Care Leavers in Further Education - The Lost Cohort

Research Report for Aimhigher West Area Partnership (May 2011)

Chris Leonard
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### Composition of the Aimhigher West Area Partnership

The Aimhigher West Area Partnership is comprised of schools, Further Education Colleges, Connexions Services, Training and Higher Education providers across the eight local authorities of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Swindon, South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire.
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Section A: Summary of the research

Executive summary of the key findings of the research

1. Central government has confirmed its support for strategies which address the under-performance and ensure the effective progression of Care Leavers. Changes to the funding priorities in further education mean that resources will need to be targeted to meet the needs of Care Leavers. Research at a national level into the progression of Care Leavers confirms that the expectations and aspirations of Care Leavers and those who work with them are low and that this, combined with gaps in education or the absence of targeted support means that this group does not fulfil its potential. In some local authorities, effective local strategic leadership supported by programmes like Aimhigher can make a difference to the progression of Care Leavers.

2. In recent years, 50% of Children in Care or Care Leavers with the potential to achieve the national benchmark of 5 GCSE A*-C have not done so by the end of Key Stage 4. This suggests that there are a number of Care Leavers who could benefit from the types of activity and support provided by the Aimhigher programme but the procedures for targeting learners are insufficiently robust for provision to be fully inclusive. Further Education Colleges (FECs) have either been unwilling or unable to implement national targeting guidelines for higher education outreach. Key target groups of disadvantaged learners such as Care Leavers are not always identified in FECs for special support and reliance is placed upon universal provision to meet the needs of all learners. This, combined with under-performance in previous phases of education, means that Care Leavers make up a small but significant “lost cohort” in the Aimhigher West Area.

3. Learner resistance, fears of stigmatisation, data protection legislation and professional boundary demarcation are some of the reasons why FECs experience difficulty when attempting to obtain the identity of Care Leavers. Some local authorities are developing Information sharing partnership protocols with FECs, Connexions and other stakeholders so that Care Leavers can see that there are positive reasons why their identity, status and personal circumstances should be shared with educational providers.

4. Colleagues from local authorities refer to the discontinuities in the educational history of Care Leavers which lead to skill gaps, lack of confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and expectation on the part of this group. There is evidence that practitioners in FECs may lack expectations of Care Leavers and are unaware of the challenges and degree of disadvantage that this group faces. Some colleges are making

1 Throughout this report the phrases Children in Care (CiC) or Looked After Child (LAC) refer to young people under the age of 16 years whilst the term Care Leaver is applied to those above the current statutory school age of 16 years.
5. Several colleges are in the process of developing policies, procedures and responsibilities for Care Leavers. It is difficult for the person with responsibility for Aimhigher to identify, target and deliver the programme to Care Leavers when the overall policy for this group is under-developed. HEIs in the Aimhigher West Area offer a progressive programme of activity targeted at Children in Care in Key Stages 3 and 4 but this does not extend in a progressive and coherent fashion to Care Leavers in further education where current arrangements are more ad hoc and fragmented.

6. The link between local authority leaving care teams, virtual schools, Connexions and FECs requires further development and would benefit from the formal adoption of quality assurance procedures in respect of Care Leavers. The Connexions service plays a pivotal role in the identification, transition and effective progression of Care Leavers but this work often occurs in isolation and is not always communicated to other agencies working with this group. There is support for the implementation of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education by stakeholders in the Aimhigher West Area. One local authority and several neighbouring colleges have expressed a desire to take part in any pilot programme which might be developed to launch the Quality Mark in the area.

Summary of recommendations

7. In view of the imminent closure of the Aimhigher programme (July 2010) existing members of the Aimhigher West Area Partnership should initiate pilot projects to address the following recommendations:

- Local authorities, Further Education Colleges, Connexions Services and other stakeholders should work together to develop management information sharing and partnership protocols in respect of Care Leavers.
- Further Education Colleges should develop a staff awareness training package about the needs of Care Leavers.
- Higher Education Institutions in possession of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education\(^2\) should work with partnership groups working towards the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education.
- Further Education Colleges should work with relevant partners, stakeholders and learners to make application for the award of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education.

Background and introduction

8. The number of known Care Leavers aged 19 years in full-time Higher Education (HE) has increased over the last five years from 260 in 2004 (5% of Care Leavers) to 422 in 2009 (7% of Care Leavers). Further information about the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education can be obtained from www.buttleuk.org

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\(^2\) Further information about the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education can be obtained from www.buttleuk.org
Leavers). In 2009 the 7% HE participation rate for Care Leavers aged 19 years compared with 24.6% of young people aged 19 years in the general population. The figures indicate that Care Leavers are significantly under-represented in higher education. Any further progress with this group is likely to require closer analysis of the processes at work when young people make the transition from that of “Child in Care” aged up to 16 years to “Care Leaver” aged 16+ years. This period of transition can be particularly challenging as it often brings further significant changes to the young person’s personal, social, financial, domestic and educational circumstances. Nationally, Aimhigher partnerships and others have devised a variety of interventions to support the progression of Care Leavers. However, a survey of widening participation officers in HE providers found that “very few had any special provision in place for applicants or students with a care background”. (Action on Access with Frank Buttle Trust 2009). The Aimhigher West Area Partnership Care Leavers in Further Education (FE) research project is timely because of the government’s declared interest in social mobility and the development of policies to target increasingly scarce educational resources at groups with the greatest need.

The purpose, scale and audience for the research report

9. This report is based upon research undertaken during the period January to March 2011 to evaluate the effectiveness of progression arrangements for Care Leavers in Further Education, especially in respect of learner transition to Higher Education. This report summarises the outcomes of research in seventeen FECs based in eight local authorities in the Aimhigher West Area and makes a series of recommendations for future practice. The report should be of interest to colleagues in schools, FECs, HEIs, local authorities, Connexions Services and other stakeholders concerned to improve the progression of Care Leavers.

Research methodology

10. Desk research was undertaken to ascertain the national and local policy context within which Aimhigher has been working to increase the participation of Care Leavers in both further and higher education. A data base containing the contact details of representatives from FECs, local authority virtual schools, Aimhigher coordinators, Connexions and HEIs was established. Each contact was provided with a schedule of questions to be used as a basis for a telephone interview (Please see Appendix 1 below for the list of questions used with respondents to the research). Over 40 contacts with an interest in the progression of Care Leavers were interviewed. All but one of seventeen colleges and three of the eight local authorities responded to the research request. Six FECs and one local authority were visited to undertake in depth face to face interviews. Informal discussions took place with OFFA and Buttle UK. (Please see Appendix 2 below for an anonymised list of contacts and their job roles and a summary of the responses made).

3 Figures have been taken from “The Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark: A Practice Guide” (Action on Access and The Frank Buttle Trust 2009) available from http://www.buttletrust.org/quality_mark/
4 Figures have been taken from “Young People from a Public Care Background: secondary analysis of national statistics in educational participation” (Institute of Education 2010) available from http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee
5 Throughout this report the term progression refers to the arrangements put in place to promote the development of learner aspirations, awareness and attainment over time.
Section B: National and Local Policy Context

Central Government Policy for Care Leavers

11. The previous government’s Children and Young Persons Act (2008)\(^6\) contained legislation to implement elements of the green paper “Care Matters (2006)\(^7\). In respect of Care Leavers this included statutory duties for local authorities as follows:

- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) element in a wider Pathway Plan to be drafted by the local authority.
- A “designated teacher” in each school to support Children in Care and to assist in drafting the PEP for Care Leavers.
- The development of ‘virtual schools’ with a virtual school headteacher (VSH).
- A person from the local authority to act as a personal adviser to Care Leavers.
- A local authority commitment to support Care Leavers in education or training until the age of 25.
- A £2,000 bursary from the local authority for Care Leavers who go to higher education.

12. The coalition government has expressed its continuing support for the effective progression of Care Leavers in both further and higher education. Speaking at a conference held by Buttle UK on 11 January 2011, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Tim Loughton stated as follows:\(^8\):

........we should all be concerned, outraged even, that tens of thousands of children go through the state-funded care system but never fully realise their talents or potential........The pioneering Quality Mark you’ve (Buttle UK) developed is a huge step forward in encouraging universities, and now colleges, to recognise and address the very specific needs of Care Leavers. And so I back wholeheartedly what you are doing in this area.

13. In his speech to the Buttle UK conference (Jan 2011) the minister also referred to differences in the educational performance of Care Leavers as between geographical areas and commented as follows:

........some areas like Ealing do brilliantly where almost a fifth of children in the care system go on to higher education, when the national average is only 7 per cent.

It is worth noting that for some years Thames Valley University has been working in the London Borough of Ealing with Care Leavers as a specific target group and it may be that this is a contributory factor to success in the authority.


\(^7\) Further details of “Care Matters” (October 2006) are available from http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/Cm%207137

\(^8\) The full text of the Minister’s speech at the Buttle UK conference is available at http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072287/tim-loughton-to-the-frank-buttle-trust-conference
14. A recent letter (11 April 2011) from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to the national Aimhigher Alignment Group confirmed the government commitment to Care Leavers. The letter stated that whilst there was no specific reference to Care Leavers in the BIS Grant Letter to HEFCE\textsuperscript{9} “...they (Care Leavers) are covered in HEFCE’s detailed guidance and that still stands. There has been no change in policy”.

15. Whilst the government continues to support the general direction of policy and strategy for the education of Care Leavers initiated by the previous government, there are changes to the funding available to support these strategies. It seems likely that general reductions or re-prioritisation of the funding available to local authorities, FECs and HE providers will mean that increased emphasis will be placed on targeting the available resource to meet the needs of Care Leavers.

