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Leading learning and skills

Supporting Care Leavers in Accessing Employment and Skills Training

A Guide for
Leaving Care Teams

Guide 5



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Foreword



John Korzeniewski
Regional Director

The LSC has a single goal – *to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards*. It’s a goal that is often interpreted in terms of business and employment – giving people the skills to achieve the career they want, helping employers access training to improve their bottom line – but this is only half the story. The LSC also supports work to help society’s more vulnerable people access training and employment, and no group is more vulnerable than that of young people leaving care.

The 2007 White Paper *Care Matters: The Time for Change* made it clear that despite advancements in recent years there was still a significant gap between the outcomes of young people in care and leaving care and all young people.

Only 45% of looked after children in the North West achieved five or more GCSEs grade A* to G in 2007, compared to 91% of all children across the region. 34% of 19 year old care leavers in the region who had been in care at the age of 16 were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

In 2008 the LSC in the North West commissioned Amion Consulting to develop Good Practice Guides for professionals working with care leavers. While the LSC recognises that local authorities lead on provision for care leavers we also believe that by working closely together and sharing good practice, we can make a real difference to the lives of thousands of young people across the region.

This guide is one of a series of five aimed at LSC strategic and operational staff, strategic managers in statutory organisations, learning and training providers and leaving care teams. Each guide includes an overview of the policy context in which support for care leavers is being developed, key contacts, and frequently asked questions. They also feature case studies from across the North West, which illustrate how different partners are working together to meet the needs of care leavers.

The guides, however, are just a starting point, and best practice can only be developed through close communication, co-operation, and support. We are all aware of the huge challenges many care leavers face; by working together we can address these challenges, and help greater numbers of care leavers to access appropriate training and employment.

John Korzeniewski

Section 1

Introduction and Guide Structure

Over the last year, NW Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has commissioned development work by AMION Consulting, to support the production of a series of Good Practice Guides to:

- raise awareness of the particular circumstances/issues affecting care leavers, many of whom are vulnerable learners; and
- support an increase in the numbers of care leavers accessing, completing and sustaining skills training and apprenticeships.

The Guide is a statement of NW LSC's commitment to its role as part of the 'corporate family' to support care leavers in successfully accessing training and employment.

This Guide is one of a series of five – each of which focuses on individual corporate parent 'partners' – and include LSC strategic and operational staff, senior strategic staff within statutory organisations, training and learning providers who deliver LSC funded programmes, and Leaving Care teams.

“Together with partners, the NW LSC is raising awareness of the needs of this highly excluded group of young people...”

What is this Guide For?

Development work between NW Learning & Skills Council (LSC) and partners who are involved in supporting care leavers into the world of work and training has highlighted many needs, including:

- the need for information guides for Leaving Care staff in relation to how to identify the current (specific) range of employment and skills training available locally, and for signposting as to what is already being tried and tested across the region in relation to care leavers' support at post-16;
- suggestions as to how to develop more effective partnership working at the local authority level; and
- ideas about how to develop 'progression pathways' which link to mainstream employment and training services.

This guide, produced by the North West Learning and Skills Council, is a starting point in meeting some of these. Together with partners, the NW LSC is raising awareness of the needs of this highly excluded group of young people. It is looking to ensure that care leavers, wherever possible, can access mainstream support and, as part of this, access personalised support, to enable them to go on to sustainable employment.

Leaving Care Services have a central role to play in the whole range of employment, training, health and well-being initiatives being targeted in local communities, at excluded residents, including care leavers. Leaving Care team members often have good one to one working relationships with care leavers, supporting them in moving towards independent living. Few, if any other agencies, have this engagement with this highly excluded groups and there is real opportunity for Leaving Care Teams to play a far greater role in linking care leavers into local initiatives (health, skills and education based initiatives) and ensuring that these provide sufficient support to them at the local level.

Recognition of the Employment and Training Needs of Care Leavers

The need for specific action targeted on the needs of care leavers was highlighted in 2007, in the White Paper *Care Matters: The Time for Change*. This identified that, despite improvements in socio-economic outcomes in recent years, there remained a significant gap between the outcomes of those in care and leaving care and other young people.

The government identified care leavers as one of four priority socially excluded groups, with a key priority being that of improved access to quality education, training and employment for this group, through its Public Service Agreement Delivery Agreement 16: To Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training.

Building on this, in January 2009, *New Opportunities for the Future* White Paper was published by the Cabinet Office. This identified substantial support for young care leavers, outlining specific actions including:

- a national employment support programme for care leavers, as part of the wider drive to improve the quality of transition from care to adulthood. The Government will fund the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) for the next two years to work with local authorities to develop and test models of support for care leavers into employment. NCAS will work with nine local authorities in year one with a view to extending support to half of all local authorities in year two as the first phased step of a national roll-out;
- as part of this new programme, the creation of a national network of employers from the private, public and third sectors who will sign up to a commitment to develop employment support initiatives in their organisations for young people leaving care. Employers will offer opportunities for work experience and mentoring support, matched to the specific needs of the young person and including a package of training;
- from September 2009, the offer of an Apprenticeship place to all suitably qualified care leavers by the National Apprenticeship Service which will work with NCAS; and government intend to make this a legal entitlement from 2013; and
- over time, all care leavers will be offered an enhanced career planning pathway that will cover their next two to eight years, using a personalised, flexible model to help tackle barriers to work.

“The need for specific action targeted on the needs of care leavers was highlighted in 2007...”

Section 1

Introduction and Guide Structure

In addition, over the next two years NCAS, government offices and specialist youth homelessness advisors will work with local authorities as part of government's drive to improve access to suitable accommodation for care leavers.

This Guide is timely in its aims of:

- informing and raising awareness of Leaving Care Teams of the LSC's recognition of the specific needs of care leavers looking to access employment and skills training; and
- the promotion of all partners' better understanding of what can be done by practical, joint working with employment and training providers and 'corporate parents', to support these care leavers in their journey towards sustainable employment.

