

MDA No.: 1682

Title: Economy, Culture and Skills Committee - Careers for Care-Experienced Young Londoners

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee meetings on 9 December 2024 and 15 January 2025 the Committee resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair agreed the Committee's report on Careers for Care-Experienced Young Londoners, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair, in consultation with the party Group Lead Members, agrees the *Careers After Care: Helping Care-experienced young Londoners fulfil their potential* report, as attached at Appendix 1.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name:

**Hina Bokhari OBE AM,
Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee**

Date:

7 May 2025

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the former Chair, in consultation with relevant party Lead Group Members and Deputy Chairs, on 30 October 2025 under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the report and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the report on Careers for Care-Experienced Young Londoners will be formally noted at the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): *Sal Fazal*

Printed Name: Saleha Fazal

Date: 6 May 2025

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.


Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

Legal Implications:

The Chair of Economy, Culture and Skills Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 7 May 2025

Email: rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Alessandro Georgiou AM;
- Zack Polanski AM; and
- Marina Ahmad AM.

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: *Tim*

Printed Name: Tim Gallagher

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 7 May 2025

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature: *Helen Ewen*

Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat

Date: 7 May 2025

**Careers after care: helping care-
experienced young Londoners fulfil
their potential**

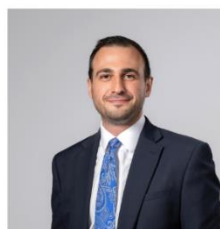
Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

LONDONASSEMBLY

Economy Committee



Marina Ahmad AM
(Chair)
Labour



Alessandro Georgiou AM
(Deputy Chairman)
Conservatives



Hina Bokhari AM
Liberal Democrats



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Foreword



Marina Ahmad AM

Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

“Everyone says we need change, but when will it happen?”

This was the poignant question asked by a young woman at our closed panel of care-experienced young people. She has overcome the challenges of her experience in the children’s social care system to become a successful professional.

As a parent, I know that we all want the best for our children. We go to great lengths to shield them from hardship and help them grow into happy, confident adults. As any parent knows, this is a full-time job and requires juggling countless responsibilities: from choosing the right school, managing appointments and navigating childhood dilemmas such as those all-important friendship fallouts to supporting them through emotionally turbulent teenage years and guiding them toward their goals and aspirations.

While this might seem like a normal part of giving a child a strong start, many young people in London don’t have the privilege of such an upbringing. Every year, hundreds of children in the capital are taken into care. The reasons are varied, but often involve abuse, neglect, or family breakdown. Deprived of the same support that other young people take for granted, their lives are often marked by instability, uncertainty, and mental health challenges. Many are shuffled from one foster placement to another, changing schools and social workers along the way. And when they turn 18 and leave care, many find themselves directionless, with little support to help them navigate adulthood.

The purpose of this report is to give those young Londoners a voice. Figures consistently show that these young people are disproportionately likely to be not in education, employment, or training (“NEET”). We wanted to dig deeper—to understand their experiences, explore what is being done to help them, and examine why so little progress has been made to support this group of young people in our city.

For this investigation we spoke with leading experts to gain an insight into current research and practice. But it was hearing from young care-experienced people themselves that really made an impact. Care leavers working with the Drive Forward Foundation were very clear on the need for change. That’s why the recommendations in this report are wide ranging. We are calling on

the Mayor of London, local authorities, government, higher education institutions and employers to all play a part in delivering for care-experienced people. Many care-experienced people are successful in education and employment, but some are struggling.

Whilst it is true that local authorities are still required by law to provide support until the age of 25, we heard that this is often not sufficient and does not come close to replicating the support provided within a family. Additionally, support is highly disjointed, varying widely between local authorities, with some boroughs offering generous support, but others falling short. Further exacerbating this sorry state of affairs are incorrect, yet widely held beliefs in society and among employers that those with care-experience are not as capable, diligent, smart and employable, as those who come from more privileged backgrounds.

While the situation described in the following pages makes for difficult reading, we want to emphasise that there is hope. The fates of those with care-experience are not set in stone. However, the situation will only change if policymakers act. London-wide initiatives, such as the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact and the Mayor's 13 commitments to care leavers signed in 2021 represent a step in the right direction. However, we feel strongly that more needs to be done.

The Mayor can play a pivotal role here. This will involve working alongside London's local authorities, third-sector organisations and higher education institutions to ensure Londoners with care experience receive the support they need. It will also require lobbying the Government to prevent care-experienced Londoners from being penalised by the benefits system and ensuring they are assisted by the new policies being trialled. Finally, it will mean guiding by example, following the lead of exemplary employers like the John Lewis Partnership, to ensure that organisations within the GLA Family become as welcoming a place for care-experienced Londoners as possible.

We need to work together, to deliver the change care leavers are calling for. The time is now.

My thanks go to everyone who has contributed to this report, including guests, committee members, researchers and scrutiny officers.

Executive Summary

The odds are stacked against Londoners with care experience. Many have endured trauma early in life, followed by a childhood and teenage years affected by instability. A lack of trusting relationships, family support, frequent moves between placements and school changes are common for care-experienced young people in our city. These are not ideal conditions for entering into adulthood. It is unsurprising, then, that care-experienced young people are disproportionately likely to find themselves not in education, employment or training.

The current situation remains alarming: more than one in three care-experienced Londoners within the crucial age range of 19 to 21 are not in education, employment or training.

It is in this context the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee decided to carry out an investigation into London's care-experienced young people and their access to education, employment and training. Through our meetings and written evidence we heard from charities, academics, local authorities, the GLA and leading employers. Most importantly, we also spoke to young people with care experience, and it is the voices of these people that we hope to reflect in our report.

This report seeks to outline the main barriers for care-experienced Londoners to accessing education, employment or training and suggests solutions for how they can be overcome. We reached several key findings as part of our investigation, which are summarised below:

- Care-experienced young people are disproportionately likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) for prolonged periods of time after leaving care. In some cases, the poor outcomes associated with care experience are compounded by other characteristics, such as disability status and ethnicity.
- Disadvantage emerges early in life. Young people with care experience are more likely to have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and perform poorly in school. This is aggravated further by frequent placement moves. Placement moves have a detrimental impact on academic performance as they are typically accompanied by a change in school, social worker and other support staff, as well as removal from existing support networks.
- Care-experienced people face a "care cliff" at age 18, where they are expected to live independently with only minimal support, unlike many of their peers. Care-experienced people confront a number of challenges once they turn 18, such as finding somewhere to live, managing their finances and dealing with mental health difficulties, including past trauma. This makes looking for and transitioning into education, employment or training extremely challenging. In many cases the current provision of support does not adequately meet care-experienced people's needs.

- The task of helping care-experienced people access education, employment or training cannot be viewed in isolation. There is a strong need for a broad support offer, along similar lines to the support provided to a non-care-experienced person by their family. This would equip care-experienced people with the skills and confidence to find employment, educational or training opportunities, whilst also addressing the other key challenges faced by care-experienced people. Of particular importance is the role of stable and trusted relationships in building confidence, addressing everyday stresses and improving mental wellbeing.
- It is important that support is available to care-experienced people on a longer-term basis. The abrupt transition to adulthood can be overwhelming, resulting in education, employment or training becoming less of an immediate priority. Those who choose to pursue a degree often do so later in life. This means that it is not uncommon for care-experienced people to experience a delayed start to their careers, which means they reach important milestones later than those without care experience. However, there is little support available for older care-experienced people, with most support provision ending at age 25.
- Support provision across London varies widely, which means care-experienced people living in the same city have access to varying levels of support. This is not acceptable. The law only sets out a minimum level of support entitlements for care-experienced people, and every local authority is responsible for creating its own support offer. While some local variation is to be expected, we would like to see more of a pan-London offer and greater consistency across the capital. Steps have been taken towards this through initiatives such as the Pan London Care Leavers Compact, but we call for further actions in this report.
- Care-experienced young people are disadvantaged by the tiered Universal Credit system, whereby people under the age of 25 receive a lower standard rate. The lower rate reflects the assumption that people under the age of 25 are more likely to still live at home. However, this is not the case for care-experienced people, who cannot rely on routine support from their family to the same extent as many of their peers.
- Unfortunately, we heard that employers sometimes have negative perceptions of care experience. However, care experience brings with it a unique set of skills that can add value to any workplace. This has been demonstrated by several London employers who have taken steps to actively recruit and support care-experienced young people. The GLA has taken steps in this area through the GLA apprenticeship scheme. The GLA should go further and lead by example, adopting care-leaver-friendly practices across the GLA family.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should work with London boroughs and London Councils to lobby the Government to pilot a Regional Care Cooperative in London.