Office for Fair Access Guidance

16. The publication of “Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education - An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance” (October 2010)\textsuperscript{10} informed the government decision to raise the cap on student fees for higher education to a maximum of £9,000 per annum. In return for this increase in fees the government expects HE providers to draft Access Agreements\textsuperscript{11} for approval by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Care Leavers are a specific policy target group for both OFFA and HEFCE. For example, “How to produce an access agreement for 2012-13” (OFFA 2011/01) states as follows:

*If you have identified specific under-representation in your student body, for example among Care Leavers, disabled students, or under-represented ethnic groups, we would encourage you to set targets to address this.* (Paragraph 95 page 25)

This means that Access Agreements produced by HE providers which contain reference to outreach or support arrangements for Care Leavers are likely to receive a favourable response from the OFFA and any costs associated with this work can be counted as legitimate expenditure in support of access strategy.

Funding for 16-19 education and training

17. The recently published “16-19 Funding Statement and Statutory Guidance: Arrangements for 16-19 Funding of Education and Training” (Young People’s Learning Agency 2010)\textsuperscript{12} announced an overall increase of 1.5% in funding to the education and training budget for the 16-19 age group. The new

\textsuperscript{9} The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body whose function is to allocate funding for HE on behalf of the government.


\textsuperscript{11} Access Agreements “…set out how institutions will sustain or improve access or student retention”. Further information on “How to produce an access agreement for 2012-13” (OFFA 2011/01)is available from www.offa.org.uk

funding arrangements reflect a change in government priorities with a reduction of 74% in funding for entitlement and enrichment activities.\textsuperscript{13} (i.e. A reduction from £650m to £150m) and an increase in the funding for other provision such as Apprenticeships. Some FEC leaders and practitioners believe that entitlement and enrichment activities are an important element in securing the retention and engagement of the most disadvantaged learners such as Care Leavers.

18. In March 2011, the government gave further details of its plans to replace the £560m per annum Education Maintenance Allowance\textsuperscript{14} with a reduced and more targeted fund of £180m for low-income learners aged 16-19 years (£15m is for Care Leavers and those on income support i.e. approximately £1,200 per annum and £165m for a ‘Learner Support Fund’ to be administered by schools and colleges).

19. The reduction in entitlement funding, combined with the announcement that the Educational Maintenance Allowance is to end and be replaced by a more targeted reduced allocation, will mean that the scarce resources available for entitlement, enrichment and support for disadvantaged learners will need to be carefully targeted.

20. In addition, whilst the strategic responsibility for further education is to remain with the local authority the source of funding will be the ‘Young People’s Learning Agency’. The new system will see the YPLA directly funding 16 - 19 provision in FE colleges, sixth form colleges and independent providers, allowing local authorities to focus on their role as champions of young people’s learning and giving them more opportunity to fulfil their responsibility to meet the needs of their local community and identify gaps in provision. At the same time, it will allow providers greater freedom in the design of their curriculums. \textsuperscript{(Young People’s Learning Agency)}\textsuperscript{15}

This division of 16-19 strategy from funding is likely to test the relationship between FECs and local authorities especially in respect of provision for Care Leavers where a number of statutory duties are vested in the local authority as ‘corporate parent’.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Central government has confirmed its support for strategies which address the under-performance and ensure the effective progression of Care Leavers.}

\textbf{Changes to the funding priorities in further education will mean that resources will need to be targeted to meet the needs of Care Leavers.}

\textbf{The division of responsibility for funding from that of strategy for 16-19 education and training places increased emphasis on the quality of the relationship between local authorities and FECs.}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{13} The Entitlement Curriculum includes guaranteed support to all learners through tutoring and guidance activities. Enrichment refers to social, cultural and enrichment activities which are ‘additional’ to core course provision.

\textsuperscript{14} Further information on the replacement for EMA is available from: http://www.ypla.gov.uk/news/latest/bursary-announcement.htm

\textsuperscript{15} Further information on the Young People’s Learning Agency and the relationship with local authorities is available from: http://www.ypla.gov.uk/localauthorities/
Section C: Existing Research into Care Leavers in Further and Higher Education

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on research into Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The YIPPEE Study

21. The European Union funded ‘Young People from a public care background pathways to education in Europe’ (YIPPEE) comparative study addressed two key questions:

- How well does the care system recognise and promote educational potential among children in care?
- To what extent are they able to, or prevented from accessing universal educational provision beyond compulsory schooling?

22. In England the study focused on a sample of young people aged 19 to 21 years and the managers of leaving care services in five local authorities. Findings of the study are contained in the “English summary national report (WP5)” (Institute of Education 2010). Key points of relevance to this research were as follows:

- Expectations and aspirations for the young people concerned were modest and they tended to be steered towards vocational qualifications rather than academic courses....it was more common for care leavers to follow a vocational route building up qualifications through courses at FECs.
- They (the young people) reported a serious falling off of professional support after leaving school and little targeted support for care leavers in their further and higher educational institutions although those at university seemed to enjoy greater stability in their lives than others.
- Nearly all the young people (in the sample) had experienced extreme disruptions in their education....they had a strong learning identity.....they looked forward to the next phase of their educational lives in the hope that it would be better than the previous one.
- Their (the young people’s) aspirations were generally rather modest...career aspirations were mostly unspecific and fluid subject to a change in downward direction in the face of practical difficulties.
- The majority of professionals tended to reinforce their (the young people’s)class and gender based assumptions about education and career paths as to challenge them.
- Many more young people (are) growing up in public care have the potential and motivation to benefit from further and higher education than has been assumed in the past
- It is very important that care and education practitioners recognise that...it is most unlikely that the GCSE examination results achieved by looked after young people represent their true level of ability

16 The “YIPPEE – young people from a public care background pathways to education – English Summary National Report” (Institute of Education 2010)is available from http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee
OFSTED thematic research

23. “Support for Care Leavers” (OFSTED July 2009) studied provision for Care Leavers in six local authorities and in relation to Aimhigher noted as follows:

The Aimhigher programme helped raise aspirations and encouraged Care Leavers to think about following further or higher education courses. (OFSTED 2009)

The OFSTED report went on to give examples of the ways in which Aimhigher partnerships involving a variety of stakeholders such as local authorities, colleges, universities and Connexions could develop protocols which promoted the smooth progression of Care Leavers. A key finding of the study highlighted the importance of partnerships to effective provision for Care Leavers as follows:

High aspirations for Care Leavers, supported by good corporate parenting strategies, coordinated partnerships and the delivery of effective, coordinated services. A strong commitment to support ‘looked after children’ into adulthood, underpinned by effective policies and practice, enabled Care Leavers to retain their looked after status to 18 years of age and beyond if needed. ‘Leaving care’ was not seen as a single event, but as a process of transition. (OFSTED 2009)

24. OFSTED also noted the importance of developing protocols between the various agencies with responsibilities or services for Care Leavers.

Two authorities had negotiated protocols with colleges and universities to help Care Leavers continue their education. In one authority, Care Leavers had fast track interviews at college; in another, two universities agreed a reduced point admissions protocol for Care Leavers. (OFSTED 2009)

The “By Degrees” research

25. The “By Degrees” (2005) action research project commissioned by the Frank Buttle Trust (now Buttle UK) investigated the higher education experience of young people with a background in care. The research was commissioned at a time when the educational needs of Care Leavers were under review as a result of the “Children (Leaving Care) Act” (2000). A cohort of 129 young people at university who had a background in care had GCSE performance similar to the national average with 40% of the cohort progressing to higher education through FECs. The research outlined the challenging circumstances faced by the cohort with 60% of the sample suffering abuse or neglect prior to coming into care. At the time of the study Care Leavers were not a specific target group for the Aimhigher programme and the researchers stated that initiatives designed to increase the numbers of disadvantaged young people going to university ‘did not seem to have raised awareness of the needs of Care Leavers to any appreciable extent’.

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17 Support for Care Leavers (OFSTED July 2009) is available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications
18 The “By degrees” action research project findings are published in “Going to University from Care” Jackson S, Ajayi S and Quigley M (University of London Institute of Education 2005) available from http://www.buttleuk.org/data/files/Research_Documents/
Research at a national level into the progression of Care Leavers shows that the expectations and aspirations of Care Leavers and those who work with them are low and that this, combined with gaps in education or the absence of targeted support, means that this group does not fulfil its potential. In some local authorities effective local strategic leadership supported by programmes like Aimhigher can make a difference to the progression of Care Leavers.

Local research commissioned by Aimhigher in the South West region

26. A recent study commissioned by the Aimhigher West Area Partnership entitled “Who might benefit from Higher Education” (UWE 2010) reviewed guidelines contained in “Higher Education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners” (HEFCE 2007). The study critically analysed a key phrase in the targeting guidelines which was as follows:

Resources should be targeted at learners with the potential to benefit from higher education who come from under-represented communities. (HEFCE 2007: p.8 paragraph 21)

The researchers stated that there was widespread agreement about the need to target young people from ‘under-represented communities’. However, there was less agreement about the phrase ‘potential to benefit from HE’ which has subjective connotations that can lead to a variety of outcomes. Most importantly, the study suggested, learners from certain backgrounds were more likely to show their potential to benefit from HE after involvement in activities such as those provided by Aimhigher. The report suggested that young people with a background in care suffer many disruptions to their education and have been unable to demonstrate their potential for HE to the full or lack the necessary self awareness to consider HE as an option for the future. The researchers provided a comment from a headteacher of a virtual school which supported this notion as follows:

A lot of our young people have such fundamental gaps in learning from an early stage that some of them are not very confident readers. …… But I wouldn’t want to write off any young person in care because they aren’t a confident reader. They may have been born drug dependent, for example. It can take a long time to recover from that and for brightness to show. (Virtual School Headteacher)

27. A significant proportion of learners from disadvantaged groups that are under-represented in higher education attend Further Education Colleges. FECs therefore play an important part in the progression route to higher education for Care Leavers. One of the three research objectives of “Aimhigher and Colleges: A report to the Aimhigher Areas in the SW Region” (Hatt S and Tate J 2009) was “to look at the way that colleges in the south west region were targeting learners from socio economic groups 4-8, disabled learners and looked after young people (LAYP)”. However, the report was

21 “Aimhigher and Colleges: A report to the Aimhigher Areas in the SW Region” Hatt S and Tate J (July 2009) is available at http://www.aimhighersw.ac.uk/research.
unable to provide examples of the way in which colleges addressed the issue of targeting young people with a background in care.