Guide Structure

This Guide is structured as follows:

Section 2 outlines the current provision by LSC in relation to skills and employment training;

Section 3 recommends key action for Leaving Care Teams in engaging locally with LSC Partnership Teams, in their role as corporate family members, providing some good practice examples ; and

Section 4 summarises the need for co-ordinated 'corporate family' support for care leavers.

The annexes provide details of specific contacts in relation LSC Partnership Teams and LSC funded initiatives.

“NCAS, government offices and specialist youth homelessness advisors will work with local authorities as part of government's drive to improve access to suitable accommodation for care leavers...”

Section 2

What does the Learning & Skills Council do?

- The LSC is a publicly-funded organisation which aims to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to ensure a workforce of world-class standard by 2010. [About the LSC](#) (49KB). Download this document to find out more about the LSC.
- At present, the LSC is responsible for the planning and funding of further education and training in England for all people aged 16+ years, other than universities. This accounts for full-time, part-time and casual learners, both inside and outside of employment. One of its key aims is to equalise opportunities through better access to learning – including those of care leavers.
- Its strategy is designed to work with the groups its views as our main customers – employers, young people, adults, and the colleges and other providers of education and training we fund.
- Young people (Aged 14-19) – the LSC supports young people to improve their knowledge and skills and help them make the most of their potential. It offers support to young people through and the Entry to Employment (e2e) scheme. e2e is a learning programme for young people who are not yet ready to join an Apprenticeship, go to college or get a job. The programme offers the opportunity to develop personal and social skills, try out different work areas and gain qualifications up to NVQ Level 1. [e2e](#)

Foundation Learning Tier Developments

The DSCF is developing a ladder for progression for low attainers. Entry and Level 1 of the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) is described as the Foundation Learning Tier.

To improve the experience of learners at this level and raise participation, achievement and progression, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) were asked by the government to develop a more focused and strategic approach to Entry Level and Level 1 provision. This reform is aimed at all learners over the age of 14 working below Level 2, including for example:

- 14-19 year olds;
- adults with skills gaps; and
- adults or young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Full implementation will be complete by 2010, when there will be a suite of Progression Pathways, clear stepping stones that will enable learners to access a first full Level 2 programme or will enable them to develop the skills necessary for living independently. These will be made up of credit-based qualifications and units from the QCF will be in place with clear progression routes through Entry and Level 1 to Level 2.

For further information see:

<http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/>

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8153.aspx

<http://flt.excellence.qia.org/>

“The LSC supports young people to improve their knowledge and skills and help them make the most of their potential...”

Section 2

What does the Learning & Skills Council do?

- Adults – More than four million people of working age in England still have no qualifications and lack basic skills. The LSC has guaranteed everyone free learning to achieve their first Level 2 qualification, with support focused on vocational skills.
- Colleges and providers – The LSC are working in partnership with colleges and providers to implement Agenda for Change reforms that will radically transform the sector by improving standards and making it more responsive to the needs of employers and individuals. The LSC funds the following mainstream provision:
- Employers – the LSC helps employers develop workforce skills so they can improve productivity and competitiveness. The LSC supports Apprenticeships – through work based learning through Apprenticeships (see below) and Train to Gain, an initiative through which a national network of brokers helps link employers to providers who can supply training tailored to their employees' needs.

Care Leavers need to access support for all types of training and employment support – not only through entry programmes such as e2e, but also when they are in employment and need to develop their skills, to enable them to move on successfully.

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)

- The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was launched in 2008 to lead the expansion and improvement of the apprenticeship programme.
- A one-stop website will soon be available that provides comprehensive information on Apprenticeships for employers, potential Apprentices, parents/carers, training providers and providers of information, advice and guidance to young people.
- Leaving Care Services will be able to access advice on how to assist case leavers in choosing and applying for a suitable apprenticeship.
- A National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service was launched in November 2008. The free service brings together employers, candidates and training providers to streamline the apprenticeship matching process.
- To find out more about Apprenticeships visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

“The LSC are working in partnership with colleges and providers to implement Agenda for Change reforms that will radically transform the sector...”

Current LSC Funded Skills Training

- With partner organisations, LSC and JobCentre Plus also commission ESF-funded programmes in the North West, with the new ESF phase covering 2007-2013.
- The LSC has commissioned over thirty organisations from across the North West to deliver twenty-three initiatives under the 'Youth' agenda, assisting young people facing disadvantage. Find your local projects in Annex 2.
- These local projects target young people who are NEET – not in employment, education and training – as well as young people at Key Stage 4, aiming to keep them involved with education, training and jobs.

Delivering Employment and Skills Services from 2010

The Secretaries of State of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and Department for Children, Schools And Families (DCSF), announced organisational delivery changes in relation to employment and skills in 200*. There will be two new bodies that will continue to drive ahead the employment and skills agenda.

Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)

For young people there will be a new national Non Departmental Public Body, the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) with some regional capacity, which will support local authorities in their new role in commissioning and funding 14-19 provision. Local capacity on 14-19 will therefore, as expected, be with Local Authorities.

Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

For adults, there will be a new Skills Funding Agency (SFA), again with some regional capacity, which will oversee the distribution of funds to the sector and manage the performance of FE colleges. The Agency will also house the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), the National Employer Service, and the Adult Careers and Advancement Agency. As has already been announced, the Train to Gain brokerage service will transfer to Regional Development Agencies in April 2009.

In 2010, some LSC staff will transfer to local authorities and some will move across to the two new organisations. Even before that, some staff will move over within the LSC to work for the NAS which is aiming to be up and running by April 2009.

“The LSC has commissioned over thirty organisations from across the North West to deliver twenty-three initiatives under the ‘Youth’ agenda...”

Section 3

Roles for Leaving Care Teams and Connexions Looked After Children (LAC) Leads

The LSC wants to promote improved joint working with corporate family members, including Leaving Care Teams, to ensure it is effectively supporting those partners providing employment and training services to care leavers.