Recommendation 2

In 2025/26, the Mayor should instruct TfL to provide free advertising space on the TfL network for local authorities to run advertisements to recruit foster carers.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should carry out a full assessment of whether his ambition for every care-experienced young Londoner to be entitled to a mentor has been met, and whether every care-experienced Londoner is aware of this entitlement. He should also provide more information to the committee about what impact this mentoring programme has had to date.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor should incorporate his mentorship scheme into the Pan-London Care Leaver compact as soon as possible to ensure it is part of a comprehensive support package aimed at care-experienced Londoners.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should work with local authorities and partners of the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact to ensure that as many opportunities as possible available through the Compact are accessible to care-experienced people until the age of 30. This could include free prescriptions, half price bus and tram travel, housing support, as well as training and employment opportunities in healthcare.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should lobby the Government to increase the age threshold for the £2,000 higher education bursary which care-experienced people are entitled to from 25 to 30 and index its value to the rate of inflation to ensure it retains its value.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor should collect and publish data in 2025-26 relating to outcomes of the interventions currently funded by the GLA through the UKSPF and the Community Outreach Programme in relation to supporting care-experienced Londoners to access education, employment and training.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor should gather and review all available evidence on the effectiveness of interventions designed to support care-experienced individuals as they transition into education, employment, or training, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current evidence base. Additionally, the Mayor should identify any gaps in this research and offer financial support to at least three local authorities or third-sector organizations working with care-experienced Londoners to conduct small-scale trials that address these gaps.

Recommendation 9

By the end of 2025, the Mayor should convene a working group with all of London's local authorities via the London Local Authority Network for Care Leavers to agree on a set of support measures every local authority can implement, building on the commitments made as part of the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact. In addition to a set of measures aimed directly at supporting care-experienced people with their transition into education, employment or training, this should include support measures relating to mental health, housing and financial support.

Recommendation 10

During this Mayoral term, the Mayor should use the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact to create a platform where all London boroughs can share employment or training opportunities arranged with local employers, making them accessible to all care-experienced Londoners.

Recommendation 11

The Mayor should convene public universities in London and work with them to create a basic support offer for student care leavers for all of London's public universities. The Mayor and London's universities should either create a London-specific offer or work with the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) to adopt the NNECL Quality Mark. The Mayor should further monitor the impact this has on care leaver withdrawal rates.

Recommendation 12

The Mayor should lobby the Government to raise the rate of Universal Credit paid to care-experienced people under the age of 25 to bring it in line with the standard rate.

Recommendation 13

The Mayor should lobby the Government to raise the personal allowance for Housing Benefit for young people living in supported accommodation and reduce the taper rate to 55p for every £1 earned over the allowance.

Recommendation 14

The Mayor should hold an event for London's business employers in City Hall in 2025 to raise the profile of employing care-experienced young people. Employers that have taken steps to become care-leaver-friendly should be invited to showcase the work they have done to attract,

recruit and support care-experienced people in the workplace, as well as care-experienced people themselves who have benefitted from these programmes.

Recommendation 15

The Mayor should organise outreach activities across the GLA Family targeted at care-experienced young people, in order to promote employment opportunities in these organisations. This should include a biannual “insight day” event for care-experienced young people to explore careers in the GLA Family.

Recommendation 16

The GLA should set specific targets for the number of applications received from care-experienced people for the GLA apprenticeship scheme in 2025/2026 and actively recruit to ensure those targets are met.

Recommendation 17

The GLA should produce training materials and run regular virtual workshops for line managers with regard to managing employees with care experience.

Recommendation 18

Based on the Mayor’s Good Work Standard, the Mayor should produce an accreditation scheme for London employers to become more accommodating towards people with care experience. This should include a toolkit for employers. The Mayor should develop this in partnership with care-experienced young people, leading employers and third sector organisations working with care-experienced people.

Introduction

Far too many care-experienced young people are not in education, employment or training. These people are being failed by the current system. The reasons people enter the formal care system are varied, however many young people in care have experienced difficult childhoods or teenage years. Official data shows abuse, neglect and serious family issues to be the most common reasons children are placed in care.¹ Once they reach adulthood, they leave the care of their local authority and are suddenly expected to live independently. Such a rapid transition into adulthood would not be easy for any young person, let alone for someone without family support, and, in many cases, experiences of past trauma. As a result, care-experienced people are less likely to be in university or further education and often find it harder to get a foot in the door with employers.

The available data on this is alarming. As of March 2024, there were 19,220 care leavers aged 17 to 25 in London, of whom 5,190 were not in education, employment or training (typically shortened to “NEET”). This represents 27 per cent of care leavers – more than one-in-four.² This is more than double the figure for this age group in London as a whole: as of 2022, 13.2 per cent of all Londoners aged between 16 and 24 were NEET.³ Nicola Smith, Senior Policy Adviser at Barnardo’s, told the Committee that there is “massive over-representation” of care leavers within the NEET category.⁴

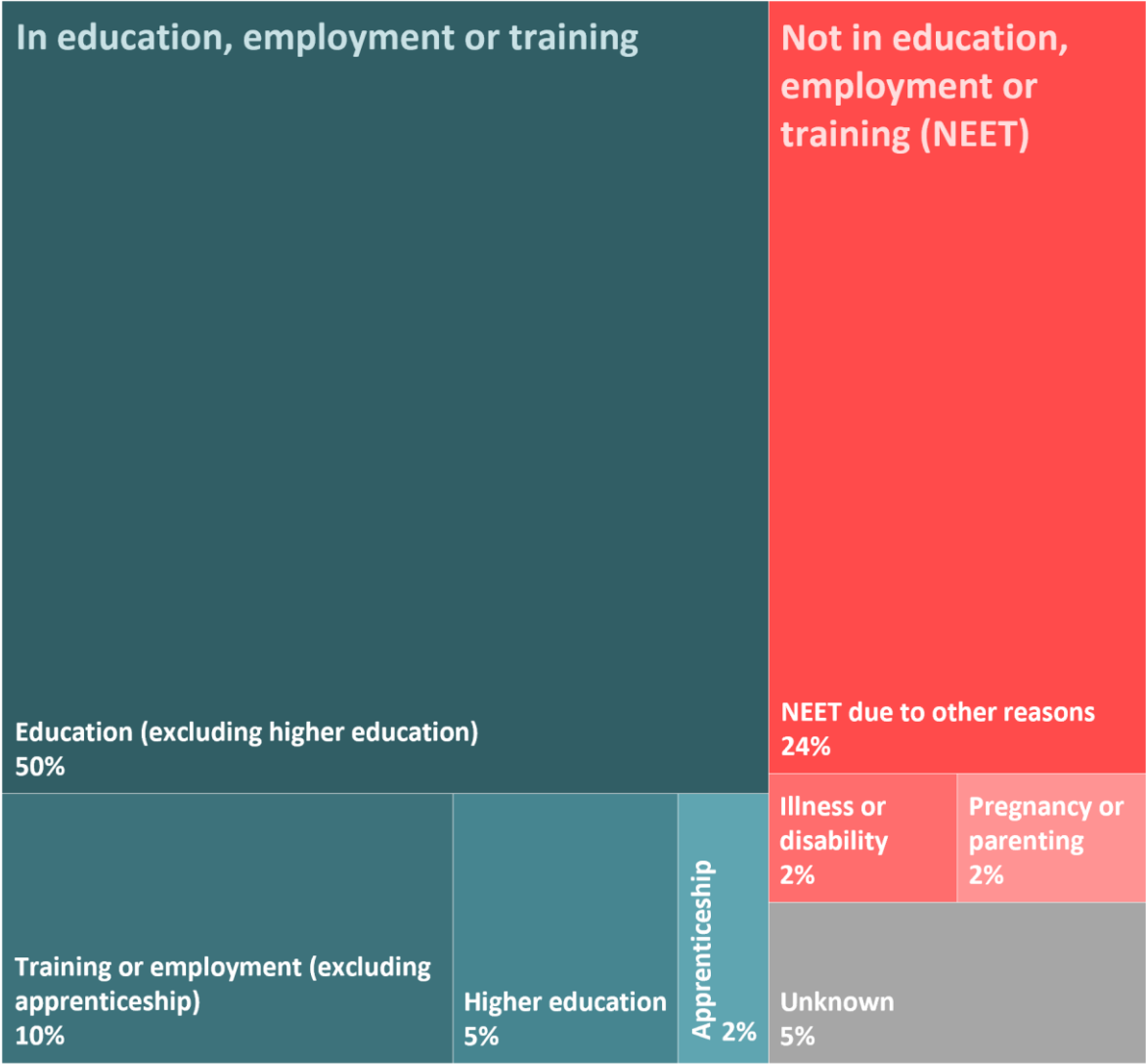
¹ Office for National Statistics, [Who are the children entering care in England](#), November 2022