**Government Office of the South West research**

28. Prior to its closure in the autumn of 2010, the Government Office of the South West supported the ‘South West Education Protects Network’ of headteachers of virtual schools. The network commissioned research into the attainment of Care Leavers because of “the general concern and experience that young people in care do not continue to fulfil their potential beyond statutory education”.

29. The subsequent report “Improving the educational outcomes of children in care in the South West Region” (Uwins C 2009) provided details of the educational attainment of young people in care in terms of their performance in the GCSE examinations. The attainment of 5 GCSE grades A*-C (or Level 2) has, until the recent introduction of the English Baccalaureate, been taken as the national benchmark for Key Stage 4 and a proxy for the potential of learners to progress through Level 3 to higher education.

30. Tables 1 and 2 below are derived from the Uwins study and compare examination performance between Children in Care in the South West and the national mainstream cohort for GCSE attainment at grades A*-C and A*-G. In 2006 in the South West Region 440 (5,100 nationally) Children in Care were eligible to take GCSE examinations and of these 12% (52 learners) achieved the national benchmark of 5 GCSE Grades A*-C. Similarly, in 2007 this figure was 395 (5,100 nationally) with 12% (47 learners) achieving the national benchmark.

**Table 1: GCSE performance 2006**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total in Year 11 eligible</th>
<th>% of CIC obtaining at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-C</th>
<th>‘mainstream’ Cohort %</th>
<th>% of CIC obtaining at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-G</th>
<th>‘mainstream’ Cohort %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>South West 440</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England 5,100</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: GCSE performance 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total in Year 11 eligible</th>
<th>% of CIC obtaining at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-C</th>
<th>‘mainstream’ Cohort %</th>
<th>% of CIC obtaining at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-G</th>
<th>‘mainstream’ Cohort %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>South West 395</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England 5,100</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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22 “Improving the educational outcomes of children in care in the South West Region” (Uwins C 2009) used national statistics collected via the national OC2 data collection exercise. Further details are contained in “Bridging series for outcomes for Looked After Children” available from the Department for Education at: http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000894/index.shtml
31. If the assumption is made that ability and talent is spread equally between all learners regardless of social grouping then approximately 60% of Care Leavers had the potential to achieve 5 GCSE grades A*-C since this is the performance of the mainstream cohort in 2006 and 2007. When comparison is made with the regional mainstream cohort it can be seen that the attainment gap between actual and potential performance of Children in Care is 46.2% (203 learners) and 47.5% (188 learners) in each of the years 2006 and 2007 respectively.

32. This pattern is also reflected in national statistics. For example, in September 2009 there were 5,300 Y11 Children in Care eligible for GCSE and of these 780 (14.8%) achieved 5 A*-C grades compared with 67% for the national mainstream cohort of over 600,000 pupils. Once again, applying the assumption that ability and talent is evenly spread within the cohort then this would seem to indicate that nationally there is a “missing Aimhigher cohort” of 2,771 (i.e 50% of the Care Leaver cohort per year).

33. At a local level, given the relatively high concentration of population in the Aimhigher West Area by comparison to that of the South West region as a whole then it seems likely that a significant number of this potential Aimhigher cohort will be in the seventeen Further Education Colleges in the area. Further, it would seem reasonable to expect that this group could achieve at least Level 2 in Year 12 and move on to L3. This means that there could be a ‘hidden’ or ‘lost’ Aimhigher cohort made up of Care Leavers in the Aimhigher West Partnership Area.

In recent years 50% of Children in Care/Care Leavers with the potential to achieve the national benchmark of 5 GCSE A*-C have not done so by the end of Key Stage 4 and have the potential to benefit from Aimhigher type interventions. Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges make up a small but significant “lost cohort” in the Aimhigher West Area.

Section D: Targeting provision for Care Leavers – the Aimhigher “lost cohort”

34. The recent research into Aimhigher in colleges in the West Area (Hatt S and Tate J 2009) noted that approximately 40.0% of college respondents found the targeting of learners to be “extremely difficult” whilst another 40.0% found targeting to be “extremely easy”. Individual practitioner perceptions depended on the way that each college had addressed the targeting guidelines (HEFCE 2007). The underpinning ethos of the management of the Aimhigher West Area has been the “support for rather than direct delivery of” national Aimhigher objectives. In the colleges’ research (2009) the Aimhigher West Area manager commented that:

If you went down the 17 (colleges in the area), you would find that there are 17 different ways that people are trying to do this. Even though they may be doing it in different ways they are all trying to do it (identifying target groups and addressing learner needs) the very best (way) they can.

(Aimhigher West Area Manager)
The targeting controversy

35. In view of the difficulties associated with identifying the “potential to benefit from HE” in young people with a background in care the Aimhigher West Area partnership decided that all Children in Care/Care Leavers should automatically be part of the Aimhigher cohort unless there was a good reason for their exclusion.

........identifying potential can be a volatile thing as looked after children’s lives can change so much and so often. In one school year, potential for HE could look doubtful and, in another, quite viable.

(Virtual School Head)

36. In “Who might benefit from Higher Education?” (Hatt et al 2010) termed the Aimhigher West targeting strategy for Care Leavers a “non-selective developmental approach” and argued that this “turns the usual Aimhigher practice on its head”. This exception to the practice recommended by HEFCE is seen as a reason to reconsider the assumptions upon which targeting is based.

37. Alternatively, it might be argued that Aimhigher West has adopted a more inclusive approach by suggesting that, whilst all learners might benefit from Aimhigher provision, there are certain groups whose needs are relatively greater than others because they suffer the greatest relative disadvantage. However, regardless of the approach adopted to targeting the argument becomes specious if there are no mechanisms in place for learners with a background in care to be identified in the first place or, where there are mechanisms in place, the Aimhigher coordinator is excluded from the process as is the case in most FECs in the Aimhigher West Area. One College Aimhigher Coordinator stated as follows:

The Aimhigher cohort might have some Care Leavers on it but I don’t do anything....I do not know who they are unless someone identifies them for me. (College Aimhigher Coordinator)

38. None of the colleges participating in this research project targeted Care Leavers as a specific group for participation in the Aimhigher programme. As with the “Aimhigher and colleges” study (Hatt S and Tate J 2009), this research found that the targeting of disadvantaged learners is an issue which has not been fully addressed by FECs in the area. As a result, it seems likely that resources have been allocated to make some form of HE introductory experience available for a wide range of learners rather than the target groups recommended by the funders of the Aimhigher programme.

Inclusion v exclusion – possible definitions

39. One of the reasons for the problems with the targeting of Aimhigher in FECs might be due to the apparent lack of agreement about the use of the term “inclusion”. For example, in one college all learners on BTEC Level 3 courses are included in the Aimhigher cohort whilst those on an A level route are not. In another all students in a particular subject area are targeted for Aimhigher provision whilst, in another, all students on A level and BTEC level 3 courses are “targeted” because of the perceived economic disadvantage in the area.

Care Leavers are included in the general provision made by the college. This is an area of high deprivation so much so that we do not have an Aimhigher target group because they’ll all fit in one way or another. Also identification makes them (the students) feel different from their peers so there is a lot of resistance. It would be easy to miss some of the target group if we tried to segregate them.

(College Admissions Administrator)
40. Whilst this last example sounds “inclusive”, in practice it is not. Inclusive management behaviour takes account of the needs of individual learners and then appropriate provision is made available to meet the needs of those with greatest relative disadvantage. This is very different from giving everybody the same experience and then terming this “Inclusive”. The colleges’ study (Hatt S and Tate J 2009) found that one of the key factors for sustained involvement in Aimhigher by FECs was:

...an inclusive or a ‘whole class’ approach to targeting to focus on cohorts of manageable size and to alleviate resistance to a selective approach. Since the colleges’ historic role has been the provision of education for working class students, they include very large numbers of learners from the Aimhigher target groups. Working with all students on courses where there had been low progression to HE found favour with staff as it avoided selection and enhanced student learning.

41. This unwillingness or “resistance to a selective approach” on the part of FECs means that, even where Care Leavers have been identified, they are likely to receive the same provision as their peers regardless of their individual need. It could be argued that giving everyone the same experience or provision could, in fact, be termed “exclusive” since the individual needs of learners have not been taken into consideration. This is particularly important when provision for Care Leavers is planned since it is clear that this group will have specific needs as a result of their previous personal, educational and social experiences. For provision to be fully inclusive some form of targeting must take place which means that Care Leavers receive interventions which have been specifically devised to meet their needs. The following comment from a senior manager in a college was representative of the general response to the issue of targeting Care Leavers.

There is no specific Aimhigher provision for Care Leavers….The college always tries to do something for a specific individual whether they are a Care Leaver or not. (College Senior Manager)

The procedures for targeting learners for the Aimhigher programme are insufficiently differentiated or selective to be fully inclusive. Making the same offer to all learners in a particular class or group is unlikely to meet the needs of those learners who face the greatest relative disadvantage to effective progression. Key target groups such as Care Leavers have not been identified and there are no procedures currently in place to remedy this situation.

The identification of Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges

42. Along with the general unwillingness to make selective arrangements, there are a number of reasons why the targeting of Care Leavers for Aimhigher provision is problematic for colleges. For example, Care Leavers are not required to disclose their background in care when making the transition to post-16 education or training (although most FECs have quite detailed screening procedures designed to identify the nature of learner needs across any given cohort). The OFSTED study (2009) found that Care Leavers often believed that a background in care would cause discriminatory practices to take place by various providers which would not be in their (Care Leavers) best interest and as a result of this there was considerable learner resistance to identification. Several colleges responding to this research reported that Care Leavers did not wish to be targeted as they feared the stigma associated with being
treated differently. Others wanted a “fresh start” and for their independence to be recognised. In one college a survey was carried out part way through the academic year and this resulted in the college’s knowledge of the identity of Care Leavers rising from 26 in number to over 60.

