

# SUPPORTING VULNERABLE STUDENT GROUPS

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## TODAY'S SESSION

- What do we mean by vulnerable groups?
- Support offered by Higher Education Institutions
- Positive disclosure



## VULNERABLE OR UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

- Those with experience of the care system (looked after, care leaver, care experienced...);
- Those who are estranged from their immediate family;
- Carers;
- Asylum seekers and refugees;
- Children from military families;
- Gypsy, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boatmen;
- LGBT+ esp trans and non-binary people
- ....

\*It can be an error to focus on vulnerability rather than resilience and the strengths individuals can bring to their studies. Certain groups of learners are under-represented in HE, however, and may benefit from specific support to 'level the playing field'

## CARE EXPERIENCED LEARNERS: IMPACT OF CARE

- Multiple placement moves (Who Cares? Scotland poll of Renfrewshire members indicated average of 4.9 placement moves)
- Interaction with criminal justice system (CE represent 1.2% of young people under 21, but half of young people in custody and 26% of adult prison population [SPS, 2018](#))
- Impact on educational attainment:
  - 12% of looked after young people leave school with a Higher level qualification (SCQF6), compared to 62% of peers
  - X6 more likely to be excluded
  - 44% looked after young people leave school as soon as they can (16 or younger) compared to 11% of peers
- Insecure housing and homelessness (care experienced adults more than twice as likely to have experienced homelessness than general population)
- Mental health and trauma

## CARE EXPERIENCED LEARNERS: HE SUPPORT

- Tickbox on UCAS to indicate care experience (The Fostering Network's [Tick the Box](#) campaign)
- Guaranteed offer at minimum entry level;
- SAAS Care Experienced Bursary;
- Named Contact at each institution (See [Propel](#)) for individual pre-entry support and guidance;
- Year round Accommodation;
- Additional mentoring support and opportunities available at many HEIs;
- Each institution must publish a Corporate Parenting plan detailing their activities and objectives
- Regional initiatives such as the [Hub for Success](#) and the West of Scotland Care Leavers Forum



## ESTRANGED LEARNERS

- Assumption within HE funding and policy that young people can access financial and material support from their families.
- Those who are estranged do not have that support nor local authority/ Corporate Parenting care.
- Key causes of estrangement: abuse; clashes of values and mismatched expectations about roles; forced marriage, rejection of LGBT+ identities ([Unite Foundation & Stand Alone, 2015](#))
- Stand Alone estimates numbers are higher for estranged students than care experienced
  - Similar barriers to care experienced learners (finance, housing, mental health...)
  - Retention rate x3 lower than national average (Bland, 2018)



## ESTRANGED LEARNERS: HE SUPPORT

- Many universities have signed the Stand Alone Pledge to improve support for estranged students
- Named contact and specific webpages
- Priority in scholarships, outreach activities and additional opportunities
- Priority for financial support
- Year round accommodation
- No UCAS tickbox so need to contact directly, use personal statement and/or reference
  - Detail impact on studies and strengths and skills developed
- Application for [SAAS funding](#) as an independent student (need to provide evidence)



## CARERS AND YOUNG CARERS



**R**esearch commissioned by Carers Trust found that student carers were generally providing a very high level of care, and that:



**39%**

rated their physical health as either 'just ok' or 'poor'.



**45%**

reported having mental health problems.



**56%**

were experiencing difficulties because of their caring role.



**16%**

were concerned that they might have to drop out of university.



**75%**

of respondents informed university staff of their caring role.



**45%**

said there was no-one at university who recognised them as a carer and helped them.

- [Carers Trust](#) refers to carers in HE as a 'hidden group' but their research suggests student carers are x4 more likely to drop out of college or university than other students
- Scottish Government research ([2017](#)) suggests caring may adversely affect a young person's education and attainment (attendance, tiredness, bullying, financial concerns) and may impact on choice of university and course.
- See also [Education Scotland](#) resources

## CARERS: HE SUPPORT

- Many universities have been awarded the Carers Trust Scotland Going Higher award for their work to support student carers
- Carers policy (e.g. [Open University](#), [Strathclyde](#))
- Named contact and specific webpages
- Priority in scholarships, outreach activities and additional opportunities
- No UCAS tickbox so need to contact directly, use personal statement and/or reference
  - Detail impact on studies and strengths and skills developed through caring



## OTHER GROUPS

- Refugees and asylum seekers – funding, English language requirements, currency or proof of qualifications
- Gypsy, Traveller, Roma populations
  - [GTRSB into HE, 2020](#): 3-4% of the 18-30 GRT population enter HE compared to 43% of the general population;
  - Attainment, social exclusion and invisibility, stereotyping
- Service children/ Children from military families – SCiP Alliance [Thriving Lives](#) toolkit
- LGBT+ learners particularly trans and non-binary young people

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Positive disclosure in personal statement and reference where appropriate
- Contact institutions for specific support
- Collaborate on support where possible

**Thank you**

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