² Department for Education, [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#), November 2024

³ London Datastore, [Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training, Borough](#)

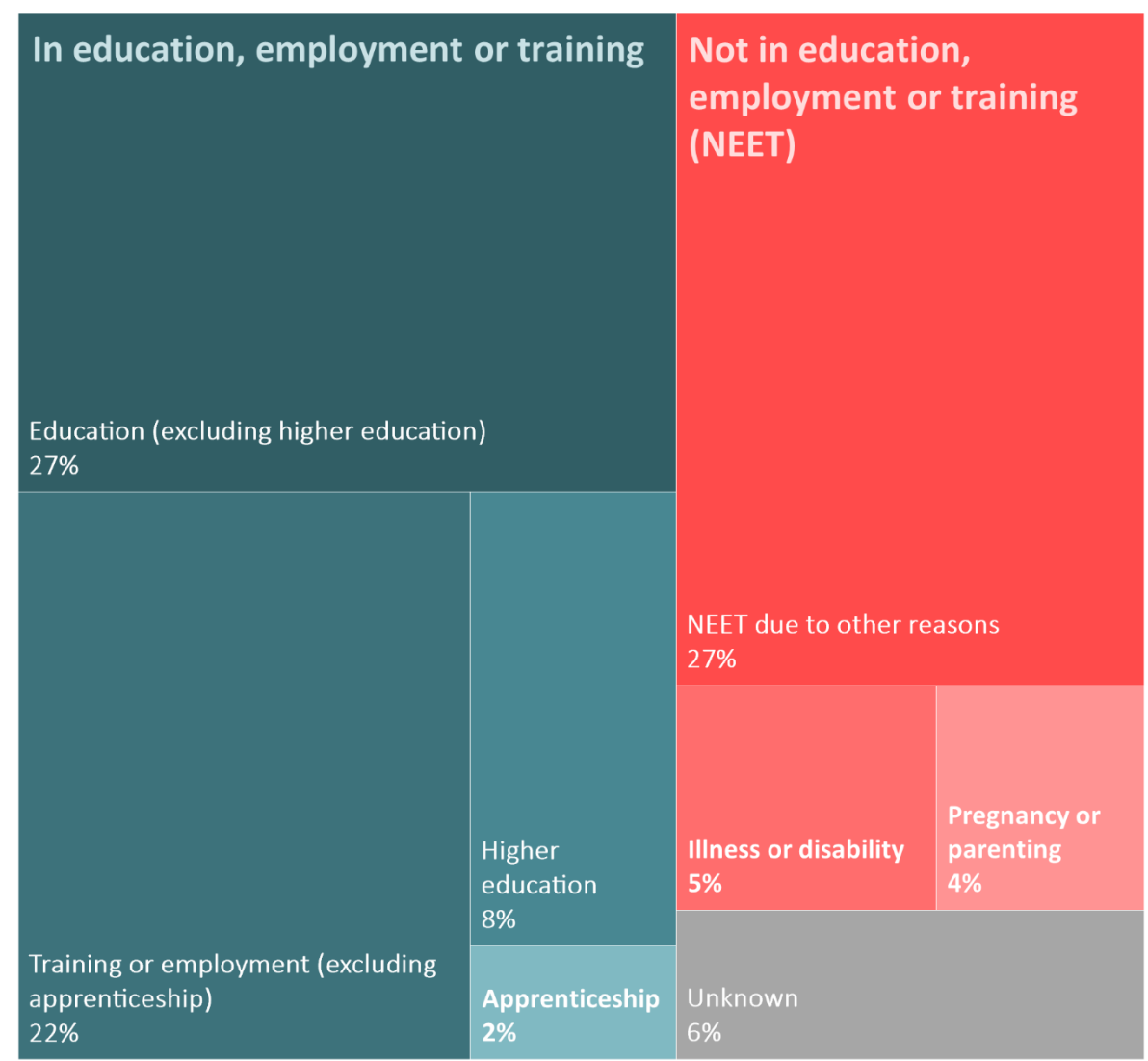
⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

Figure 1: 17- to 18-year-old care leavers in London grouped by activity
28 per cent of care leavers aged 17 to 18 in London are NEET



Charts produced by the London Assembly. Source: Department for Education, [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#), November 2024. Data relates to the year ending 31 March 2024

Figure 2: 19- to 21-year-old care leavers in London grouped by activity
Approximately one in three care leavers aged 19 to 21 in London are NEET, whilst fewer than one in ten attend university



Charts produced by the London Assembly. Source: Department for Education, [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#), November 2024. Data relates to the year ending 31 March 2024 (total does not add up to 100 due to rounding)

Who is a “care leaver” and “a care-experienced young person”?

There is no formal definition of who a “care-experienced” person is, but it is generally considered to be someone who is currently looked-after or has been looked-after at any stage in their life.⁵

This is distinct from the category of “care leavers”, which only applies to some care-experienced people. A care leaver is legally defined as someone aged 16 – 25 who is or was “looked-after” (i.e. provided with accommodation) by a local authority for at least 13 weeks in between the ages of 14 and 16, and on or after their 16th birthday.^{6 7} For example, if a person spent time in care growing up, but not for 13 weeks in between the age of 14 and 16 and on their 16th birthday, they would be considered care-experienced but would not legally be considered a care leaver, and would not be included in official statistics about care leavers.

This report primarily uses the term care-experienced young person/people to refer to both people who have left care and those who are still in care. However, we refer to the legal category of “care leavers” where necessary (e.g. when citing official statistics).

Barriers facing young people with care experience

We heard that disadvantage sets in early on, as young people who grow up in care often have unstable starts to their lives. Nicola Smith told us that it in London it is not uncommon for people who are placed in care to find themselves living far away from areas they are familiar with and where they may have support networks.⁸ She added they also more likely to move home frequently as they are transferred from one foster placement to another.⁹ All this, we heard, negatively impacts care experienced children’s performance in school, as they move between schools, frequently change social workers and often receive inadequate learning support.¹⁰ Our evidence suggests that this is particularly the case for people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Although SEND is common among care-experienced young people, it often goes unrecognised for years.¹¹

⁵ BBC Teach, [Supporting care-experienced children: 1. Defining care experience](#)

⁶ [Children Act 1989](#), s.24

⁷ Kingston and Richmond, [The four “Care Leaver” categories](#)

⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.5-6)

¹⁰ Barnardo’s, [From Pillar to Post](#), May 2022

¹¹ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become and Centrepoint. Published alongside report.

The “care cliff”

Although local authorities are required to continue providing support for care-experienced people after they turn 18, care-experienced Londoners themselves told us that this support is often inadequate, with many being left to effectively fend for themselves.¹² We heard this means that support often drops off at a person’s 18th birthday – a crucial transition point at which young people are expected to enter further and/or higher education, training or employment all whilst shouldering the responsibilities of adulthood with minimal support.¹³ This is commonly referred to as the “care cliff.”¹⁴

Care-experienced Londoners told us that this rapid transition into adulthood is particularly challenging in London given the high cost of housing.¹⁵ Additionally, we were told there is not always enough mental health support in place after turning 18, with neurodivergence, experiences of trauma and resulting mental health difficulties often overlooked by support staff.¹⁶ This is worrying given the evidence we received suggests that this cohort of young people is far more likely to struggle with poor mental health.¹⁷

We also heard that basic support provision can vary widely between boroughs. Some local authorities provide more support than others – a situation which Bethany Caunter, Strategic Partnerships Manager at the Care Leaver Covenant, referred to as a “postcode lottery”.¹⁸ She stressed that support concerning the “foundational parts of life” was currently inconsistent.¹⁹ This is discussed in more detail below.