**Information sharing partnership protocols**

43. Clearly it is impossible for a college to offer inclusive provision if information about the status and background of learners is unavailable or incomplete due to the requirements of data protection legislation. In one local authority, (Bath and North East Somerset) a ‘Partnership Working Protocol’ has been developed which aims to overcome the difficulties involved in data transfer or availability. Signatories to the protocol include the authority’s Children in Care Moving OnTeam, Connexions and local FE Colleges. The headteacher of the local authority virtual school works in support of this protocol and all learners are made aware of the information that will be shared with the college and the reasons why this is happening. The protocol states in the first and second paragraphs as follows:

**Section from the Bath and North East Somerset Partnership Working Protocol for Care Leavers. (Please see Appendix 3 for a full version of the protocol)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Application to College</strong></td>
<td>When a young person is applying to go to college they should make it clear on their application form that they are a young person who is in care or leaving care. This will assist the college in raising staff awareness of the potential for the young person needing specific/additional support...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Information to be provided by the Children in Care and Moving on Team to the College</strong></td>
<td>There will be two levels of information exchange - the first at a universal level will be basic...intended to highlight the fact that the young person is or has been in care but will not divulge the reasons why... The second level (of information exchange) will concern information to help the college to manage any specific needs of or risks posed by the young person. This should be treated as confidential...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. Several colleges reported that links with local authority social services or virtual schools were weak. In many cases, the college had not participated in the process of drafting the Personal Education Plan. The PEP forms part of the overall Pathway Plan which the local authority has a statutory duty to maintain until the age of 25 where the Care Leaver remains engaged in education or training. In some cases the social worker, acting as Personal Adviser to the Care Leaver, made the decision that information about the identity or needs of a Care Leaver should be on a “needs based” arrangement. Several colleges reported that they did not know about the identity of a Care Leaver “until there was a crisis”. One respondent gave the example of a young person who arrived at the college from a local authority outside the area and soon displayed severe anger management issues. In another college the identity and needs of a Care Leaver arose through the implementation of the college’s policy on safeguarding. The senior manager stated as follows:
Had we known about the background of this young person we would have been able to manage the situation in a more pro-active fashion (College Student Services Manager)

Learner resistance, fears of stigmatisation, data protection and professional boundary demarcation are reasons why the identity of Care Leavers is withheld from FECs. Some local authorities are developing information sharing protocols so that Care Leavers can see that there are positive reasons why their identity, status and personal circumstances should be shared with educational providers.

Challenges faced by Care Leavers

45. Apart from being unaware of the identity of Care Leavers in the college, it was clear that many of the respondents were also unaware of the degree of disadvantage that Care Leavers have and the challenges which they have to face. Comments gathered as part of this research included:

When they come here they are supposed to be responsible adults.

(Post 16 Senior Tutor with responsibility for HE)

Just because they are Care Leavers does not mean to say they need more (support)....Aimhigher has always been open to them.

(College Learning Mentor)

We don’t target Care Leavers and we don’t use Care Leaver as criteria for Aimhigher provision.

(College Aimhigher Coordinator)

We could do more on targeting and 1:1 work with Care Leavers.

(College Director of Study)

46. There was evidence that most colleges wished to develop their awareness of the needs of Care Leavers and to respond accordingly. One college had recently published a list of aims with respect to Care Leavers as follows:

- To actively encourage Care Leavers to make applications for Higher Education.
- To raise awareness of the needs of Care Leavers
- To make an effective response to those needs by identifying and working to overcome the barriers they face.

Some practitioners in FECs are unaware of the challenges and degree of disadvantage that Care Leavers face as they progress through educational phases. Most colleges are making attempts to address the lack of staff awareness of the needs of Care Leavers through the development of policies for Care Leavers and continuous professional development.
47. Colleagues from local authorities were asked what they considered to be the greatest challenges facing Care Leavers as they progress into and through post-16 provision and what they would wish to see happening in FECs in support of this group of learners. Respondents referred to gaps in the education of Care Leavers caused by discontinuities in placements which in turn led to a lack of confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and expectation on the part of young people and of those who work with them. Respondents felt that these challenges could be ameliorated by greater awareness on the part of designated college staff of the issues facing Care Leavers and through provision of 1:1 support by learning mentors or associates, some of which could be provided by peer or adult role models. The notions of improved communication and the establishment of protocols were emphasised. (Further details of the responses to these two questions are provided in Appendix 4 below “Challenges facing Care Leavers in post 16 education”).

**Colleagues from local authorities referred to the discontinuities in the educational history of Care Leavers which leads to skill gaps, lack of confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and expectation on the part of the young people and many of those who work with them.**

**Section E: Provision for Care Leavers in Further Education**

48. At an early stage in this research project it became clear that FECs were experiencing difficulty with the identification of Care Leavers. However, two of the seventeen FECs in the research were able to provide details of the higher education destinations of Care Leavers. In both instances the colleges had an academic rather than vocational or ‘mixed economy’ market focus. In order to make recommendations about Aimhigher or higher education outreach provision for Care Leavers it seemed necessary to look at the way that overall provision was established for this group in FECs. Local authority leaving care teams, virtual schools, Connexions and various agencies within colleges each make a contribution to the overall educational experience and progression of Care Leavers.

**Further Education Colleges**

49. It was not always easy to identify the person(s) with responsibility for Care Leavers in FECs. Several colleges in the Aimhigher West area revealed that there was still considerable work to be done to address the issue of targeted provision for Care Leavers in further education. The following responses are representative of colleges where the provision for Care Leavers was still under discussion.

*We don’t have a specific person with responsibility for the pastoral care, enrichment, progression or guidance of Care Leavers........we do not have any tailor made provision for Care Leavers....it is not a requirement to do this and we have a universal service which they can access. We have students from care who could go to HE but they lack confidence and believe themselves to be in a benefits trap...*

(College Aimhigher Careers and IAG coordinator)
...it takes time to find the people you’d need to talk to...it (Care Leavers) does not fit under any particular heading...there are three areas in the college at least with an interest in this.

(College Aimhigher Coordinator)

We do not have processes in place formally to monitor this (i.e. the number of Care Leavers in the college) at the moment, but are putting a new system in place next academic year. Presently they (Care Leavers) are identified via the ‘At risk register’ with the Learning Mentors or they are self-identifying.

(College Aimhigher Coordinator)

Several colleges are in the process of developing policies, procedures and responsibilities for Care Leavers. It is difficult for the person with responsibility for Aimhigher to identify, target and deliver the programme to Care Leavers when the overall policy is in a state of development.

50. One college senior manager described a ‘Getting to know you’ questionnaire which was completed some months after learners had joined the college and received a relatively high response rate. Responses to the questionnaire revealed a large number of “vulnerable learners” of whom the college had no prior knowledge. In another FEC, the Aimhigher Coordinator described how Care Leavers became known to the college through the work of Learning Mentors or through self-referral. Case Study 1 below shows the way in which the college Aimhigher Coordinator was able to work in support of one such Care Leaver.

Case Study 1:  Example of the way in which an Aimhigher Coordinator in a Further Education College worked with a Care Leaver.

Towards the end of the first year of a Level 3 Media Studies course a young person with a background in social care decided that she would like to attend a private university in London. Her key-worker requested a meeting with the College’s Aimhigher Coordinator and the team-leader for student support to discuss how the student could best be supported towards her goals.

Subsequently, a meeting was held between the student, her college key worker and the college’s Aimhigher Coordinator (AhC) to discuss the student’s ambitions, concerns and initial questions. A follow-up meeting with the student was arranged by the AhC. The course that the student wished to do at the university had a relatively high annual cost and so the AhC helped the student to explore the different grants and additional funding that might be available. The AhC also phoned the university to discuss their requirements and any other related information that would be of use to the student. Following this the AhC prepared an information pack for the student to study and arranged a further meeting to discuss matters arising from the pack.

The student contacted the university and arranged a preliminary visit where she received some very favourable feedback and encouragement from tutors. (College Aimhigher Bursary funding was used to pay the student’s train fare for this initial visit). In the following September (Y13), the AhC spent time with
the student to ensure that her UCAS application was completed in a way that reflected her full-potential, talents, achievements and personal circumstances. Subsequently, the student gained a place on the university course of her choice and the AhC reports that she “is now happily nearing the end of her first year as an under-graduate”.

51. Case Study 1 above shows how enhanced provision for Care Leavers can make a difference to student progression. However, in general there is no separate or discrete provision for Care Leavers in FECs in the Aimhigher West Area. Where colleges were making plans to offer specific provision to Care Leavers this often depended for its success on the support and cooperation of external agencies. For example one senior manager stated as follows:

One issue for us - and I have taken this up with the county council - is that we are not certain if we are always told about looked after children when they progress to post-16 colleges. This is further complicated by movement from other counties and the number of our students who leave the parental home post-16 but do not enter the care system. I would say that our known Care Leavers are less likely to progress to HE and that they are at greater risk of dropping out in FE, but the numbers are too low for me to be able to support this with any meaningful statistical evidence. (Assistant Principal)

Local Authorities

52. The research report “Improving the educational outcomes of children in care in the South West Region” (Uwins C 2009) contained a number of recommendations to local authorities to support the transition and progression of Care Leavers from age 16 onward as follows:

- A common format for the Personal Education Plan (PEP) element of the Pathway Plan across the South West region should be devised.
- The professionals involved in drawing up the PEP should include ‘designated teachers’ from feeder and receiving institutions; a Connexions Personal Adviser and the professional who holds “all round” knowledge about the young person and their educational capability.
- The PEP should be “underpinned by the development of protocols agreed by local authorities with post-16 institutions and the Connexions service”.
- The appointment of a teacher to local authority leaving care teams.
- DCSF to encourage FECs and HEIs to nominate ‘designated lecturers’ for Care Leavers.
- The virtual school head teacher to ensure that post 16 institutions have a system “comparable with that in place pre-16, to monitor young people’s educational progress”.