This section suggests some key partnership activities through which Leaving Care Teams can expect LSC funded training providers to respond to positively – and so increase the opportunities for care leavers entering the world of further education, training and work.

Communicating with corporate family members

- Through 14-19 Partnerships and social regeneration colleagues (Corporate Services; NEET hot spot co-ordinators; HR leads; regeneration leads; social inclusion teams) raise awareness of the specific needs of care leavers looking to access employment and training, as they develop initiatives targeting groups such as these who are socially excluded. These colleagues are developing, and have access to a range of funding sources (such as Working Neighbourhoods funds), which are looking to get the most excluded residents into work and training. i.e. care leavers. These colleagues need to understand the scale and the barriers facing care leavers, in order to target resources and tailor programmes effectively.

- Contact LSC Partnership Teams (Partnership Directors) to raise awareness of success stories and the barriers and gaps in local training and employment provision which prevents care leavers engaging with any element of it (see Annex 3 for contacts list).
- Contact other statutory partners – including PCTs and learning providers – to raise awareness of the 'corporate parent' agenda, and the needs of local care leavers.

Linking Care Leavers to Local Employment and Skills Training

Information/Identifying Provision

- Agree with your local Connexions service a co-ordinated approach to identify (or map) what is available locally for care leavers (including those up to at least 21 years) in relation to education, training and employment.
- Many care leavers are NEET – not in employment, education or training. Work with Connexions and 14-19 Managers to identify the range of 'engagement' programmes available at the pre-E2E level: Princes Trust local courses, Youth Service provision, local training providers such as YMCA across the North West, and Youth Offending Teams all provide engagement programmes of many sorts across the North West.
- Make contact with your LSC Partnership Manager (see Annex 3) to find out what is on offer locally in relation to mainstream provision (pre-E2E, E2E, Train to Gain and apprenticeships) – including ESF funded projects targeting NEET young people and projects looking to retain young people in training and education:
 - What pre Entry to Employment (E2E) activity is funded? What are the entry/eligibility criteria for these?
 - Who has the contract for Entry to Employment activity in the local area and is there a good working relationship with this provider to ensure the training provider can deliver personalised support to care leavers, as and when they require it?
 - Are LSC Partnership Managers aware of the demand for this pre-E2E provision by care leavers and how does funding of these courses match demand?

Manchester – Presidents' Meeting

Contact: Ruth Welford-Hunte, Making It Work
Barnardo's Leaving Care Team
ruth.welfordhunte@barnardos.org.uk

A quarterly meeting of Manchester's key partners from education, employment and young peoples' services shares information and network contacts with a view to enhancing provision for looked after children and care leavers. The President's group brings together representatives from ConneXions, Leaving Care Services, Barnardo's, 14-19 Strategy Group, Aim Higher, FE sector, Manchester City Council education department, Asylum Seekers Service and the sub-regional NEET co-ordinator.

- Develop a local listing for use by the Leaving Care Team, Connexions and care leavers themselves and consider sharing this with neighbouring local authority Leaving Care teams, to raise awareness of what is available, highlighting where personalised support is available (see link to regional approach in final section).
- With Connexions leads, make sure you have clear information about financial support available to care leavers looking at their training options – develop clear information for care leavers related to this and keep this up to date.

Learner Support Programme – Discretionary Funding

The Learner Support Programme represents a programme of financial support available to participants of LSC-funded FE courses aged 16+ years and who are experiencing difficulties in meeting the costs associated with learning participation. Elements of the Learner Support Programme include:

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) a means-tested supplement of up to £30 p/w for young people aged 16-18 years engaged in post-16 learning (including Sixth Form, FE College, E2E courses and programme-led Apprenticeships). EMA payment is subject to satisfying coursework requirements and meeting agreed attendance and/ or behavioural targets. Bonuses are awarded to those who demonstrate a good level of progression against targets.

Care to Learn (C2L) support towards Ofsted registered childcare and associated transport costs for young parents aged up to – and including – 19 years at the time of commencing learning. For more information call the C2L information line 0800 121 8989 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn.

20+ Children in Sixth Form Colleges support towards childcare costs for adults aged 20 years or above at the time of commencing learning. Eligible learners will be attending a sixth form or sixth form college and have a dependent child aged under 15 years (or 16 years for children with disabilities). For a 20+ Childcare application pack call 0800 121 8989.

Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs) this programme offers talented individuals wishing to work in performing arts the opportunity for heavily subsidised tuition fees and means tested help with living and learning costs at participating leading dance and drama training providers. DaDAs are awarded on the basis of successful auditions at individual institutions. To apply, students must contact dance and drama schools directly to arrange for an audition. More information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/danceanddrama.

Adult Learning Grant (ALG) provides assistance to adults aged 19+ years on low incomes who are studying full time (more than 450 guided learning hours per year). ALG applicants are subject to financial assessment and can receive up to £30 p/w to help with costs associated with learning. Eligible learners will be studying their first full Level 2 or first full Level 3 qualification. For more information visit: www.direct.gov.uk/alg.

Section 3

Roles for Leaving Care Teams and Connexions Looked After Children (LAC) Leads

Working with FE Providers & Training Providers – Mainstream Provision

- Through any local Training Provider Forums/Networks, make contact with training provider leads to ensure that they are aware of your Leaving Care service, and raise their awareness of the specific support needs care leavers may require in order to enrol, and sustain their place in local training – this may be most effective through local training provider forums which operate at local authority level – your LSC Partnership contact will be able to put you in touch.

- Raise training providers/LSC awareness of any specific initiatives you may be running for care leavers locally – so that some progression or linkage can be built between these initiatives and mainstream provision. Most local authorities are running specific programmes, including Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen, Knowsley, Cheshire CC, and Rochdale. These include employability programmes, work placement programmes, and apprenticeships (see below for examples).