Multiple disadvantage

We were concerned to hear that care experienced young people with particular characteristics (for example related to ethnicity or disability status) face additional barriers. Dr Neil Harrison, Associate Professor of Education and Social Justice at the University of Exeter, described the interaction between care experience and other factors, such as ethnicity or gender, as an “additive process”, whereby there is a “layering of disadvantage” as a result of care experienced people frequently sharing multiple characteristics associated with poor outcomes.²⁰ Research by Dr Neil Harrison and two other academics from 2020 suggests that there are certain

¹² Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹³ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹⁴ Palmer, A. et al. (2022), “[Accelerated adulthood, extended adolescence and the care cliff: Supporting care leavers' transition from care to independent living](#)”, Child & Family Social Work, Vol.27(4)

¹⁵ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹⁶ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹⁷ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the Care Leavers’ Association. Published alongside report.

¹⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.11)

¹⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.12)

²⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.15)

characteristics shared by those with care experience, particularly related to levels of prior attainment, disability status and ethnicity, which act as obstacles to finding employment in the labour market.²¹

Initiatives by the Government, London's local authorities and the GLA to support care-experienced young people

What does the legislation say?

The Children Act 1989 first set out who qualifies as a care leaver and outlined the responsibilities of local authorities. It has since been complemented by additional Acts of Parliament. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced the role of a "Personal Adviser" (PA) to support young people as they transition to adulthood.²² A key responsibility of PAs is creating a "pathway plan" at age 16, outlining the necessary support, including health care, accommodation, and assistance with education, employment, and training up to the age of 25.²³

The Children and Families Act, passed in 2014, requires local authorities to appoint a "Virtual School Head" to promote the educational achievement of children in care.²⁴ The Children and Social Work Act 2017 further strengthened local authority duties by defining "corporate parenting," which set out seven key principles to guide responsibilities toward care leavers. These include promoting health and well-being, encouraging their views, ensuring stability, and preparing them for independent living.²⁵ The Act also mandates local authorities to publish a "local offer" outlining services for care leavers, covering employment, education, training, and health support.²⁶

Government initiatives

National policy sets out that care leavers receive additional financial support when undertaking apprenticeships or attending university. Since 2018, apprenticeships for care leavers are supported with a £3,000 bursary in the first year,²⁷ along with £1,000 for employers and training providers who hire 16-24-year-olds who were in care.²⁸ Additionally, care leavers aged 25 and younger starting higher education are eligible for a one-off £2,000 bursary from their

²¹ Harrison, N. et al. (2020), [Employment and further study outcomes for care-experienced graduates in the UK](#), Higher Education, Vol.83

²² [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#), s.2

²³ [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#), s.2

²⁴ [Children and Families Act 2014](#), s.99

²⁵ [Children and Families Act 2014](#), s.99

²⁶ [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), s.2

²⁷ Department for Education, [Apprenticeships care leavers' bursary guidance](#), February 2023

²⁸ Department for Education, [New support for young care leavers starting an apprenticeship](#), May 2018

local authority.²⁹ Those in sixth form or other further education may also qualify for a bursary up to £1,200.³⁰

The Government's 2016 "Keep on Caring" strategy established the Care Leaver Covenant, a programme supporting care leavers aged 16–25 through pledges from public, private, and voluntary sectors for apprenticeships, work experience, and other services.³¹ The Government states that the Covenant has created over 2,000 opportunities (including jobs, apprenticeships, training, work experience, support and mentoring) and offers a care-leaver-friendly employer charter to guide organizations on how to support care leavers.³²

Local authorities

Local authorities are required by law to produce their own 'local offer' for care leavers. This could include financial support, such as help with job-related expenses or transport costs, support with housing costs, either directly through supported accommodation or through income support, as well as mentoring and job-readiness programmes.³³ Matthew Blood, 'Virtual School Head' at Islington Council told the Committee that there are a variety of approaches taken by local authorities across the capital, including commissioning external support providers (such as charities), making use of centrally-funded programmes (such as through European Social Fund and its successor, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund), as well as directly providing support via in-house teams.³⁴

The Pan London Care Leavers Compact

In 2022, a coalition comprising the Mayor of London, Transport for London (TfL) the NHS, London boroughs, NHS London Region and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), established the Pan London Care Leavers Compact. The Compact is sponsored by Lambeth Council and the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LLIA, a "sector-led improvement partnership"). The stated goal of the Compact is to provide a framework for developing a consistent offer for care leavers in London across seven key areas: health, education, training and development, housing, financial support, mentoring, transport, and data.³⁵

Mayoral initiatives

The Mayor signed up to the Government's Care Leaver Covenant in October 2018. As part of this, the Mayor published "13 commitments to care leavers" in 2021 (a full list of the Mayor's commitments is provided below). One of the key commitments made was to include those with care experience as a "targeted group" within the 2019–23 European Social Fund (ESF)

²⁹ [The Children Act 1989 \(Higher Education Bursary\) \(England\) Regulations 2009](#)

³⁰ Education & Skills Funding Agency, Guidance: [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2024 to 2025 academic year](#), May 2024

³¹ Department for Education, [Care Leaver Covenant](#), October 2018

³² Care Leaver Covenant, [Care Leaver Opportunities](#)

³³ Partnership for Young London, [Towards a London-wide Local Care Offer](#), September 2021

³⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.14)

³⁵ London Innovation and Improvement Alliance, [The Pan London Care Leavers Compact](#), February 2023

programme.³⁶ This programme provided funding for skills and employment initiatives, with the stated objective to: “Enable NEET young people and unemployed, long-term unemployed and economically inactive adults to gain industry relevant and pre-apprenticeship skills and progress into sustainable employment, education or training opportunities in target sectors facing significant skills challenges in London.”³⁷ The programme was worth just over £70 million and funded a mixture of youth and adult skills and employment projects.³⁸ There is no data available on how many care-experienced people benefitted from this programme.

The below is an overview of the commitments made by the Mayor, which will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Mayor’s actions for care leavers published in 2021 as part of signing the Care Leaver Covenant

1. The GLA Apprenticeship scheme:
 1. Offering a guaranteed telephone interview for care leavers that meet minimum requirements
 2. Broadening pre-employment support
 3. Working with partners to increase numbers of applications with care experience
2. Careers & employment support
 1. Including care leavers as a targeted group within the ESF funding allocation
 2. Ensuring every care leaver is entitled to a personal mentor by 2024 as part of the Mayor’s New Deal for Young People
3. The Mayor’s Peer Outreach Team
 1. Advertising this opportunity through the Covenant online portal
 2. Providing the opportunity for Peer Outreach Workers with care experience to influence GLA policy in this area
4. Mental health support for London’s care leavers
 1. Continue to promote the mental health first aid training to organisations supporting care leavers
 2. Reserving up to two places for care leavers on every youth mental health first aid training course
5. Young people with insecure immigration status
 1. Publishing online guidance for young Londoners with immigration needs so that they, and those supporting them such as social workers or personal advisors, can get information and access resources around resolving immigration status

³⁶ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London’s actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

³⁷ Mayor of London, [The Mayor’s European Social Fund \(ESF\) 2019-2023](#), December 2018 (p.7)

³⁸ Mayor of London, [The Mayor’s European Social Fund \(ESF\) 2019-2023 Round 2 Prospectus](#), December 2018 (p.7)

2. Promote the issue and our resources to virtual school heads and promote the resources on the Covenant portal

6. Promoting consistency in the London offer to care leavers

1. Working with London boroughs and the third sector on sharing best practice and ways to work collaboratively for the benefit of London's Care Leavers
2. Continuing to keep the perspective of care leavers' experiences at the heart of GLA's work.³⁹

The GLA is also responsible for allocating funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which replaced the European Social Fund (ESF) in 2023. Ann-Marie Soyinka, Interim Assistant Director at the GLA, noted that while the UKSPF continues to support targeted NEET programmes, its smaller size compared to the ESF means these efforts are now on a reduced scale.⁴⁰

The Mayor also oversees the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), formerly the Adult Education Budget (AEB), which supports skills courses for individuals aged 19 and above, and launched the Community Outreach Programme in 2022 to reach Londoners "most in need of adult education".⁴¹ However, the programme does not specifically reference people with care experience.