53. The previous government developed a “Virtual School Head Toolkit” which continues to be endorsed by the Department for Education. The toolkit (Chapter 8 “Supporting Post -16 Education”) states as follows:

The VSH should ensure that:

- Their management information systems can identify more able looked after young people early in their secondary school career.

- Designated teacher training provided by the virtual school includes strategies for assisting these looked after young people “likely to progress” to:
  - make good subject choices at GCSE,
  - make appropriate post-16 education choices,
  - participate in “aim higher” (sic) initiatives,
  - apply for further education/ university, including providing help with personal statements,

- These young people have good access to a sensitive/responsive adult mentor in school (mediation of emerging challenges, ongoing pastoral support, reinforce aspirations as lifelong learner and achiever) and a virtual school mentor post 16, if possible.

- Social care colleagues are made aware of these young people’s potential and encouraged to allocate carers who are likely to support their aspirations actively wherever possible.

- They develop good links with local further education colleges and universities to promote the needs of Care Leavers and encourage the colleges to develop support strategies, take the Frank Buttle quality mark etc.

54. As part of the research for this report, colleagues in virtual schools and local authorities were asked about the ways in which local authority leaving care teams and virtual schools linked with local Further Education Colleges so that support for Care Leavers was coherent. Responses were sometimes limited to a statement about the numbers of Care Leavers making the transition to FE but the general impression given was that this was an area where there was a desire for further development. Several local authorities have developed agreements with the Connexions service to undertake this link. The VSH in another authority is working with Connexions to develop a protocol to support vulnerable groups in further education but local FECs have yet to fully engage in this process. In the local authority where there is a well developed formal information sharing protocol both senior college staff and the VSH were able to describe the ways in which this relationship was developing. However, the evidence is that the link between care teams, virtual schools and FECs is weak in the majority of local authorities in the Aimhigher West Area.

The link between local authority leaving care teams, virtual schools, Connexions and FECs requires further development and would benefit from the formal adoption of quality assurance and information sharing partnership protocols in respect of Care Leavers.
55. In Salford local authority the role of Virtual Headteacher has been extended to cover all young people in education up to the age of 21 years and this has been helpful to those young people on provision located outside the locality (Cabinet Office 2009)\textsuperscript{24}.

The role has opened access to parts of the education support services, Aim Higher (sic) and mentors, previously under utilised by social workers in supporting their young people.

(Senior Officer Salford Local Authority)

56. In September 2003 Bristol Local Authority appointed a peripatetic teacher to work with the authority’s ‘Care and After Team’. Case Study 2 below outlines the way in which the teacher works with Care Leavers.

\textbf{Case Study 2: Personal Statement by Mark Farmer a teacher in the Bristol Local Authority ‘Care and After Team’}

\begin{quote}
My background is as a teacher of science and also of children with special educational needs. I have relevant qualifications in both of these areas. As far as I am aware, I am the only teacher working in this capacity in the country. I have therefore largely developed the job as I have gone along.

The work that I do varies enormously. It includes helping our young people to apply for college or work, assistance with coursework and support into Higher Education. Bristol offers a very high level of support for young people who progress on to HE, including paying their rent and a small living allowance. I try to look at achievement in the broadest possible sense, including cultural and sporting events. We organise an art exhibition of our young people’s work every year and encourage participation in sports and leisure activities. Young people have been on trips to national theatres and art galleries, as well as to Premier League football and international cricket matches. We have an Achievement Day every summer that recognises the efforts that our young people have made over the previous 12 months.

I do not have a formal referral system; colleagues are aware of what I do and will approach me if they have a young person who requires help. Similarly, duty workers will tend to direct relevant queries towards me. We are responsible for about 350 young people (Care Leavers) in total at any one time. I have the numbers for over 60 of these young people stored on my work phone. I will see some of these young people every week, but the majority only as and when required. I also act as Personal Advisor to 5 young people.

In the time that I have been in the post, I have established a large number of useful contacts outside the team. These include Connexions, local schools, local Universities and Further Education Colleges. These are mostly informal arrangements; I do not have sufficient time to be setting up policies or regular meetings. I have always found that people in these organisations are very willing to help our young people and we work together to remove as many barriers as possible that might affect the progress of the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} “Realising Young Potential :supporting care leavers into education training and employment” (Cabinet Office November 2009) is available from: http://www.leavingcare.org/admin/uploads/5f6cbcd482b1cb154accb76b52427d41.pdf
The Connexions Service

57. The Connexions service has a key role in the support for Care Leavers in their transition from school to FE and HE. In a thematic report, OFSTED gave an example where one authority had identified that some Care Leavers dropped out in the period between leaving school and starting further education. In response, the Connexions worker based in the leaving care team provided targeted support to Care Leavers during the summer break to ensure their retention in education. Connexion service workers in all the authorities visited by OFSTED worked closely with leaving care teams, giving Care Leavers advice and information and making young people aware of learning and employment opportunities:

‘If it wasn’t for the Connexions worker, I would never have got to university. I didn’t think I could do it, but he thought I could and he and my foster carer encouraged me a lot and helped me to apply. Now I am there and I love it!’  

(Learner response in OFSTED Thematic Study 2010)

58. In the Aimhigher West Area it is clear that Connexions plays a pivotal role in providing advice and guidance to Care Leavers about higher education. However, the Connexions respondents stated that it was not always possible to provide details of the numbers of Care Leavers who progress to higher education. One Connexions Service respondent is working with a local authority VSH to produce an information sharing protocol whilst another explained how all Connexions Personal Advisers are reminded that Care Leavers are a specific target group for Aimhigher. The Executive Manager of another Connexions Service in Aimhigher West provided details of senior management contact persons in a number of local colleges and described the process which is used when working with Care Leavers making the transition to further education.

Case Study 3: Connexions Service support for Care Leavers - Statement by Connexions Service Executive Manager

The (Connexions) Manager and Connexions Advisers meet with Care Leaver services in the local authority to develop strategies to reduce and prevent these young people from becoming ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEET). Connexions Personal Advisers work intensively with the young people to...
support their progression, support visits to colleges and universities. Connexions works closely with the local colleges and training providers to ensure that there is appropriate provision for young people in the areas. This is achieved through multi-agency strategy meetings with Connexions, Local Authority Service Commissioners, training providers and colleges; offering young people impartial information, advice and guidance; support with making applications to college and university; practicing interview techniques and liaising with partner organisations to ensure smooth transitions.

Where a student has a statement of Learning Difficulty or Disability or we have identified the need for additional support during transition into FE, a section 139A assessment will be made. This assessment should ensure that all the needs of the young person are met by the education establishment and should include a summary of the young person’s personal and social needs which can sometimes be more pertinent to a Child in Care/Child Leaving Care. We are often in direct communication with students’ social workers and carers and attend Looked After Children reviews when informed.

A Connexions PA will often establish that a CIC and CLC have a priority need for support and we have a sense of duty to act as a ‘corporate parent’ for their educational needs. This can mean we become more involved in ensuring that the CIC/CLC has equal access to opportunities. Examples of such activities are, arranging for: work experience; Learning Mentors; transport; negotiating entry to education with providers and supporting the client to attend interviews, open days etc. As well as intensive support, it is also our intention to ensure that CIC/CLC have the skills necessary to carry out lifelong learning and career planning independently.

59. This statement from the Connexions Executive Manager is an example of the role that Connexions plays in the transition and progression of Care Leavers but it also shows how IAG matters can become a discrete or “disintegrated” element in the pastoral arrangements for learners. For example, when talking with colleagues from colleges as part of this research it became clear that few knew about the work that Connexions was doing with Care Leavers. In one authority the Connexions service was working with the VSH and local authority Children in Care Teams to develop an information sharing protocol with local colleges. In another authority Connexions and Aimhigher work together on a ‘Looked After Young People Project’ which includes:

- Campus visits to universities for Children in Care and their foster parents.
- A publication specifically for Foster Carers, Heads of Children’s Centres that gives details of events and support provided.
- Direct mailing to foster carers of information about careers fairs.

The Connexions service plays a pivotal in the identification, transition and effective progression of Care Leavers but this work often occurs in isolation and is not always communicated to other agencies working with this group.

Higher Education Institutions

60. Three of the HEIs in the area have achieved the award of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in higher education. Achievement of the Buttle UK Quality Mark requires HEIs to devise quality assured processes to support targeted under-graduates with a background in social care. Most of the
outreach work done by HEIs in the Aimhigher West Area is targeted at Children in Care in Key Stages 3 and 4. Children in Care are offered a collaborative progressive programme of events which include campus visit days and a pre and post programme of social events for the children and their friends, family and foster cares. HEIs in the Aimhigher West Area also offer a summer school for Y10 Children in Care.

61. In relation to Care Leavers, a student adviser in one HEI outlined the range of outreach activity which the university had provided in the past.

*We have attended and supported summer schools, carers events, campus visits and also specialist teacher conferences and celebration events involving Further Education Colleges and (six of the eight) Local Authorities. The aim has been to provide information for Care Leavers and their families, foster carers and staff such as teachers and LA staff in order to encourage progression into Higher Education and raise aspirations for Care Leavers.* (HEI Student Adviser)

62. A widening participation officer in another HEI described how the university had worked closely with a local authority to provide activities specifically designed to meet the needs of individual Care Leavers.

*I have worked closely with a teacher in a local authority After Care Team for a number of years. We have a bespoke visit for any of the LA’s Care Leavers. The teacher colleague will normally call me with the details of the Care Leaver and their interests. I would then set up a visit for them which would include talks to specific subject tutors, money and welfare advice as well as a tour of the campus.* (HEI Widening Participation Officer)

63. The progressive programme of events for Children in Care does not extend to Care Leavers in Further Education. During this phase of education, activities are more ad hoc and are dependent on the work of individual HEIs and their relationship with relevant partners. There is a discontinuity in provision for Care Leavers and no evidence of the type of coherent progressive programme offered to learners in Years 9 to 11.