Oakmere Community College and Young Person's Advisory Service (YPAS) The Gateway Initiative

Contact: Cath Lydon
cath.lydon@oakmere.net

Based in north Liverpool, Oakmere Community College works with young disengaged people aged 16-19 years in delivering an ESF-funded pre-E2E programme of accredited vocational training and basic skills lasting between 18 and 20 weeks. Oakmere is committed to reducing disengagement amongst its learners, a number of which are looked after or young people with drug, alcohol or emotional problems.

The Gateway initiative has an open admissions policy that welcomes referrals from other young persons agencies – such as Connexions, and strives to guarantee prospective learners a start date within two weeks of initial contact.

Vocational training opportunities include plastering, bricklaying, landscape gardening, dance and drama, painting and decorating, carpentry and business administration. Gateway learners are given a personalised learning plan and commence a progression pathway at Oakmere that comprises pre-E2E and E2E training, before moving onto college and to foundation and Level 1 programmes.

The Young People's Advisory Service (YPAS) is a Liverpool-based charity that provides support, counselling and advisory services for vulnerable young people aged 10-25 years. Over the past four years YPAS has established community-based links with young people through their offices at Oakmere Community College. Here, two YPAS advisors and two mentors work with young people in resolving emotional and practical difficulties that might present barriers to effective learning. Mentors host weekly counselling sessions, where learners can access impartial and confidential advice.

Oakmere and YPAS work collaboratively in maintaining an effective relationship with the team of professionals attached to each looked after young person. If requested, a YPAS representative will join care workers and Connexions advisors in attending CORE Group meetings, informing and sharing in discussions relating to the well-being and development of the young person. YPAS acknowledge the value of these meetings in developing an understanding the issues affecting their client group – such as progression into independent living or financial concerns – and the impact this may have on their pre-E2E training. Support for the young person from Oakmere and YPAS can be tailored accordingly to prevent possible disengagement.

Warrington BC Corporate Parenting and Employability Scheme

Contact: Terry Irvine, Acting Team Leader, Leaving Care Team; Richard Berry, Environment and Regeneration Directorate

Warrington Leaving Care Team has been working with the local authority's Social Regeneration Team to pilot a Care Leavers Employability Scheme. Funded from the local authority's own regeneration budgets, the scheme targets 16-19 year old care leavers. It includes the following elements:

- Five day course spread over three week employability course – delivered by A4E – which includes interviewing skills, CV preparation, and intensive job search skills; and
- Twelve month access to peer mentoring support for care leavers – delivered by the Relationship Centre – as individuals move onto various training, employment and learning options.

The scheme is part of Warrington's broader approach to ensure that the local authority is developing an integrated approach to support care leavers including social inclusion functions, HR and Connexions functions.

In addition to the Employability Scheme, Warrington is developing the following:

- a database of care leavers looking for employment;
- Identification of a range of apprenticeship opportunities within the council and with partners – such as two joinery and plumbing apprenticeships with Golden Gates Housing;
- identification of opportunities for employment of care leavers, through employer liaison work, with private sector employers locating in the borough;
- linkage to mainstream LSC funded employment provision Routeways and Local Employer Partnerships as appropriate; and
- effective partnership work with Connexions has already been developed through a Key Stage 3/4 Personal Education Plan – Into Learning PEP – with streamlined assessment processes agreed between agencies.

The Leaving Care Team wants to ensure that care leavers and their support workers are linked to mainstream employment and training initiatives in the local area. It has identified the need to ensure that as a team, it links up with the wide range of engagement and diversionary activities available locally, such as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and youth services activities.

“Raise... awareness of the specific support needs care leavers may require in order to enrol, and sustain their place in local training...”

Section 3

Roles for Leaving Care Teams and Connexions Looked After Children (LAC) Leads

Merseyside Learning Together Partnership

Contact: Chris Wilkinson

Partnership Co-ordinator, Learn Together

chris.wilkinson@f2s.com

The Partnership identified a need for local authorities to take more responsibility as corporate parents to provide work experience and employment opportunities for young people preparing to leave care. The vast majority of people usually receive their first job or work experience through family, friends and contacts. Young people in care don't have these types of personal contacts and therefore their 'corporate parent' should seek to provide these opportunities from within the 'family firm'. Local authorities are often the largest employers in the area, with an extensive variety of different services and departments which could potentially offer a vast array of learning opportunities to care leavers.

- An important sub-regional initiative in the North West which is seeking to develop local authority approaches to support for care leavers in relation to employment and training. The Learn Together Partnership is a collaboration between Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, Warrington and Wirral Children's Services. The intention of the partner authorities is to increase the level of joint activity to meet the challenges of high quality service provision within the emerging Children's Services agenda.
- It is developing proposals to promote the training and employment of care leavers in the partnership region. The Partnership is now specifically examining the feasibility of developing an apprenticeship for a generic children's services worker, with the intention of earmarking such opportunities to provide sustainable employment for care leavers and other vulnerable learners.

Recommendations to date include the following:

- There is clear evidence that priority access and ring-fencing arrangements are extremely effective tools in providing opportunity for care leavers and vulnerable learners.
- Local authorities should ensure that they provide an effective mechanism to respond to any request for a work placement related to a course of study for children in care or care leavers.
- A gap in provision for those young people needing to address employability issues could be met through a pre-employment training scheme.
- Some children in care and care leavers will access the new Diplomas through conventional pathways. This should be supported and encouraged. However, the Diploma is not likely to be effectively utilised to offer additional opportunity to children in care or care leavers.
- Local authorities should consider offering advanced apprentices the same level of support as that available to those in higher education.
- Many Leaving Care services have also identified the need to develop their own targeted engagement programmes, in order to support care leavers to get to the point where they can apply for mainstream employment and training programmes such as Entry 2 Employment (E2E).