Whilst the Mayor has launched a number of initiatives aimed at supporting those with care experience, so far there is little data to evaluate how this has benefitted care-experienced Londoners who are NEET. Based on the evidence we heard, the Committee believes there is more the Mayor can do to work with boroughs, third sector organisations and care-experienced Londoners themselves to address some of the most pressing issues facing care-experienced people looking to transition into education, employment or training in London. These ideas will be explored in more detail throughout this report.

³⁹ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London's actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

⁴⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.13)

⁴¹ Mayor of London, [Skills for Londoners Community Outreach programme](#)

The role of early intervention

The primary focus of our investigation was the experience of people in London trying to access employment and education once they have left care. But we repeatedly heard that the challenges care-experienced people face at this stage of their lives cannot be separated from challenges early in life. We were saddened to hear how early in life disadvantage sets in for people with care experience. If the playing field for care experienced people is to be levelled in accessing employment and training, outcomes need to be improved at an earlier stage of their lives.

Care-experienced children are more likely to encounter barriers to learning in school

Employment and educational outcomes in early adulthood cannot be detached from academic performance earlier in life. The charity Become told us that young people growing up in care are more likely to experience poor academic outcomes than other children.⁴² The disparity can be stark: in London in 2023, just 13.8 per cent of looked-after children achieved the grade 5 “good pass” threshold in English and mathematics GCSEs,⁴³ compared to a national average of 45.3 per cent.⁴⁴

“You cannot separate issues around [education, employment and training] without understanding the early life history of these young people, their trauma, their instability and their poor educational outcomes at school. That early intervention is crucial.”⁴⁵

**Matthew Blood, Virtual School Head
London Borough of Islington**

Although the lives of young people do not follow fixed pathways, early experiences can influence outcomes later in life. We heard that gaps in attainment have implications for education, employment and training outcomes. Referring to his own research from 2023,⁴⁶ Dr Neil Harrison pointed out that it is often possible to predict a young person’s outcomes in early adulthood from age 11 onwards with a high degree of certainty.⁴⁷ He added that pathways

⁴² Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become. Published alongside report.

⁴³ Department for Education, [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England](#), April 2024

⁴⁴ Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance](#), February 2024

⁴⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

⁴⁶ Harrison, N. et al (2023). Care leavers’ transition into the labour market, Rees Centre Oxford University. <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CareLeaversLabourMarket.pdf>

⁴⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

could be set early in life and that care-experienced young people who did poorly in their GCSEs were often directed into “lower-level qualifications” (as opposed to A-levels or other level 3 qualifications).⁴⁸

This is further exacerbated by inadequate support in schools for care-experienced children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The charity Become cited data from the Department for Education (DfE) showing that in 2023, 55 per cent of children in care had SEND, compared to 17 per cent of all pupils.⁴⁹ However, Nichola Smith from Barnardo’s told the Committee that SEND support is often not provided in schools to care-experienced children as it frequently takes an engaged parent to “push for it”.⁵⁰

This lack of an engaged and long-term advocate can have substantial impact at individual levels. Centrepont told us about one care-experienced young person supported by the charity: despite the young person having foetal alcohol syndrome, a personality disorder and mental health difficulties, support for this person was not provided in school until they were adopted at the age of 16.⁵¹

The evidence we received suggests that young people growing up in care in London, particularly those with SEND, are not receiving the support they need to thrive academically. This naturally has implications for outcomes later in life.

Why placement stability matters while growing up

These educational challenges can be exacerbated when young people have to move between placements and schools. Dr Neil Harrison told us that a care-experienced young person’s education can be “profoundly disrupted” early in life due to school and placement moves, particularly at key stage 4 (when pupils are typically aged between 14 and 16).⁵² Research shows that looked-after children who experience a high number of placement moves are more likely to have an unsettled career or be unemployed.⁵³

Nicola Smith from Barnardo’s stressed that moving between placements is typically associated with a higher number of school moves and changes in social workers, contributing to a lack of adequate support whilst in school.⁵⁴ She stated that frequent changes in social workers can make it difficult for the social worker responsible at any one time to build a picture of what is

⁴⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

⁴⁹ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become. Published alongside report.

⁵⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.5)

⁵¹ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

⁵² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

⁵³ Stein, M. (2006) “Research review: young people leaving care”, Child and Family Social Work, Vol.11(3)

⁵⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.5-6)

going on and provide the necessary support.⁵⁵ Research carried out by Barnardo's found that at a national level, 60 per cent of children in care experienced at least one change of social worker in 2017/18, and just over a quarter experienced two or more changes.⁵⁶

The Care Leavers' Association informed us it is currently working with the University of Cambridge to conduct research into the experience of care-experienced young people in the South London and Maudsley area. Preliminary findings show that of the 80 randomised individual cases being analysed, 80 per cent experienced "disruptive schooling".⁵⁷ This suggests the national problem of placement instability is mirrored in the capital, making it harder for young care-experienced Londoners to get the support they need and do well in school.

Children in care are more likely to be placed away from their familiar surroundings

We heard that, in London, young people in care are often placed away from areas they know well, as a result of a shortage of residential care placements in the capital (referred to as an "out of area" placement).⁵⁸ Although the Children Act 1989 states that local authorities must place children within their area, there is an exemption in cases where this is not "reasonably practicable".⁵⁹ Research by Become from 2023 found that this can have further disruptive effects on children's lives by separating them from loved ones.⁶⁰

Our evidence suggests the problem is compounded by a shortage of foster carers. Matthew Blood told us that there is a "massive issue in Islington about recruiting local foster carers."⁶¹ This was echoed by Nicola Smith who said that the increase in children entered the care system is putting a "tremendous strain" on finding foster carers.⁶² Research published by the Fostering Network in 2024 found that since 2019 the number of fostering households in England decreased by 1,045, while the number of children in care increased by 5,690.⁶³

Recruitment of foster carers should therefore be a priority at both national and London level. A joint report by the Department for Education and the Fostering Network highlighted outreach and targeted advertising activities as crucial to recruiting foster carers.⁶⁴ However, this comes

⁵⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.5-6)

⁵⁶ Barnardo's, [From Pillar to Post](#), May 2022 (p.7)

⁵⁷ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the Care Leavers' Association. Published alongside report.

⁵⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

⁵⁹ [Children Act 1989](#), s.22C

⁶⁰ Become, [Still Too Far](#), August 2024

⁶¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.15)

⁶² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

⁶³ The Fostering Network, [More children to end up in unsuitable homes if more foster carers aren't urgently recruited](#), May 2024

⁶⁴ Department for Education & The Fostering Network, [Supporting Fostering Services to Recruit and Retain Foster Carers](#), August 2015

with costs, and Matthew Blood told us that councils often struggle to secure affordable advertising space with businesses which would allow them to publicise their fostering services and recruit more foster carers. He told the Committee that:

“Why does our fostering team have to penny-pinch and go to businesses and say, “Will you give me this advertising rate? Can I put it here? Can I put it there?” Surely, the power of the Mayor is to say, “That is ridiculous”.”⁶⁵

We believe the GLA has a role to play by providing free advertising space to recruit foster carers in London. It could also provide support for local authorities to ensure looked-after children are placed as close as possible to the areas with which they are familiar. It is clear that placement instability, which contributes towards inadequate support for young people in care, has a significant impact on the education of people with care experience. This leaves them more vulnerable to falling into the ‘NEET’ category in early adulthood.

The Committee is aware that the Department for Education is currently piloting Regional Care Cooperatives. According to the Government, one of the key ambitions of this programme is to *“reform foster parent recruitment and retention and where necessary create new forms of care to meet local need, so that more children in care can stay in family environments and be closer to home”*.⁶⁶ The Committee believes that this intervention has the potential to facilitate closer collaboration between London boroughs and help ensure children in care are placed close to their familiar surroundings. However, this initiative is currently only being piloted in two regions, both of which are outside London. Given the amount of care leavers in London and the need for close collaboration between boroughs, The Mayor should work with London’s local authorities to lobby the Government to launch a trial in the capital.