**HEIs in the Aimhigher West Area offer a progressive programme of activity targeted at Children in Care in Years 9, 10 and 11 but this does not extend in a progressive and coherent fashion to Care Leavers in further education where current arrangements are more ad hoc and fragmented.**

64. Working on behalf of the Aimhigher West partnership, Bath Spa University is producing a booklet entitled “Moving on – A Guide for Care Leavers and those who support them” (2011). Aimhigher partnerships in other areas have produced similar publications specifically for use by Care Leavers. For example, the Aimhigher Kent and Medway Area Partnership has published a booklet entitled “A Guide to Further and Higher Education for Young People Leaving Care in Kent and Medway” (Version 4 2009) is available from www.aimhigherkentandmedway.org

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25 “Moving on – A Guide for Care Leavers and those who support them” (Aimhigher West Area 2011) will be available in May 2011 from www.aimhigherwest.org.uk

26 The booklet “A Guide to Further and Higher Education for Young People Leaving Care in Kent and Medway” (Version 4 2009) is available from www.aimhigherkentandmedway.org
Aimhigher Peninsula Area Partnership has published the “Study South West – Get On, Get Qualified Pack – Information for children in care and care leavers”\(^{27}\).

65. As the Aimhigher programme comes to an end there is widespread concern that the collaborative work done by HEIs with other Aimhigher partners will come to an end or be significantly reduced. As part of the requirement on HEIs to submit Access Agreements it seems likely that some activities will survive but there is evidence that, even at current levels, there is insufficient HE related outreach activity for Care Leavers in further education. In addition, it seems likely that the existing infrastructure for the delivery of collaborative activity in support of young people with a background in care will disappear with Aimhigher. A possible framework for further work of this type could be provided by the adoption of arrangements to secure the award of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education.

There is a need to develop specific strategies and activities to meet the specific progression needs of Care Leavers in further education at all attainment levels. Adoption of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education has the potential to provide a collaborative infrastructure to sustain and extend the work initiated by the Aimhigher programme.

Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education

66. At the conference entitled “From Care to Further and Higher Education: Partnership Working through the Quality Mark for Care Leavers”\(^{28}\) Buttle UK expressed an intention to extend the current higher education quality mark to further education and this was supported by the government minister in attendance. Three HEIs in the Aimhigher West Area have achieved the Quality Mark for Care Leavers in HE. The Buttle UK Quality Mark is mentioned in several places in a section of the “Toolkit for Virtual School Headteachers” entitled “Promoting Participation in FE/HE for LAC and Care Leavers” (Pages 45-57). The majority of respondents to this research expressed an interest in developing a response to the Buttle UK Quality Mark. Examples of responses are as follows:

Yes (we would be interested in the Buttle UK FE Quality Mark). We achieved the Quality Mark at the university in 2009 and would be happy to discuss this with FE Colleges and the Trust if they were considering extending the Quality Mark to FE Colleges” (HEI Student Adviser)

Yes (we would be interested in the Buttle UK FE Quality Mark). We also have a draft policy which we are in the process of trying to implement with the FE Colleges to improve the support offered to Care Leavers. (Connexions Personal Adviser LAC/Care Leavers)

\(^{27}\) The “Study South West – Get On, Get Qualified Pack – Information for children in care and care leavers” (Aimhigher Peninsula 2010) is available from www.gr8choice.org

\(^{28}\) Further details about the Buttle UK Conference “From Care to Further and Higher Education: Partnership Working through the Quality Mark for Care Leavers” (Buttle UK January 2011) can be obtained from http://www.buttleuk.org/pages/conference.html
The local authority would be interested in participating in a Buttle UK Quality Mark pilot project for Care Leavers in Further Education. We would also be interested in working with local HE providers to develop things like study skills development, taster events, pre-entry e-mentoring and transition mentoring targeted at Care Leavers in the authority. (Local Authority Partnership Manager)

67. There was a note of caution about the increased workloads which the Buttle UK award would generate from some FECs including those respondents who welcomed the introduction of the Quality Mark.

All of this implies a lot of work for us and we do not get any help from the Social Worker due to confidentiality issues. (College HE and Aimhigher Coordinator)

68. Nevertheless, this colleague also completed the informal audit sheet “A commitment to Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges – Quality Mark Criteria” a blank draft version of which is contained in Appendix 5 of this report. Overall the college completing the audit sheet rated itself quite favourably in terms of readiness for the award of the quality mark. Areas for further development included: senior management responsibility for Care Leavers; staff awareness of the needs of Care Leavers; management information systems and monitoring of provision specifically targeted at Care Leavers. The findings of this informal audit are likely to be broadly similar in other FECs. Several respondents suggested that there was a good state of readiness for the award but some areas which required further attention particularly in relation to the identification of Care Leavers and the monitoring of provision specifically designed for this group. For example a senior manager in one college stated as follows:

...we don’t make enough of our good stories about vulnerable groups like Care Leavers. This college is good at these things and we’d score well on the audit device. I’m very keen to develop specific support services for Care Leavers but you need a framework to guide you otherwise you have to make it up yourself.” (Senior Manager Learner Services)

There is support for the implementation of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education by stakeholders in the Aimhigher West Area. One local authority and several neighbouring colleges expressed a desire to take part in any pilot programme which might be developed to launch the Quality Mark in the area.

Section F: Recommendations for the sustainability and future development of provision for Care Leavers

69. In view of the imminent closure of the Aimhigher programme (July 2010) existing members of the Aimhigher West Area Partnership should initiate pilot projects to address the following recommendations:

• Local authorities, Further Education Colleges, Connexions Services and other stakeholders should work together to develop management information sharing and partnership protocols in respect of Care Leavers.
• Further Education Colleges should develop a staff awareness training package on the needs of Care Leavers.
• Higher Education Institutions in possession of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education should work with partnership groups working towards the Buttle UK Quality Mark in Further Education.
• Further Education Colleges should work with relevant partners, stakeholders and learners to make application for the award of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education.

Section G: Conclusion

70. In common with schools, the targeting of Aimhigher provision has represented a significant challenge to Further Education Colleges. This is particularly the case with Care Leavers as a specific target group for Aimhigher. Attempts to target this group have been thwarted by a lack of information about the identity of the learners concerned. Colleges have also expressed reservations about making separate provision available to this group for fear of allegations of exclusivity or stigmatisation. However, as the Aimhigher programme comes to an end, a new impetus to target provision has been provided by changes in government spending priorities and an enthusiasm to strengthen the access arrangements to higher education for young people with a background in public care.

71. The strategic responsibility for further education lies with local authorities along with a number of statutory responsibilities for Care Leavers in education and training. It seems likely that the government will wish to obtain evidence about the ways in which local authorities have taken a strategic lead to ensure that there is adequate provision of sufficient quality to support the education and employment prospects of this under-performing group of disadvantaged learners.

72. The Buttle UK Quality Mark is a useful framework to develop the quality of provision for Care Leavers in further education but, if it is to be carried forward in the Aimhigher West Area, a joint approach will be required involving schools, FECs, local authorities, Connexions and Higher Education providers. One local authority has already expressed an interest in working with others to develop a response to the Buttle UK award. However, with the closure of the Government Office of the South West in the autumn of 2010 and the imminent cessation of the Aimhigher programme in the summer of 2011 there is currently no single impartial body in a strategic position to take this matter forward.

Section H: Appendices
Appendix 1: Schedules of questions used in conversations with stakeholders in: Further Education Colleges; Local Authority Virtual Schools; Local Authority Aimhigher Partnerships; Connexions and Higher Education Institution.

Questions to Further Education Colleges

1. Approximately how many Care Leavers enrol at the college each year to do courses from Level 0 to Level 6?

2. How are Care Leavers identified at the college?

3. Does the college, contribute to the Pathway Plans of Care Leavers? E.g. In the case of learners who might benefit from Aimhigher provision, through a preparation for HE level education and training element in the plan.

4. Do you have any data on the numbers of Care Leavers who have progressed to higher education from the college?

5. Has the college participated in work to achieve the “Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers”?

6. Please make a general comment about the way that the college provides support for Care Leavers in relation to their potential progression to higher levels of education or training, including HE.

7. Would you be interested in further discussions about the implementation of the Buttle Trust Quality Mark in Further Education Colleges?

Questions to local authority virtual school headteachers

1. Approximately how many Care Leavers make the transition to further education colleges in your local authority each year?

2. Which agencies or persons make a contribution to the education element of the Pathway Plan for Care Leavers?

3. Please provide a description of the way in which the virtual school links with further education colleges either in this local authority or elsewhere?

4. What do you consider to be the (two or three) most significant challenges faced by Care Leavers as they progress into and through further education?

5. What can be done by Further Education Colleges and other agencies to help Care Leavers to overcome the challenges identified above at number 4 above?
6. Have you been involved in any local developments in relation to the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in higher education? Please describe.

7. Would you be interested in further discussions about the implementation of the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges?

8. (If possible) Please give the contact details (s) of your principal contact (s) in local:
   - Further education colleges
   - The Connexions Service
   - Local higher education providers

Questions to colleagues in Connexions services

1. Do Connexions/Prospects contribute to the Pathway Plans of Care Leavers?

2. Do you have any data on the numbers of Care Leavers who have progressed to higher education from local colleges?

3. Please make a general comment about the way that the Connexions/Prospects Service provides support for Care Leavers in relation to their potential progression to higher levels of education or training, including HE. How could this be further developed?

4. Would you be interested in further discussions about the implementation of the Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges?

5. (If possible) Please provide contact details of key staff that you deal with in:
   - Local Further Education Colleges
   - Local Authority Looked After Children Services

Questions to colleagues with responsibility for widening participation in HEIs

1. Please describe the way in which the university establishes links with Further Education Colleges in relation to Care Leavers.

