

Looked After Children (LAC) Policy (also known as CLA – Child Looked After)

Statement

Halesowen College is committed to developing its policies and processes to support all vulnerable learners and to enhance their experience, development and progression opportunities. The College believes in opportunity for all and constantly strives to remove barriers for learners who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or been subject to negative life experiences; social, emotional and educational. This policy relates specifically to learners who are looked after children (LAC) also known as Child Looked After (CLA), care leavers (CL) and young carers (YC). Halesowen College has established a strong position from which to fulfil its responsibilities to prepare students to fully participate in training and education programmes to enable them to compete in the global marketplace and maximise their success in their future working lives.

The College has developed strong relationships with its neighbouring Local Authorities. This expresses the commitment to working together. As partners we endeavour to ensure that Young People in Care and Care Leavers achieve the best possible outcomes in post-16 education and training.

This policy will support the engagement, admission, support and progression of LAC/CLA/CL/YCs, whilst developing a consistent approach across all college campuses and their local councils. It is hoped that this focused approach will provide these learners with an excellent learning experience whilst studying at the College, as well as providing them with the confidence and motivation to succeed in their lifelong learning and wider life experiences.

College Responsibilities

The College vision for LAC/CLA/CL/YCs is to provide them with the necessary support and guidance to achieve an equality of opportunity, so that they are able to achieve and progress to further/higher education, apprenticeships and/or training as well as preparation for wider life experiences.

In order to provide LAC/CLA/CL/YCs with an equal opportunity, there is a need to identify them at the earliest opportunity in order to provide them with a tailored experience from pre-entry guidance through to post-college progression. Therefore, the College aims to provide the following support to all LAC/CLA/CL/YCs :

- Ensure activities are accessible, eg taster days, open days, information events and interviews which are not a barrier to participation.
- Encourage access to FE/HE and include them as a specific target group.
- Provide impartial pre-entry guidance on FE/HE.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead ('Virtual Head Teacher' – a legal term for the person who has responsibility for LACs) will have a lead responsibility to act as a key point of contact and advisor for LAC/CLA/CL/YCs, to co-ordinate support prior to and on entry, as well as throughout the learning programme, in accordance with the Personal Coach Strategy.

- Ensure early identification of applicants and establish contact with them as appropriate.
- Ensure information on the full range of support offered to LAC/CLA/CL/YCs is readily available and easily accessible (financial, welfare and academic).
- Where appropriate offer flexible application arrangements and interviews.
- Ensure that the individual's circumstances and views are reflected in the support offered to them and assistance with their application to College.
- Provide impartial progression guidance relating to further study (eg FE to HE), or progression routes into employment and to support transition to higher education or employment.

THE PROCESS: SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT, ADMISSIONS AND COMPLETION for LAC/CL/YCs

Beneficiaries	Actions
Learners (and their Carers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners will receive early support and guidance, eg IAG, targeted support, informal tour of the campus, transition meetings ■ Familiarisation with College expectations eg attendance, commitment, behaviour, progression opportunities ■ Provision of information regarding Safeguarding/Wellbeing, support, contact names/faces
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A designated person (Designated Safeguarding Lead) is the first point of contact for all LAC/CLA/CL/YCs ■ Tutors are aware of learners support needs at an early stage so they can be actioned. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) can be reviewed every six months or sooner if there is a problem. This includes updating actions on the EBS central system and STaRS ■ Tutors to be made aware of any issues in past education that may affect learning, behaviour or attendance, which will require intervention strategies, eg advocacy, targeted support, early one to one meetings ■ Tutors to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the key worker/carers, in the case of disciplinary or personal problems and not to permanently exclude a student without informing these contacts
The College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ College provides early interventions regarding poor attendance, behaviour, and study issues ■ Improved outcomes, ie successful completions, progress to further study, training and/or employment, as well as learner experience, are reported to the College Leadership Team

Review

Reviewed/Approved	By	Date	Review Date
Updated by	Mandy Davis	08-2019	08-2020

Care Experience

At Halesowen College we recognise that students have different living circumstances. Some may live with parents, family members, carers or may be living independently or with support. We want to make sure that our students are given the right support from the moment they apply to study with us.

What does Halesowen College mean by care experienced?

We use the term care experience to cover a range of different living circumstances young people have. You may have heard of the following terms

- Looked After Child/Child Looked After
- Care Leaver
- Kinship Care/Living with Relatives
- Foster Care
- Residential Care/Children's Home
- Unaccompanied Minor

You may have or have had, a social worker, a personal advisor (PA) an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or maybe you remember attending meetings called LAC reviews or PEP meetings.

If any of these sound familiar to you and your living circumstances, we at Halesowen College consider you care experienced.

If I am care experienced, what should I do?