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should work with London boroughs and London Councils to lobby the Government to pilot a Regional Care Cooperative in London.

Recommendation 2

In 2025/26, the Mayor should instruct TfL to provide free advertising space on the TfL network for local authorities to run advertisements to recruit foster carers.

⁶⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.15)

⁶⁶ Department for Education, [Regional Care Cooperatives \(RCCs\): pathfinder regions](#), November 2024

Entering adulthood: what do care-experienced people need?

The “care cliff”

The evidence we received, and particularly the conversations we had with young people, brought home to us how difficult the sudden transition into adulthood can be for people with care experience. Up until their 18th birthday, young people are in the care of their local authority and typically live with a foster carer. However, this arrangement abruptly ends once the young person turns 18. Although the local authority is still required to provide support, our evidence suggests that young people do not always find it adequate and can experience the transition out of care as a sudden rupture in their lives.

A 2019 study analysing care-experienced people’s views about their transition to adulthood found that they perceived the transition as an “instant severance from support” with a lack of information around the transition.⁶⁷

Our guests echoed this. Will McMahon, Project Worker at the Care Leavers’ Association, told us that care-experienced people are expected to live independently much sooner than other young people and that many find themselves “effectively abandoned”.⁶⁸ Nicola Smith from Barnardo’s noted that the average age for leaving home in the UK is “about 23-24 at the moment”, whereas some people with care experience have no choice but to start living independently at the age of 18.⁶⁹ Given the high costs of housing in London, which means many young people remain in their family home for longer, it is likely that this disparity is even wider in London.

As a result, the absence of coordinated and effective support at this time in a young person’s life acts as a barrier to entering the labour market or accessing further/higher education or training. No longer looked after by their local authority, they have to face the many daunting challenges associated with living independently for the first time. These include securing a job or enrolling in further/higher education or training, but also finding a place to live and managing one’s own finances. The charity Become explained that:

⁶⁷ Atkinson, C., Hyde, R. (2019) Care leavers' views about transition: a literature review, Journal of Children's Services Vol.14(1) <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-05-2018-0013> (p.50)

⁶⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

⁶⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

“[Care-experienced people are] responsible for paying rent and bills, budgeting and managing a tenancy, at a time when they may be in the middle of studying, exams or starting employment or training, all without a family safety net to fall back on.”⁷⁰

The need for wide-ranging support

The role of Personal Advisers

In line with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, the main point of support for a young person after leaving care at 18 is their Personal Adviser (PA), who is employed by the local authority.

During our roundtable discussion with care-experienced Londoners, we heard some strong criticisms of PAs, with participants expressing frustration and disappointment with the level of support they received. Although one care-experienced Londoner told us that their PA was highly engaged, regularly checking in with them and encouraging them to apply to programmes, we were disappointed to hear that this level of engagement from PAs in London is not the norm. Those we spoke to felt that their support depends a great deal on the individual PA’s engagement and motivation.⁷¹

A 2019 study into the views of care leavers in the UK found that many described ‘pathway planning’ with their PA as a “tick box” exercise. Those overseeing pathway planning (typically a PA) were perceived as fulfilling a contractual obligation, rather than showing genuine interest in their future.⁷²

The evidence we received suggests that the workload of a PA is often simply too high to provide the sort of well-rounded support that a young person leaving care needs. Bethany Caunter from the Care Leaver Covenant, stressed that PAs play an “incredibly crucial” role in helping care-experienced people access opportunities after leaving care, but that they typically deal with extremely high caseloads and limited time and resources.⁷³

Whilst there is no official average figure for PA caseloads, guests at our meetings told us that caseloads can typically range between 20⁷⁴ and 35⁷⁵ care-experienced people per PA at any one time. Matthew Blood from the London Borough of Islington told us that PAs often only have time to fulfil their basic statutory requirements, which means they typically only meet one of

⁷⁰ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become. Published alongside report

⁷¹ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

⁷² Atkinson, C., Hyde, R. (2019) Care leavers' views about transition: a literature review, Journal of Children's Services Vol.14(1) <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-05-2018-0013> (p.50)

⁷³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.8)

⁷⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

⁷⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.8)

their care-experienced people once every eight weeks.⁷⁶ He added that PAs often need to prioritise “crisis” cases (for example when a young person has been arrested or becomes homeless), resulting in others receiving less support for things like education and career planning.⁷⁷

Ofsted’s written evidence to this investigation echoed some of these points, highlighting some key factors that it considered necessary for a successful transition into education, employment or training, including: skilled council support staff with manageable workloads, supportive relationships with PAs and staff having high aspirations for care-experienced people.⁷⁸

The role of support networks

Whilst PAs form the core part of the formal support offer available to care-experienced young people, we heard that this alone is often not sufficient to facilitate a smooth transition into education, employment and training. Nicola Smith from Barnardo’s stressed that care-experienced young people often miss out on informal support, which would usually be provided within a family.⁷⁹

Young people without care experience typically transition into adulthood with extended parental support and can rely on their family for emotional, financial and career support as they get on their feet. Many young people in London live with family at home after the age of 18, providing support and allowing them to focus on their career ambitions. By contrast, care leavers often lack such family support networks who ensure that fundamental needs are met.⁸⁰ On reaching adulthood, care-experienced young people often have a long list of challenges to contend with, such as their health or housing situation.

Our guests agreed that trying to provide support for accessing education, employment or training without addressing some of the underlying challenges linked to care experience is unlikely to be successful. In particular, multiple guests highlighted the importance of mirroring the support provided within the family for young people at this stage in life.⁸¹ Dr Neil Harrison told us that while practical employment support, such as CV writing, was important, it should be complemented by more wide-ranging support addressing the other challenges faced by care leavers.⁸² Will McMahon from the Care Leavers’ Association told us that for any employment or

⁷⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.8)

⁷⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.8)

⁷⁸ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Ofsted. Published alongside report.

⁷⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

⁸⁰ Palmer, A. et al. (2022), Accelerated adulthood, extended adolescence and the care cliff: Supporting care leavers' transition from care to independent living, Child & Family Social Work, Vol.27(4) <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12922>

⁸¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.7,10, 19)

⁸² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

education support to succeed, it should build on a “secure base” incorporating stable relationships, housing and health support.⁸³

The Care Leavers' Association shared with us an example of a skills programme it ran from 2014 to 2018. It found that many care-experienced people struggled to stay in the programme due to everyday issues like financial stress and poor housing. The Care Leavers' Association stated that:

“In our experience the main day-to-day stressors (aside from health) are financial (not having enough money to live) and poor-quality housing. It is no wonder that a care leaver will not be able to focus on education or employment if they are concerned and anxious about money and housing.”⁸⁴

Targeting the mental and emotional support gap

The availability of emotional support is essential for any young person entering adulthood, and particularly for many care-experienced people. Data shows care-experienced people are significantly more likely to suffer from poor mental health compared to the wider population.⁸⁵ Although some mental health issues are severe and require specialist attention, we also heard that some mental health issues which affect care-experienced people could be effectively addressed by having stable and trusting relationships.⁸⁶ Dr Neil Harrison told the Committee that, in some cases, mental health issues “would ordinarily be managed and supported within the family”.⁸⁷ Dr Neil Harrison told us families provide an environment where young people can freely discuss their career and options available to them after graduating, but also everyday issues that may cause them emotional distress.⁸⁸

Dr Neil Harrison told us that care-experienced people often struggle to find and maintain work due to a lack of ongoing informal support. He told the Committee that:

“It is having someone to come home to and say, “Today was a bad day at the office”. Often, the young people that we are talking about do not have that in the same way.”⁸⁹

⁸³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.8)

⁸⁴ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the Care Leavers' Association. Published alongside report.