2. Does the university contribute to the Pathway Plans of Care Leavers? E.g. Through a preparation for HE level education and training element in the plan or the provision of summer school placements designed specifically for Care Leavers.
3. Please make a general comment about the way that the university provides support for Care Leavers in relation to their potential progression to higher levels of education or training which includes an HE element.

4. Would you, on behalf of the university, be interested in further discussions about the implementation of the Buttle Trust Quality Mark in Further Education Colleges?

5. (If possible) Please provide contact details of key persons you have worked with in relation to Care Leavers in the Aimhigher West Area Partnership. For example:
   - In FECs
   - In Connexions Services
   - In local authorities.

Questions to local authority Aimhigher Coordinators

1. Please make a general comment about the way that Aimhigher provides support for Care Leavers in relation to their potential progression to higher levels of education or training, including HE. For example, does Aimhigher contribute to the Personal Education Plan element of the Pathway Plans of Care Leavers in the local authority?

2. Do you have any data on the numbers of Care Leavers who have progressed to higher education from schools or colleges in the local authority?

3. Would you be interested in further discussions about the implementation of the Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education Colleges?
### Appendix 2: Roles of persons contacted with a brief summary of their contribution to the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Summary of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aimhigher Coordinator and Head of Post 16</td>
<td>Care Leavers expected to be young adults like everyone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Insufficient information about Care Leavers from local authority. Interested in Buttle UK QM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learner Services Officer</td>
<td>The college Learner Mentor deals with this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learner Mentor</td>
<td>Reply incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Head of Support for Learning</td>
<td>Large number of Care Leavers at the college. Some progress to HE but no numbers available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>College Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>No information about Care Leavers available. Care Leavers need to identify themselves to receive support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>HE Coordinator</td>
<td>Interested in the Buttle UK QM – completed self-audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aimhigher coordinator</td>
<td>“We don’t target Care Leavers and we don’t use Care Leaver as a criteria for Aimhigher”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Director of Student Experience</td>
<td>Informal protocol with LA but other LAs not so forthcoming. Care Leavers flagged to Aimhigher Coordinator who works with tutors. Buttle UK QM a good prompt. Support services are universal but tutors expected to be ‘watchful’ in relation to Care Leavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>Not informed of learners’ Care Leaver status. Universal Aimhigher and college provision includes Care Leavers in an undifferentiated fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>No knowledge of Care Leavers unless informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Head of Learner Services</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers but this is first year that data has been gathered. Very keen on Buttle UK QM development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>College Connexions PA</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers but does not wish to participate in this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Senior manager Student Support</td>
<td>Unless from LA x or on a Section 139A college would not know Care Leavers but anyway universal provision should suffice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Learning Support Manager</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers but universal provision suffices unless there is a problem. Very interested in Buttle UK QM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>Unable to contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Student Services Coordinator</td>
<td>Unable to contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>HE registrar</td>
<td>Unable to contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Inclusion manager</td>
<td>Unable to contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Admissions administrator</td>
<td>Can only identify if learner self-identifies on application form. Very interested in Buttle UK suggest contact with Head of Student services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aimhigher/Careers Adviser</td>
<td>This is an area where the college wishes to do more work before a response can be made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Careers/HE/Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers and where they go but no separate provision made unless tutor decides to do more. Contact nurse to talk about Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>College Nurse</td>
<td>Person with day to day operational responsibility for Care Leavers. No response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Summary of response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>No knowledge of Care Leavers as not in organisational network. Believes that there are Care Leavers with potential for HE. Connexions has functional responsibility for Care Leavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Student Services Manager</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers from LA. Does universal and comprehensive student needs assessment and course matching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Connexions PA</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers but has yet to identify anyone who has the potential for HE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Student Experience Manager</td>
<td>Works closely with local authority virtual school and would like to review practice for Care Leavers. Very interested in Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>LA virtual school teacher</td>
<td>Knows Care Leavers and two-thirds are NEET. Works closely with college and would be interested in Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Careers Education and Aimhigher</td>
<td>No data collected or specific activities provided for Care Leavers. Refer to Head of School Partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Head of School Partnerships</td>
<td>Only responsible for 14-16 year olds and does not know Care Leavers. Refer to Careers Education colleagues or Director of Information or Customer Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headteacher Virtual School</td>
<td>Has drawn up local authority protocol and procedures for Care Leavers. Works closely with local FECs. Very interested in Buttle UK QM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connexions Executive Manger</td>
<td>No information on progression of Care Leavers to HE. Connexions PAs act as ‘corporate parent’ in relation to the next steps/employment element of the Pathway Plan. Would be interested in Buttle UK developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEI WP Officer University A</td>
<td>Works with FECs but not specifically with Care Leavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEI WP Officer University B</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEI WP Officer University C</td>
<td>Provides special visits for Care Leavers and Carers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA teacher in virtual school</td>
<td>Has direct experience of working with HEIs and Care Leavers on progression to HE. Does not work with Aimhigher. Has contributed to Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA Officer Virtual School</td>
<td>Provided figures on Care Leavers who are actually at college or university but not those who might be NEET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA Virtual School Headteacher</td>
<td>Provided figures on Care Leavers. Works closely with Connexions PA and is drafting protocol. No link with Aimhigher. Very interested in Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connexions PA</td>
<td>Working closely with headteacher virtual school and is devising a Care Leavers/vulnerable groups protocol. Very interested in Buttle UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Authority Aimhigher Coordinator</td>
<td>FECs do not seem to have systematic and comprehensive system for identifying Care Leavers. No information on numbers from LA progressing to HE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Authority Partnership Manager</td>
<td>Would like to develop improved links with colleges especially in respect of those who might progress to HE and is very interested in a pilot project for the Buttle UK Quality Mark for FE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Local authority partnership working protocol

Partnership working protocol between B&NES Children in Care and Moving-on Team, Connexions, City of Bath College and Norton Radstock College to Support Young People in care and leaving care.

Introduction

This protocol is agreed between the Children in Care and Moving on Team (CIC and MOT) and Connexions and Local Colleges of further education attended by young people who are in care or moving on from care.

The purpose of the protocol is to:

- Assist children in care and care leavers in obtaining and succeeding in a college place
- Help children in care and care leavers to maximise their potential as measured by the five Every Child Matters outcomes (Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a positive contribution, Achieve economic wellbeing).
- Facilitate staff in the colleges and social care settings to work effectively with children in care and care leavers in further education.
- Provide basis for problem solving and clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of all parties.

This protocol deals with:

- Applications to colleges;
- Information sharing;
- Practical and financial support offered to children in care and care leavers;
- Specific support to children in care and care leavers to maintain college places;
- Moving on from college.

1 Application to the college

a) When a young person is applying to go to college they should make it clear on their application form that they are a young person who is in care or leaving care. This will assist the college in raising staff awareness of the potential for the young person needing specific/additional support.

b) In addition the young person should be encouraged to give their consent to sharing information about their performance and attendance with their foster–carer / supported lodgings provider/ CIC&MOT worker. If the young person wants this information to go to their parents then this should be stated on the application form and the college will make arrangements for one or both parties to be informed.

c) Help and guidance should be made available to the young person in completing his/her application form, from:

- School
- Connexions Adviser
- Carer/Provider/CIC and MOT worker

d) Applications should be encouraged to take place early, and be included in the young person’s ‘Pathway Plan’, so that any related issues can be addressed – e.g. regarding accommodation and finance.
e) Assuming the young person agrees to share the information about their care status, a post 16 Personal Education Plan will be drawn up two to three months before the young person commences a course (e.g. in June or July before a September start) and will be reviewed six weeks after the course has started. Subsequent reviews will take place at least every six months.

f) It is recognised that young people in care and moving on from care may have experienced disrupted or delayed educational progress, so applications for further education should be encouraged up until age 21.

g) For admissions outside the normal admission times, the social worker is responsible for letting the college and Connexions know that the young person is in care provided this has been agreed by the young person.

2. Information to be provided by the Children in Care and Moving on Team to the college

The Post 16 PEP sets out the information to be recorded. The PEP includes basic information (e.g. the name of current carer and CIC&MOT worker) and is aimed at enabling the college to deal sensitively with the young person. It is intended to highlight the fact that the young person is or has been in care, but will not divulge the reasons why, or detailed information about his/her past. The PEP will also contain specific information to help the college manage the specific needs for the young person.

The PEP meeting will be attended by the young person, the social worker the designated manager for looked after children at the college and a Connexions PA.

The college will treat the information in the PEP as confidential and only share it on a “need to know basis”.

Wherever possible, the young person will have consented to the information being shared, but the local authority reserves the right to share information as necessary to protect the young person or others.

A) Basic Information.

a) For a young person who has been in care the move to college may create additional challenges. Whilst at school he/she will have had the benefit of Personal Education Plans and his/her specific needs will have been known to a number of members of the teaching staff.

b) It should not be assumed by the Children in Care and Moving on Team worker that information has been passed by the school, Connexions, etc to the college.

c) The young person should consent to information being shared by either signing the college application form or at the Year 11 PEP signing their agreement.

If a young person is concerned about this information being shared the benefits should be explained to them, alongside the content of the information being shared. As a minimum the following information will be passed to the college:

i) The name of the young person.

ii) Name of Children in Care and Moving on Team worker and contact details including mobile phone and email.
iii) Name of carer/provider, address and contact details.
iv) Details of any specialist team involved i.e. Youth Offending, Mental Health.
v) Whether the young person was subject to a Statement of their special educational needs. (This will automatically cease when they leave school as Further Education Colleges have different funding streams to cover these needs. The carers/providers, CIC&MOT workers and parents should have been made aware of this at the review of the Statement in Year 11. For those young people who remain in a school 6th form, a careful review of the needs for the statement will be made.)
vi) Any particular achievements made by the young person, whether he/she is listed on the ‘Gifted and Talented’ register and any particular interests, hobbies or talents to encourage participation within the college setting.