Rathbone Training and Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team

Contacts: Sue Benson, sue.benson@rathbone.org.uk
Sandy Mackenzie, s.mackenzie@wigan.gov.uk

For three years Rathbone Training, in partnership with Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team, has delivered an intensive programme of enrichment activities focused around confidence building, key skills, communication skills and career advice for fifteen looked after young people identified by Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team as at risk of becoming NEET. Delivered throughout the six weeks summer break, the programme provides a seamless link between Years 11 and 12 to prevent disengagement over the course of the holidays. The young people – mostly aged 16 years and living in local care homes and with foster parents – are supported in identifying, applying for and commencing a preferred EET placement in early September. As such the initiative is financed by both ESF and Wigan Council NEET Hotspot monies. It is expected that the programme will secure positive progression outcomes for 65% of the looked after young people. Participant tracking is conducted by Rathbone Training at 4, 8 and 12 weeks following course completion.

Commencing with a five day residential trip led by Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team, the group then embarks on a five week programme of activities and training. A varied

timetable of day trips, guest speakers and class-based activities has been constructed to encourage team building and develop self-esteem and confidence. Accredited skills and lifestyle workshops address issues specific to looked after young people, such as saving money, applying for a bank account, expectations of FE providers and employers and pregnancy awareness.

Financial incentives of £25 are awarded to participants upon commencement of the course and at the end as they progress in to education, employment or training. Further bonuses are available throughout the course upon completion of a key skill or soft outcome, in addition to which is a £5 daily attendance payment. Travel and lunch expenses are also met by Rathbone Training.

Rathbone works closely with Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team to ensure all participants maintain a satisfactory level of attendance to retain their place on the course. Rathbone, in turn notifies Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team of each young persons future plans, while a social worker from Wigan Local Authority Aftercare Team is made available daily for members of the group to access. A significant number of looked after young people progress onto vocational routeways including, amongst others, construction, motor vehicle, sports development, electronics and nail and beauty therapy.

“It is expected that the programme will secure positive progression outcomes for 65% of the looked after young people...”

Section 3

Roles for Leaving Care Teams and Connexions Looked After Children (LAC) Leads

- Make contact with the Student Support Services at your local FE colleges and look at the possibility of developing a Care Leavers' Working Protocol with them.
- Make sure you have sorted out local information sharing protocols and that individual care leavers are clear about disclosure of information by Leaving Care teams and employment/training providers.
- When attending open days and enrolment sessions with local FE colleges or training providers, check out their Student Support Services, and their ability to provide a personalised support – whatever the support needs of the care leaver. Liaise with Further Education providers to establish flexible entry points for care leavers, for instance taster days and flexible start dates, in order to capitalise on care leavers' enthusiasm for participation as it arises.

Joint Working Protocol Barnados Manchester Leaving Care Service, Making It Work, CAFRASS and ConneXions; and Manchester Colleges

Contact: Barnados, Manchester

A joint working protocol has been established between Manchester's four further education colleges and organisations concerned with the delivery of services to vulnerable young people in Manchester aged 16 to 21 years, specifically Manchester Leaving Care Service (MLCS), Making It Work (MIW), Children and Families Refugee and Asylum Seeking Service (CAFRASS) and ConneXions. The protocol aims to commit partner organisations to working together to achieve positive educational, training and/or employment outcomes for care leavers under the care of Manchester Leaving Care Service. Four common objectives bind the organisations together:

- to make 'College' as flexible and attractive option as possible to those not currently at College, but who might be interested in, or capable of so being;
- to give the maximum level of support possible to those 'in' College, both to ensure they last the course and succeed, or that they are on the 'right' course from them in the first place;
- to give the same mixture of pastoral and academic support to ensure such young people 'progress' to their full potential whilst in College; and
- to ensure that all steps are taken to feed young people into appropriate employment/ further education etc when the time comes for them to leave College.

With the individual consent of each care leaver, MLCS/ CAFRASS share basic personal data on a six monthly basis with a named individual within student support services at each of the four Colleges. Colleges can use this data for statistical purposes, to positively 'target' care leavers with information and guidance on their support entitlements, and to explore with MLCS how a more personalised service might be provided by the College to individuals.

All partners are equally responsible for passing on information relating to significant developments in the lives of their 'caseload' of care leavers as well as feeding back information on their progression in education and training. In this way the protocol works proactively to identify potentially de-stabilising issues and bring care leavers together with partners to work towards solutions without the young person resorting to leaving college.

Partners will give ongoing consideration to ways in which care leavers not currently engaged in training or education can access College, including pre-entry programmes and flexible start dates.

www.barnados.org.uk/leavingcare

Identify Good Practice in personalising support for Care Leavers when they access Employment/Training/Education

- Find out more about the range of work being undertaken by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and NIACE around supporting vulnerable learners – to ensure the care leavers applying for training can 'stick with it' on his/her course and that they receive intensive support as soon as they think of applying for a place/course.
- One local authority has commissioned a well established supported employment training provider to target care leavers, to provide an intensive employability support to them. This approach recognises the high intensity support needs that some care leavers require, to move towards sustainable employment.
- Contact your local Aim Higher team to develop local support and access to Higher Education for looked after children and care leavers – www.aimhighernw.ac.uk.

Stick With It!

A range of NW providers, including Bolton Community College, Stockport College, Bury Adult Learning Service and Cheshire Lifelong Learning Service (Move On Cheshire) were involved in Motivating Skills for Life Learners to Persist, Progress and Achieve – a two-year national research and development project commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). The aims of the project were to increase the evidence base and to develop tools and techniques to support learners, practitioners and managers as they try to overcome the barriers to completion and continued learning.

The objectives of the project were to:

- support adults as independent learners who are managing their own learning;
- promote approaches to teaching and learning that encourage persistence;
- identify pastoral support, assessment and ICT activities that build motivation;
- develop effective and adaptable tools for practitioners, such as teaching guides and mobile technologies that foster learning beyond the classroom;
- develop practical resources for learners; and
- forge partnerships with more than 100 Skills for Life organisations and share effective practices.