⁸⁵ As of 2020, the rate of mental health disorders in the general population aged 5 to 15 was ten per cent, whereas for those in care it was 45 per cent, which rises to 72 per cent for those in residential care, according to NICE, [Looked-after children and young people](#), October 2021 (p.122)

⁸⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

⁸⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

⁸⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.5,10)

⁸⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

Care-experienced Londoners at our roundtable session felt they were at a disadvantage compared to their peers, given the absence of parental help and emotional support.⁹⁰

Other guests stressed that mental health issues later in life can often be traced to traumatic childhood experiences. We heard from Matthew Blood that mental health support should incorporate a ‘trauma-informed approach’, given the role trauma plays in the lives of many care-experienced people.⁹¹

PAs once again seem to be the natural starting point for this kind of support. However, we note that according to a 2022 report by the Children’s Commissioner, PAs typically lack mental health expertise.⁹² Matthew Blood stressed that a ‘trauma informed approach’ would require providing additional training to PAs.⁹³

Based on our evidence, a successful transition into education, employment and training is dependent on addressing the care difficulties faced by care-experienced people as they enter adulthood. We believe the goal should be to provide care-experienced Londoners with a support network that addresses not just the issue of accessing education, employment or training but simultaneously also tackles the other challenges faced by this cohort of young people, including finances, housing and health.

The role of mentoring

We heard that incorporating mentoring as part of a broader support offer could play an important role in helping care-experienced people form supportive relationships. The charity Become told us that “care-experienced young people we heard from would like to see more local mentor schemes for care leavers.”⁹⁴

As part of his New Deal for Young People, the Mayor committed to ensuring every care-experienced person is entitled to a personal mentor by 2024.⁹⁵ It is unclear whether this has been fully achieved and what this entitlement looks like in practice. However, the GLA informed us that the Mayor has invested £34 million, funding approximately 150 mentoring organisations. Through this investment, 2,393 care-experienced young people have been able to access mentoring so far.⁹⁶

The GLA also co-chairs the “Relationships Group” through its New Deal for Young People. This forms part of the Pan-London Care Leavers Compact and, according to the GLA, “focuses on the benefit of long-lasting, stable relationships that young people with care experience often

⁹⁰ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

⁹¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

⁹² Children’s Commissioner, [a vision for care leavers](#), October 2022

⁹³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

⁹⁴ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become. Published alongside report.

⁹⁵ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London’s actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

⁹⁶ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 12 February 2025

miss (including mentoring).⁹⁷ As part of this, the GLA has run two pan-London training and awareness-raising sessions.⁹⁸ This is welcome, although from the current information available about the programme, it is unclear what impact it has had on outcomes for care-experienced young people.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should carry out a full assessment of whether his ambition for every care-experienced young Londoner to be entitled to a mentor has been met, and whether every care-experienced Londoner is aware of this entitlement. He should also provide more information to the committee about what impact this mentoring programme has had to date.

The importance of collaboration to support care-experienced Londoners into education, employment and training

During our investigation, guests and written evidence indicated that local authorities and external bodies, such as Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the NHS do not always work together in a joined-up fashion to deliver support.

Close collaboration within local authorities and between public bodies is imperative to delivering the kind of support that meets the varied needs of care-experienced people as they become adults. Care-experienced Londoners told us that there is often limited information sharing between PAs, council staff and healthcare providers.⁹⁹ Debbie Jones, Director of Children's Services at Croydon Council told the Committee that a "whole-council approach" was needed.¹⁰⁰

The Government, as part of its Get Britain Working White Paper, is planning to introduce greater integration between NHS health provision and employment support at a local level. This includes piloting three "NHS Accelerators" combining health and employment support in three regions (North East, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire).¹⁰¹ We believe this approach has potential, and should be monitored for its potential use in London.

One welcome example of a collaborative effort across London is the Pan London Care Leaver Compact, a joint initiative between the Mayor, local authorities and other partners, which seeks to provide a support offer that addresses the multiple needs of care-experienced Londoners.¹⁰² The Compact's offer currently consists of free prescriptions, half price bus and tram travel on

⁹⁷ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 12 February 2025

⁹⁸ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 12 February 2025

⁹⁹ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹⁰⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.1)

¹⁰¹ NHS Confederation, [Get Britain Working white paper: what you need to know](#), November 2024

¹⁰² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.5)

Transport for London (TfL), housing support and access to training and employment in healthcare.¹⁰³ This offer is available to all care-experienced Londoners aged 18 to 25.¹⁰⁴

The Mayor, by launching his mentorship scheme and working in partnership with London's boroughs as part of the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact, has taken a steps in the right direction. We welcome this work, but there is clearly more to be done. Based on the evidence we received about the importance of holistic support, we believe that the Mayor's mentorship offer should be integrated into the wider network of support provision for care-experienced Londoners to ensure it forms part of a wide-ranging support offer available to all care-experienced Londoners.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor should incorporate his mentorship scheme into the Pan-London Care Leaver compact as soon as possible to ensure it is part of a comprehensive support package aimed at care-experienced Londoners.

Supporting care leavers after 25

Whilst there is a sudden drop in support for care-experienced people once they turn 18, they are still entitled to some support which is enshrined in law. However, this falls away completely after the age of 25. We were concerned to hear about the lack of support available beyond this age. Due to the many challenges faced by care-experienced people on reaching adulthood, many struggle to access employment or training at the first attempt. They therefore may require further support beyond the age of 25.

Care-experienced Londoners told us that once they are 18, young people typically focus on meeting their basic needs, with education being less of a priority.¹⁰⁵ Centrepont stated that given the many difficulties faced by care-experienced people upon becoming an adult, it is not uncommon for them to pick the "path of least resistance" and forego looking for work or trying to access education.¹⁰⁶ Matthew Blood told us that care-experienced people are frequently in "survival mode" after leaving care.¹⁰⁷

For those that do manage to get a job, care-experienced Londoners shared with us that it is often difficult to remain in work for a variety of reasons, including financial and mental health issues.¹⁰⁸ Will McMahon from the Care Leavers' Association warned that support provision

¹⁰³ London Councils, [Press Release: Pan London Care Leavers Compact](#), 5 March 2024

¹⁰⁴ London Councils, [Press Release: Pan London Care Leavers Compact](#), 5 March 2024

¹⁰⁵ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹⁰⁶ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

¹⁰⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.7)

¹⁰⁸ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

should not immediately stop once a young person has secured a job or is enrolled at a university or on a training course.¹⁰⁹ Will Kerridge from the Drive Forward Foundation stressed that adopting a long-term approach by continuing to provide pastoral support during the early years of a young person's career can make an important difference.¹¹⁰ He told the Committee that:

*"We have some people that we work with over a stretch of 10 years and help build them up to the point where, by the time they are 26, they have some financial stability, they are in a career that satisfies them, and they have increased their networks."*¹¹¹

Our guests stressed that care-experienced people often therefore enter or re-enter higher education later in life once their living situation has become more settled. However, we heard that there is usually only very limited support available after the age of 25.¹¹² Dr Neil Harrison emphasised the importance of extending the time period for which support is available to create "second chance pathways", enabling people to achieve when things have become more stable.¹¹³ Multiple submissions to our call for evidence stated that the current age of 25 at which care-experienced people are no longer eligible for support was too low.¹¹⁴

*"We have to have a system that allows people to have another go"*¹¹⁵

Will McMahon, Project Worker Care Leavers' Association

The evidence presented to us strongly suggests that those with care experience require support past the age 25. In the absence of family support, care-experienced people can feel overwhelmed by the challenges presented by their abrupt transition to adulthood, which results in education, employment or training becoming less of an immediate priority. Care-experienced people who have successfully secured employment or education or training opportunities remain at a high risk of becoming NEET throughout early adulthood. In light of this, we regard ending statutory entitlements at age 25 as too soon. This is an issue the Mayor should take into account with regard to any support that is provided as part of the Pan-London Care Leavers Compact.

¹⁰⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.13)

¹¹⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.7)

¹¹¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.7)

¹¹² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.14)

¹¹³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.5)

¹¹⁴ See for example written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the Care Leavers' Association, the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers and the Youth Futures Foundation. Published alongside report.

¹¹⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.14)

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should work with local authorities and partners of the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact to ensure that as many opportunities as possible available through the Compact are accessible to care-experienced people until the age of 30. This could include free prescriptions, half price bus and tram travel, housing support, as well as training and employment opportunities in healthcare.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should lobby the Government to increase the age threshold for the £2,000 higher education bursary which care-experienced people are entitled to from 25 to 30 and index its value to the rate of inflation to ensure it retains its value.