B) Specific information the Children in Care and Moving on team will give to the college

a) If there are specific concerns about a young person and his/her vulnerability whilst at college (or risk to others) the young person’s worker will decide (in conjunction with line managers) what information should be shared with the college.

b) This information should be shared with the Student Liaison Officer prior to the start of the course. He/she will make a decision as to who else needs to be aware of this information within the college and whether the college’s own risk management procedure needs to be used. The specific arrangements may vary from college to college but each college does have its own policy for managing risky behaviour / information about vulnerable students.

C) Information that the college will send to the Children in Care and Moving on team

a) The young person should have given their consent to this information being shared when they completed their college application form or at the year 11 PEP. They should also have stated who should receive this information i.e. carer/provider/ CIC&MOT worker including parent(s) or not.

b) The college will:-

i) Undertake a PEP review six weeks after the start of the course at least every six months subsequently. This review will cover the young person’s academic and general progress; ideally this should be timed to fit in with the review of the Pathway Plan. Successes in all areas of college life should be shared and celebrated.

ii) Report when the young person’s attendance falls below 85% or if there is a sudden and significant decrease in a student’s attendance that extends over a two week period.

Should one of these reports be issued by the college there must be an immediate review of the PEP involving the young person’s social worker, carer/provider and college as to what has caused this drop in attendance and a plan put in place immediately to ensure it is corrected.
The plan could include:

- a number of meetings as required to address these issues
- contribution by other agencies
- additional support to attend college or manage academic requirements
- consideration of the young person changing course, or the academic level of study
- closer liaison between college, Connexions, and Children in Care and Moving on Team worker.

3 Support for care leavers at college and beyond

Financial support to care leavers

Young people leaving care aged 16-17 are entitled to the equivalent of Income Support Benefit (paid by the CIC&MOT) and costs of accommodation until the age of 18. After 18, Housing Benefit and Income Support need to be accessed.

Education Maintenance Allowance or Adult Learning Grants may be accessed additionally. When EMA ceases at age 19, and the young person remains in education, CIC&MOT will pay the equivalent as educational premium, term time only. It will be proportional depending on the number of days attended.

CIC&MOT will pay up to £150 per year towards educational expenses e.g. equipment, books.

For young people who are part way through their course when they reach 18, and where this is part of their Pathway Plan, an application can be made for them to continue to live with their carers as supported lodgings provider or board and lodgings provider.

Once it is known that the young person has a place on a course, there must be a discussion between the carer/provider, CIC&MOT worker and the college as to what exactly is required and how this can be appropriately resourced. Young people who are in care or moving on from care, face additional challenges. If there is an additional need, the CIC&MOT worker, along with their Manager, will assess on a case by case basis the level of support to ensure the young person can progress.

Problem solving

If a young person is struggling, and his/her behaviour in college is a matter for concern, early intervention needs to be made to address the problems. Each college has its own behaviour management policy which will describe the point at which carers/parents/providers, CIC&MOT worker will become involved in discussing a young person’s behaviour or how they are managing within the college. If problems emerge during the young person’s time at college, the college will inform the social workers and foster carers (where appropriate). Generally a meeting will be called by the college to discuss concerns. It is expected that carer/provider and the CIC&MOT worker will attend.

The meeting will seek to make an agreement with the young person about expectations for future behaviour within the college, and support that the young person will be offered to affect these changes.
If a young person is asked to leave college, or decides that he/she no longer wishes to attend

a) If as a last resort, a young person is asked to leave a college course for whatever reason, or the young person decides to leave this must be viewed as a major disruption to their Pathway Plan. A re-assessment of their needs and a review of their Pathway Plan is required.

b) If a young person is asked to leave the college e.g. because of long standing problems which have not been resolved despite concerted efforts by all involved, then a meeting should be called to plan the next steps.

This meeting (held within five working days) should be part of the review of the young person’s needs, and inform the updated Pathway Plan. This plan must include details of alternative education, employment or training and of any further support a young person will be receiving. The college will also inform Connexions if the young person leaves the college.

4 Monitoring and review of Protocol

In order to support the smooth running of this protocol there should be a three meetings a year between the Assistant Team Manager of the CIC&MOT, the Virtual School Headteacher for B&NES, the Team Manager of Connexions and the lead managers for the respective colleges. The meeting would discuss any issues that may be arising and how the service offered to children in care and moving on young people can be enhanced and developed.

This protocol is to be reviewed every year to check effectiveness and any changes that need to be made.
Appendix 4: Challenges facing Care Leavers in post 16 education.

(Please note: The statements below have been taken directly from the questionnaires completed by respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges faced by Care Leavers progressing into and through post-16 education</th>
<th>Things which could be done by colleges to further support Care Leavers (not necessarily linked to previous column)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change of social worker</td>
<td>A named person at the college for the young person to contact (not necessarily the tutor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young person not wishing to be identified as having a history in care</td>
<td>A key adult (not necessarily a tutor) to support and mentor aspirational educational achievement to encourage the student to persevere, work hard and complete their studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the more independent learning skills required by FE study</td>
<td>Awareness on the part of a key person at the post provider of the issues and challenges faced by the young person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties associated with the logistics of living independently (where this has been the choice of the young person).</td>
<td>Patience, flexibility, understanding and support from the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of placement and the maintenance or sustainability of secure and safe accommodation.</td>
<td>A strong advocate who ensure that the young person is doing the right course and one which provides effective progression and employability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in the education of the learner caused through the discontinuities of moving from one school to another.</td>
<td>Close work with the virtual school and the adoption of the PEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of expectation on the part of the young person and of those around them leading to lower confidence and aspirations of the young person concerned.</td>
<td>Training of staff on the needs of Care Leavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor role models from peers where learner is resident.</td>
<td>Greater flexibility in learner support and the removal of the focus on finding syndromes and learning difficulties which is apparent in some provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional education support for Care Leavers.</td>
<td>Attendance by key college staff at events like “Carers’ Evenings”, shows or exhibitions which some local authorities organise.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-active communication between virtual school, the identified designated member of FE staff, Connexions PA and social care workers – agreement of information sharing protocol.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tasters for those young people intending to go to college – opportunities to meet support staff and to try college social activities, clubs and sports.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1:1 education support to gain access to and then sustain a place at college</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of student mentor or associate schemes where young people are supported and encouraged by strong peer role models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AIMS OF THE COMMITMENT
The Commitment to Care Leavers aims to:

- Increase the participation and retention in further education of young people with a background in care.
- Remove the barriers to further education faced by Care Leavers.
- Raise awareness of the needs of Care Leavers.
- Develop a college infrastructure and culture which raises the aspirations and achievements of Care Leavers and enables them to feel supported.
- Contribute to a national framework of effective corporate parenting embedded in local strategies and planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Mark Criteria</th>
<th>Existing provision (Please rate on a scale 1-5 where 1 is High)</th>
<th>Possible additions or changes necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access and induction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A senior manager ensures the implementation and monitoring of the “Commitment to Care Leavers”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A designated member of college staff acts as a key point of contact and adviser for Care Leavers and their carers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The college has a method of identifying and establishing contact with all applicants with a background in care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective links are established with local authority children’s services, schools, virtual schools and Connexions/Prospects to support the transition to FE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Learner Plans (ILPs) include specific provision to raise learner aspiration, awareness and attainment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Mark Criteria</td>
<td>Existing provision (Please rate on a scale 1-5 where 1 is High)</td>
<td>Possible additions or changes necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access and induction (continued)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impartial pre-entry guidance on FE study, training and support services is provided to all students with a background in care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Learning Plans for College students are integrated with the education element of the local authority’s Pathway Plan for the Care Leaver.</td>
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<tr>
<td>College and local authority staff work together to ensure that ILP and Pathway Plans are congruent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The college and local authority care teams work together to assess and remove or reduce potential barriers to entry to the college such as accommodation, travel or subsistence costs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual learners the local authority, Connexions and the college agree a protocol and procedures for sharing information.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aspiration – Awareness - Attainment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A personal tutor works with the learner to implement the ILP and review progress in the college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevant information about the learner is shared between college and local authority care staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The review of college ILP and local authority Pathway Plans contains provision to develop the learner’s aspirations, awareness and attainment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impartial CEIAG is made available to the Care Leaver so that progression pathways can be identified, explored, recorded and shared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Care Leavers are provided with the necessary funding and opportunities to access aspiration raising activities. (E.g. taster days and summer schools at universities).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Mark Criteria</td>
<td>Existing provision (Please rate on a scale 1-5 where 1 is High)</td>
<td>Possible additions or changes necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Progression</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A progressive range of activities designed to raise learner aspiration, awareness and attainment are devised reviewed and recorded.</td>
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<td>The learner is encouraged to make links with providers of further and higher education, training and employment as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The transition to the next phase of education, training or employment is coherent and all relevant stakeholders are aware of their contribution to the learner’s Pathway Plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring the commitment to Care Leavers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A senior manager ensures that monitoring procedures for the Commitment are effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback provided by Care Leavers on the quality of the learning experience is collected, recorded, analysed and used to further raise the quality of provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff awareness of the needs of Care Leavers is monitored and assessed. Additional training is provided where necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application, enrolment and progression outcome data on Care Leavers is recorded and submitted to Buttle UK annually.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of good practice and success stories are made available to Buttle UK.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Information about the researcher

Chris Leonard worked for HEFCE as a senior policy officer with principal responsibility for Aimhigher nationally from 2006 to 2009. During this time he drafted guidelines for the programme; devised and launched the Aimhigher Associates Scheme and the revised HEFCE summer schools programme. Prior to this he was the Director of an Education Action Zone, Coordinator of an Education Business Partnership and two TVEI consortia and was seconded to Dorset TEC to assist with the launch of the county’s Apprenticeship scheme. Chris qualified as an OFSTED inspector and has worked as a Chief Examiner (‘A’ level Business Economics). Chris also worked for fifteen years as a classroom teacher of economics with additional responsibilities for careers education and work experience. Most recently he has worked as an independent education research associate undertaking work for Action on Access and several Aimhigher partnerships.

Further information can be obtained from: chrisleonard500@btinternet.com