Comprehensive Guides has been produced as a result of this which provide a huge resource for those supporting vulnerable learners to 'stick with it'.

Supporting Skills for Life learners to Stick with it!
(2.4 mb)

“Find out more about the range of work being undertaken by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and NIACE around supporting vulnerable learners...”

Section 3

Roles for Leaving Care Teams and Connexions Looked After Children (LAC) Leads

Pure Innovations Stockport

Contact: Sarah Sturmey
sarah.sturmey@pureinnovations.co.uk

Based in Stockport, Pure Innovations works across Greater Manchester to assist vulnerable groups and individuals who are unemployed to overcome personal barriers and move into sustainable employment. Amongst other vulnerable groups, the not-for-profit company offers intensive support and guidance to looked after children and young people (LAC) aged 16 to 19 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Social Workers from the Looked After Children Team of Stockport MBC work closely with Children's Services, Education Support Team and ConneXions in identifying and referring suitable candidates to Pure Innovations for support.

Established in 2002, the LAC project is committed to matching young people to suitable career opportunities that result in sustainable placements. Consequently, Pure Innovations has established a specialist LAC team comprising two Employment Officers and representatives from its Youth Transitions Team. Together the LAC team

seeks to engage with their target group and deliver pre-recruitment support in preparation for entry into identified employment opportunities. Post-recruitment support is also delivered by the team to candidates whose background and personal history might cause difficulties in settling down during the early part of their careers.

Employment Officers invest time in establishing positive relationships with clients and employers alike, adopting the role of mentor to looked after young people and employment broker to local employers. In most cases Pure Innovations works with an employer to ensure a work-based mentor is identified and available to the young person.

Employers are encouraged to become Corporate Parents. Employment arrangements vary by age. Year 10 and 11 pupils are required to complete a 12 week unwaged work trial before they can secure a 12 month, waged full-time contract; while older participants commence a fixed-term contract from the outset. Throughout the initial period of adjustment Pure Innovations continues to deliver job support to the young person and employer, conducts regular mentoring visits and provides an anytime call-out service to employers should problems arise.

Edge Hill University targeting and supporting care leavers

Contact: Christine.coleman@edgehill.ac.uk

Concerned to improve the chances of care leavers going to and progressing through university, the Frank Buttle Trust developed their Quality Mark, designed to recognise the commitment of those universities who go that extra mile to target and support the number of young people entering and succeeding in higher education after being in care. As one of the first universities to be awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark, Edge Hill has been at the forefront of the work to raise awareness of the needs of this particular group of disadvantaged individuals.

In addition the University has worked in partnership with Aimhigher Merseyside to establish the Merseyside Care Leavers Network, bringing together foster carers, Social Services, Local Authorities and universities to vitalise multi agency working within the region and with Aimhigher Lancashire to develop the STAS (Students Taking Action for Success) Programme. This programme aims to support

young people in care in raising aspirations and awareness of HE. The programme includes study based sessions to help raise attainment. The programme also looks to involve carers in providing information and links with the University.

To help raise the aspirations and achievements of looked after children in the North West a process of systematic communication and promotional work has been established with all of the Leaving Care Teams within the North West After Care Forum, Supporting People Teams as well as with our Partner FE Colleges.

Sustaining the University's commitment to Care Leavers has proved to be challenging but rewarding, resulting in a significant increase in the number of known Care Leavers within the University. Numbers have risen from three in June 2006, to ten in June 2007 and to 22 in total during 2007/2008.

In addition, following the introduction of the tick box on the UCAS form inviting all 2008/09 applicants to indicate whether they have been in care, it has received an additional 19 applications from Care Leavers interested in studying at the University.

Section 4

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are the LSC investing time and resources into this target group?

Local authorities represent the 'corporate parent' of all young people in and leaving care. The NW LSC recognises the need for it to work with these corporate parents – including Leaving Care Teams – to ensure that all care leavers are fully supported in successfully accessing employment, training and learning – and to move towards and maintain a successful career path.

By supporting joint working to prioritise positive outcomes for these socially excluded young people leaving care, the LSC is aiming to:

- promote enhanced joined-working across key local partners;
- assist in generating significant long-term savings in downstream costs: Persistent and severe exclusion amongst vulnerable adults can present substantial costs to local services;
- promote community cohesion, by helping to avoid the negative external effects of a small number of highly excluded individuals; and
- over the longer term, generate positive outcomes for the children and families of excluded adults.

How can Leaving Care Teams find out more about LSC and the activities it funds in the NW?

Find your local LSC contact in Annex 1 of this Guide or go to [About the LSC](#) (49KB) to find out more about LSC activities.

What type of information can Leaving Care Teams obtain from our Local LSC Partnership Team?

The local Partnership Team can provide information about contracted training and learning opportunities throughout a Local Authority Area. They will be aware of any co-commissioned enhanced support and Partnership team. Directors have a role within CYP's working directly with all relevant partners to meet local needs.

How can Leaving Care Teams link up with local training and learning providers?

Your local LSC Partnership Team contact can help you identify key training and learning providers operating in each area. FE colleges have student support service leads who can outline specific support which may be in place to support care leavers.

What is Government Office NW doing in relation to care leavers?

Government Office NW is committed to supporting care leavers into employment and training. A working group – the Looked After Children Planning Group – has been meeting for the past year. It is exploring a collaborative regional approach to this agenda.

“The LSC is aiming to promote enhanced joined-working across key local partners...”

