on the learners' experience. | DC (support team)/Tutors/Social worker, Virtual School Head, Carer. | As required. |

7.0 The benefits of successful engagement, admissions and completion for CIC/CL

| BENEFICIARIES | BENEFITS |
|--|--|
| Learners (and their Carers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will receive early support and guidance, e.g. enhanced IAG, targeted support, informal tour of the College, transition meetings. • Familiarisation with college expectations e.g. attendance, commitment, behaviour, ethos, progression support and opportunities. • Provision of information regarding Safeguarding/Wellbeing, support, contact names/faces. |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Tutors/Lecturers/Support Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutors and other relevant staff are aware, early on, of vulnerable learners and their support needs. • Tutors are aware of any issues in past education that may affect learning, behaviour, or attendance, which will require intervention strategies, e.g. advocacy, targeted support, early one to one meetings. • Tutors will know to involve the DC and any other relevant support as advocates for the learners, in the case of misconduct issues or concerns about attendance, work completion, behaviour etc. |
| The College | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the college meets the criteria of the Virtual School/Local Authority Protocol Agreement for CIC/CLs. • Ensuring that all learners have equal opportunities to achieve their potential and to develop their potential. • Achieve good outcomes for CIC/CLs, i.e. successful completion, progress to further study, training and/or employment, as well as overall learner experience. |

8.0 Continuing support to facilitate learning, personal development and progression

The College will:

- Ensure regular reporting to the Local authority and Virtual School's Head or Post 16 Advocate on attendance, punctuality and the progress of CIC/CLs.
- Establish contact between support/care workers and the DC/ College.

- Contact networks work to support a young person where there are identified issues, e.g. non-attendance or changes in attitudes and behaviours.
- Ensure attendance by the DC at Post-16 Provider meetings and learner review meetings.
- Regularly review and monitor learner progress and wellbeing with the young person's tutor (and the DC).
- Provide additional support as and when required, e.g. on-going advice, guidance and support.

10.0 Impact assessment and learner progression/outcomes

- The DC will provide regular reports to the Director of Student Services on CL/CIC.
- The DC will provide data and qualitative information, which will be included in the Annual Safeguarding Report to the Governors and also in the Department SAR.
- The DC will contribute data and progress reports to the Virtual School's Head and Post 16 Provider meetings.