At Halesowen College, we want you to receive the best support package possible. We recognise that being care experienced can come with many challenges and we have a team here who want to make sure that you never feel you are managing these challenges alone. We know how difficult studying can be at times and we want to make sure that you can focus on your education with the support of our team to manage any challenges and changes whilst you are with us.

To provide this support we need you to **declare your care experience** as soon as you apply or at enrolment. If you have enrolled and have yet to disclose pop and see our admissions team who can add this information onto your file.

Who will know I am care experienced?

We recognise that this might not be something all young people want to share, as they may be worried about who will know they are care experienced.

At Halesowen College, we pride ourselves on making sure all young people feel they can share in a safe place. Our Safeguarding team will know more details about your care experience as they will be your first point of contact. Your personal coach and our Outreach team, will **not** know any details of your care experience. They will only know that you have declared. Unless of course you want to share your experiences with friends and others, no one else will know about your care experiences.

Our Safeguarding Team: Lynn Pass, Jennifer Morrison, Lee Clulow-Smart, Sue Crowley and Haroon Bashir. They work to keep the College a safe place for all students and that all students receive the correct support. They do not only work with care experienced. They work with students for a range of different personal reasons. Sue Crowley is the designated person and she may attend your PEP meetings and LAC reviews. They also make sure you get your bursary paid.

Your Student Support Manager and Personal Coach: These are the lead teachers of your course. They will be able to offer you additional support during your studies if you need it, they can support you if you require any time off due to changes in living circumstances or during any challenging times.

Our outreach team are staff who work hard to locate and facilitate programmes and activities that meet the needs of our students. They offer specially designed programmes for care experienced young people that are fun, educational and are targeted to their needs. For instance if you are unsure about what universities offer care experienced young people in terms of accommodation support, our outreach team can find this out. Or maybe you would like to apply for an apprenticeship but do not know how to.

What do you offer care experienced students?

Once you have declared you are care experienced you can choose to take up a range of services we have on offer. At Halesowen College, we welcome your ideas and suggestions, if you feel we could offer more or a different service, please let us know. We are committed to improving the services we offer to care experienced young people and want to make sure that the services we offer meet the different needs of our students.

Financial support

At Halesowen College we recognise that having care experience can bring on many financial challenges. We offer a bursary of up to £1,200 per year to all care experienced students aged 16–19 years.

We also offer support with applications for additional funding from charities who support care experienced young people in education. Some of our students have received grants of £2,250 from the Helena Kennedy Foundation whilst others have received support from the Rees Foundation who offer both financial, and employment opportunities for care experienced young people.

At Halesowen College we are committed to growing our networks with organisations who offer support for care experienced young people and we are dedicated to locating these organisations to support you whilst you are studying with us.

Outreach activities

Our outreach team at Halesowen College is made up of different services; one of these includes the NCOP team who work closely with universities, employers and other services to offer you the best programme of activity whilst you are studying with us. This includes trips and events that support your education and offering fun and engaging cultural capital experiences. (Cultural capital experiences include; visiting another city to watch a West End show, visiting another city to explore a popular establishment such as a football stadium or museum).

Youth participation

We also have a group known as RACE – Raising Aspirations from Care Experience. The RACE group is a group of current students who have care experience, who meet to discuss any areas of interest for them, areas the College can improve on (these views are shared with senior people in the College) and to share knowledge about rights and entitlements for care experienced young people. The group also plans trips and events for those with care experience.

The RACE members are also trainers. They train staff across the College and at other places such as schools and universities. The training sessions were created by care experienced young people to educate adults about the experiences of children and young people in care. The RACE trainers are paid for their time. You may have seen some of our trainers around campus wearing their RACE trainers t-shirts. You are welcome to join RACE at any point and join the current students in recruiting more trainers, training staff and meeting care leavers from local universities.

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)

At Halesowen, our teams in safeguarding outreach and careers, offer specialist advice and guidance for care experienced young people. This focuses on rights and entitlements as a care experienced young person in education. This also includes information on matters that are important to you and require you to make independent decisions in your life. Such as accommodation matters, staying with carers (staying put), moving onto independence, financial entitlements whilst a student or apprentice and many other areas of importance. This also includes support for students seeking asylum and for those with discretionary leave to remain.

Do I have to get involved in all of the services you offer?

The simple answer is no. We offer these services all year round with no obligation for you to take up. But, we do know from feedback from other care experienced young people just how beneficial some of these services have been for them. You can also get involved in some and not in others. We just want you to know what we offer and that our teams are here for you if you want to get involved in anything.

What should I do now?

All you have to do is declare on the application form that you are care experienced. If you have already applied or you are currently studying with us but have not declared, you can still declare by telling one of the named people from our safeguarding team, speaking to your personal coach or popping to see someone from our outreach NCOP team.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to Halesowen College.