Section 5

Summary

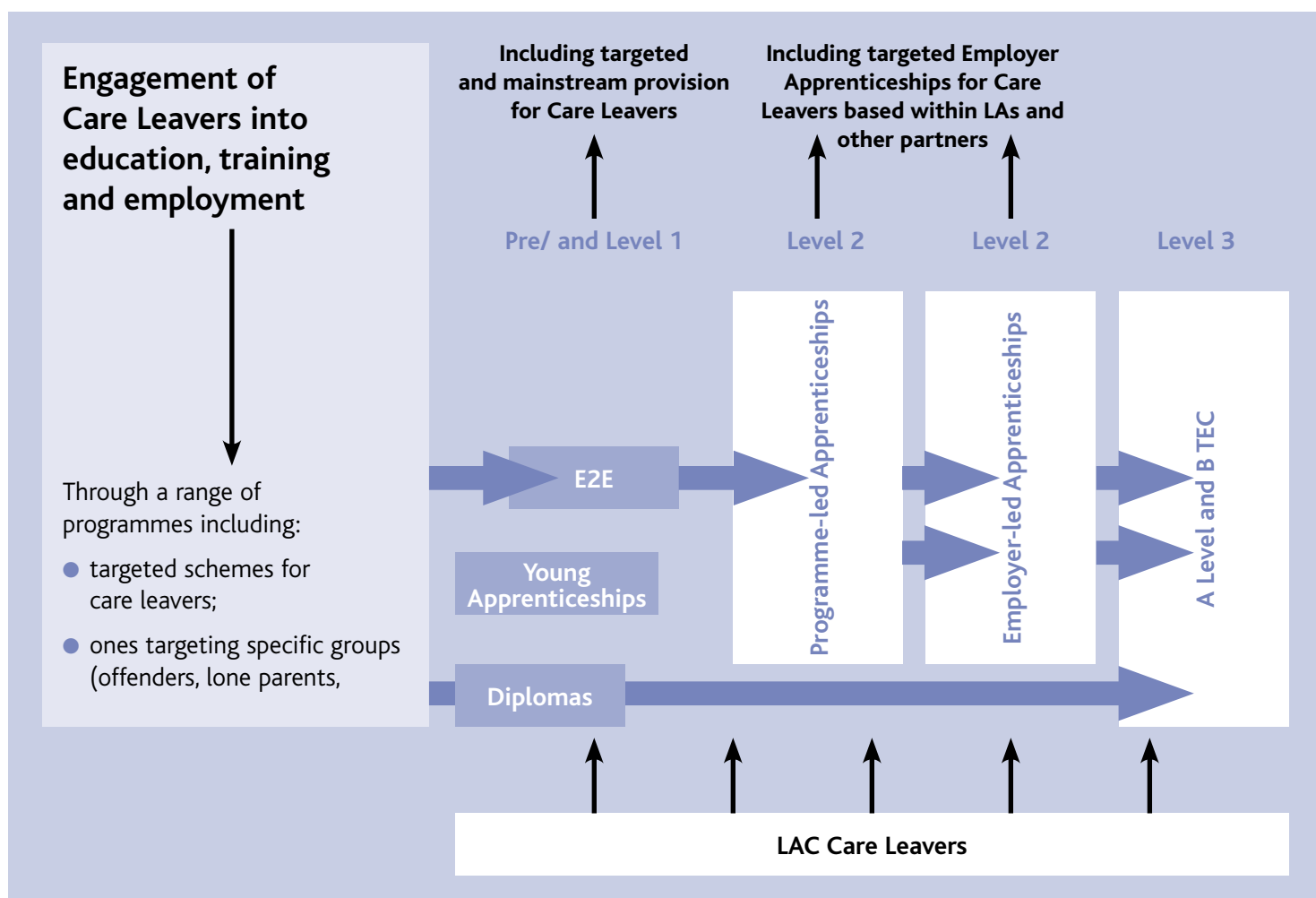
This guide, produced by the North West Learning and Skills Council, aims to ensure that care leavers, wherever possible, can access mainstream employment and training programmes and, as part of this, access personalised support, to enable them to go on to sustainable employment.

What is happening regionally in relation to care leavers?

Government Office NW is committed to supporting care leavers into employment and training. A working group – the Looked After Children Planning Group – has been meeting for the past year. This is looking to link local activity together, to form a NW regional approach, developing employment and training approaches. The NW LSC, NCAS, the Aftercare Forum and the Mersey Learning Partnership are some of those involved in this group.

The National Care Advisory Service is taking forward government plans outlined in the White Paper *New Opportunities* – which are supporting care leavers into employment and training. Comprehensive good practice databases and guides are available at www.leavingcare.org.

The NW LSC is committed to supporting and developing an integrated progression pathway with flexible options for care leavers, as outlined below:



Key approaches to support moves towards this have been detailed in this Guide. The priority development work includes:

- Through working with Local Authority Leaving Care Teams, Social Inclusion Teams and Employment Leads, the LSC need to look at ways of linking various types of provision together, so that care leavers have a progression pathway towards training and eventually sustainable employment.
- This needs to be linked to local authority Corporate Parent Strategy Groups, in order to pull together what is currently a very disparate range of activities (located within HR leads, ConneXions, Leaving Care Teams and contracted voluntary sector organisations).
- Other members of the corporate parent 'family' – eg PCT and key ETE providers need to be included in this process to ensure that care leavers' profile is championed at a senior strategic level.

The linkages need to be made between mainstream employment and training providers and Leaving Care services, to ensure that all care leavers' needs are met, not just the few who may be able to, or want to access specialist support.

“The National Care Advisory Service is taking forward government plans... which are supporting care leavers into employment and training...”

Annex 1

LSC Partnership Contacts

Cheshire and Warrington

Dalton House
Dalton Way
Middlewich
Cheshire
CW10 0HU

Tel: **01606 32 00 01**

Email: cheshireandwarringtoninfo@lsc.gov.uk

Area Director
Liz Davis

Cumbria

Venture House
Regents Court
Guard Street
Workington
Cumbria
CA14 4EW

Tel: **0845 019 4159**

Email: cumbriainfo@lsc.gov.uk

Area Director
Emer Clarke

Greater Manchester

10th Floor
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3AQ

Tel: **0845 019 4142**

Email: grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Area Director
John Temple

Greater Merseyside

14th Floor
The Plaza
Old Hall Street
Liverpool
L3 9QJ

Tel: **0845 0194150**

Email: merseysideinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Area Director
Helen France

Lancashire

Citygate
Longridge Road
Preston
PR2 5BQ

Tel: **0845 019 4157**

Email: lancashireinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Area Director
Ian Haworth

Annex 2

LSC and ESF Funded Projects

Reducing NEET – All projects funded until July/December 2010

Provider	Contact Name	Telephone / Email
Cheshire and Warrington – Energisers – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Blacon Community Trust	Louise Davey	01244 371 716
Reaseheath College	Margaret Bardsley	01270 613 204 margaretb@reaseheath.ac.uk
Total People	Nick Robertson	01606 734 004
Cheshire and Warrington – Learning and Support during Key Stage 4 – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Foundation for Peace	Lynn Hitchen	01925 581 236 lynn.hitchen@foundation4peace.org
Total People	Nick Robertson	01606 734 004
Vale Royal Borough Council	Mark Groves	01606 867 599 mgroves@valeroyal.gov.uk
YMCA Training	Anthea Bradburne	0161 945 3415 07970 471 311
Warrington Collegiate Retention in Post 16 Learning	Carole Williams	01925 494 683 carole.williams@warrington.ac.uk
Cumbria – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Rathbone Bolton Council	Carol Cantwell 14-19 Partnership Manager	Life Long Learning Unit 5th Floor Paderborn House Bolton BL1 1UA 01204 333 998 carol.cantwell@bolton.gov.uk
Bury Council		
Manchester		
Barnardo's	Ruth Welford-Hunte	0161 226 6722 ruth.welfordhunte@barnardos.org.uk
Economic Solutions		
NACRO	Anna Morrell Project Coordinator	NACRO, Unit One, Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, Manchester M11 2NA 0161 233 3568 07967 393 530 anna.morrell@nacro.org.uk
Oldham – Positive Steps	Steph Bolshaw PSO Strategic Lead	
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Gary Kelly 14-19 Participation Strategy Development Manager	01706 925 147 gary.kelly@rochdale.gov.uk
Salford City Council and Connexions Salford (until July 2010)	Julie Riley Connexions Salford	0161 743 0163 julie.riley@connexions-salford.com

Continued overleaf

Annex 2

LSC and ESF Funded Projects

Provider	Contact Name	Telephone / Email
Stockport College – Improving Life Chances in Stockport by Reducing the Number of Young People who are or may become NEET – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/07/2010		
Tameside MBC	John Symington 14-19 strategy Manager	Tameside MBC Room 2.38 Wellington Road Ashton-Under-Lyne OL6 6DL 0161 342 3242 John.symington@tameside.gov.uk
Greater Manchester – Reducing NEET in Trafford – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/07/2010		
Trafford Council	Susan Denny Project Lead	0161 911 8601 Susan.Denny@trafford.gov.uk
Greater Manchester – Reducing NEET in Wigan – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/07/2010		
Wigan Council	Peter Smith Secondary Personalised Learning Consultant – Children and Young People’s Services	Professional Development Centre Park Road, Hindley Wigan WN2 3RY 01942 767 112 peter.smith@wigan.gov.uk
Greater Merseyside (excluding Halton) – Learning and Support during Key Stage 4 for those at Risk of Disengaging and Transition Support		
Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership	Caroline Swarbrick	0151 254 6648 Caroline.Swarbrick@connexions- gmerseyside.co.uk
Knowsley MBC		
Oakmere Community College	Cath Lydon	Cherry Lane, Liverpool L4 6UG 0151 521 3563 cath.lydon@oakmere.net
Sefton Council		
Wirral Council		
Greater Merseyside (including Halton) – Retention in Post 16 Learning – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership	Caroline Swarbrick	0151 254 6648 Caroline.Swarbrick@connexions- gmerseyside.co.uk
Knowsley Community College		
Sefton Council		
St Helens College	David Williams	Water Street, St Helens, WA10 1PP 01744 623374 dwilliams@sthelens.ac.uk
Wirral Council (Children and Young Peoples Department)		

Provider	Contact Name	Telephone / Email
Greater Merseyside (including Halton) – Progression Pathways Programme – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Halton Borough Council	Ken Hughes Project Manager / Head Teacher KS4 Gateway (PRU and Engagement Service)	The Bridge School Chadwick Road, Astmoor, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1PW 01928 565 456 ken.hughes@halton.gov.uk
Knowsley Community College		
Merseyside Youth Association		
Oakmere Community College (2 projects)	Cath Lydon	Cherry Lane, Liverpool L4 6UG 0151 521 3563 cath.lydon@oakmere.net
Shaw Trust		
St Helens Chamber	Pauline Devine Starting Point Centre Manager	4-6 Hardshaw Street, St Helens WA10 1RE 01744 698 800 pauline.devine@thestartingpoint.org
Wirral Council (Children and Young Peoples Dept)		
Lancashire – Reducing NEET in Blackburn with Darwen – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
CX Limited		
Lancashire – Reducing NEET in Blackpool – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
CX Limited		
Lancashire – Reducing NEET in Lancashire Local Authority Area – Duration: 01/05/2008 – 31/12/2010		
Preston College		
University of Central Lancashire		
Greater Manchester – Prevention of NEET Young People in Salford – Pre 16		
No contact information available		
Greater Merseyside (Merseyside Phasing in Area) – Employer Pool and Integrated Career Development Mentoring Programme		
No contact information available		
Lancashire – Reducing NEET in Lancashire Local Authority Area		
No contact information available		



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If you would like a copy of this brochure in any other format, including large print please contact LSC Greater Manchester: gmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Copies of this series of guides can be found on the LSC website. It is the intention that these electronic versions will be amended to reflect any updates.

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