What works and what does not? The current lack of data

The evidence we received during this investigation suggests that interventions providing wraparound support for care-experienced people on a long-term basis have been successful in helping them access education, employment or training. However, we also heard that there is currently a lack of data with regard to effectiveness of current interventions and how useful care-experienced people find them. We heard that this poses a problem, since care-experienced people's needs differ. Dr Neil Harrison warned it was important to avoid making "sweeping generalisations".¹¹⁶

Matthew Blood told the Committee that, due to this lack of data, local authorities currently have an incomplete picture of whether and how their interventions work. He stated that rather than launching an offer and expecting care-experienced people to access it, it would be preferable to "deep dive" into the specific needs of groups of care-experienced people and design and commission programmes that meet those needs.¹¹⁷

Referring to the Pan London Care Leavers Compact, Nicola Smith from Barnardo's told the Committee there needs to be a better understanding of how the offer "is working on the ground".¹¹⁸ For example, she said that whilst many London boroughs offer to act as rent guarantors to the care-experienced people they are looking after, there was some evidence suggesting landlords are reluctant to accept this.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

¹¹⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

¹¹⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.19)

¹¹⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.19)

Will Kerridge told us that the Drive Forward Foundation is currently working with King's College London and the Youth Futures Foundation to carry out a randomised control trial to better understand the impact of their interventions.¹²⁰

There is also a lack of data about the effectiveness of the interventions funded by the GLA. We heard from Ayo Akande, Interim Assistant Director, Skills and Employment – Delivery at the GLA, that one of the key commitments made by the Mayor as part of signing onto the Care Leaver Covenant in October 2018 was the inclusion of care leavers as a “targeted group” within the 2019-23 ESF programme (as outlined above).¹²¹ ¹²² However, the Committee was told by Ann-Marie Soyinka that, despite care leavers having been included as a targeted group within the ESF funding allocation, the data has not been disaggregated sufficiently to report on outcomes for care leavers, given care leavers were only one group supported through the ESF.¹²³

Ayo Akande also mentioned to us the GLA's Community Outreach Programme, which is targeted at Londoners considered to be in need of adult education and refers them to Adult Skills Fund (ASF) provision. He stated that the programme was worth £1 million in 2024/25 and currently funds 19 small community and voluntary sector organisations, as well as charities.¹²⁴ Ann-Marie Soyinka added that the programme works primarily with small organisations which already have a good relationship with care-experienced people and can leverage these to support young people into skill provision.¹²⁵ The GLA has not published data on the impact of this support in relation to people with care experience.

We urgently need a clearer picture of what works and what does not. Given the paucity of reliable data, the GLA should seek to gather and disaggregate data in order to sufficiently evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes it is currently targeting at care-experienced people, particularly those funded by the UKSPF. In addition to this, there is currently work being undertaken by third-sector organisations to gather and analyse evidence with regard to interventions aimed at helping care-experienced people access education, employment and training. The Committee believes there is a role for the Mayor and the GLA to collaborate with the organisations undertaking this work and disseminate the data and make it available to local authorities in London.

¹²⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.7)

¹²¹ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London's actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

¹²² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.12-13)

¹²³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.13)

¹²⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.13-14)

¹²⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.14)

Recommendation 7

The Mayor should collect and publish data in 2025-26 relating to outcomes of the interventions currently funded by the GLA through the UKSPF and the Community Outreach Programme in relation to supporting care-experienced Londoners to access education, employment and training.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor should gather and review all available evidence on the effectiveness of interventions designed to support care-experienced individuals as they transition into education, employment, or training, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current evidence base. Additionally, the Mayor should identify any gaps in this research and offer financial support to at least three local authorities or third-sector organizations working with care-experienced Londoners to conduct small-scale trials that address these gaps.

Pan-London support

Consistency of support provision across London

The local 'offer' that care-experienced people can access depends on their "home authority" - the local authority that was looking after them prior to them leaving care. The Government does not tell local authorities what to provide as part of their local offer, which can lead to wide disparities. In the most extreme cases, some care-experienced people's home authorities may pay their university fees, whereas others provide no support beyond the bursaries they have to provide by law.¹²⁶

*"The postcode lottery is absolutely alive and well in different parts of the country"*¹²⁷

Bethany Caunter, Strategic Partnerships Manager Care Leaver Covenant

Care-experienced Londoners told us that this means there are currently large disparities between the local offers of London's 33 local authorities.¹²⁸ This was echoed by Bethany Caunter from the Care Leaver Covenant, who told the Committee that there are significant differences in levels of support, particularly concerning support with council tax and utility bills.¹²⁹ Similarly, Dr Neil Harrison told the Committee that mental health support was "extremely patchy".^{130 131} Figure 3 below is based on data from the Care Leaver Local Offer website and shows other forms of variation across London boroughs in the support they provide:

¹²⁶ Pathways Project, University of Sheffield, [Pathways to University from Care: Findings Report One](#), September 2019

¹²⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.11)

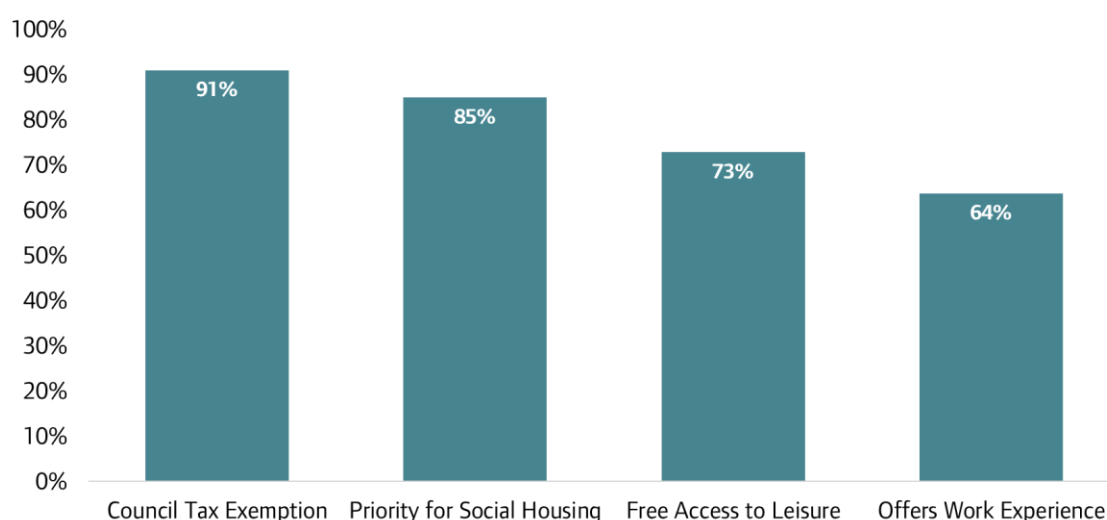
¹²⁸ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹²⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.11)

¹³⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

¹³¹ Partnership for Young London, [Towards a London-wide Local Care Offer](#), September 2021

Figure 3: Source: Proportion of London boroughs offering each type of support



Source: Care Leaver Local Offer Ltd, [Care leaver offer](#)

The career support element is the most variable on the chart above, and this is reflected in other evidence received by the Committee. A review of local offers within London by the Partnership for Young London found that some boroughs offer apprenticeships specifically for care leavers, whilst others provide the offer of one-to-one tuition and help with CVs and applying for jobs. Matthew Blood from Islington told the Committee that this difference in approach between boroughs can lead to skewed results; at present, if a borough works with a large employer to provide opportunities, those opportunities are then only available to care leavers living within the same borough. With 33 boroughs in London, where people very often live and work in different boroughs, this seems impracticably strict. He said that a consistent London-wide approach would make these opportunities available to all care leavers in the capital, whilst also providing local authorities with more leverage in conversations with large employers.¹³² He stated that:

“The more that we can do of that collectively across London adds weight to our argument. I could go to Google, or I could go to Apple or Microsoft or to whoever has its offices in London and say, “I do not want it just for Islington care leavers”, however great that would be. The offer should be [for] everyone.”¹³³

We also heard that the current situation creates additional difficulties for care leavers moving between local authorities. During our roundtable we heard from a care-experienced young person who told us that upon moving from one borough to another, neither borough felt they

¹³² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.9)

¹³³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

were responsible for providing support.¹³⁴ In its submission to our call for evidence, the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance stressed the importance of establishing reciprocity of offers, whereby care-experienced Londoners can access local support regardless of who their home authority is.¹³⁵ It is very common for Londoners to move between boroughs in the city, particularly when they are young. The possibility of a young care-experienced person losing access to support they are legally entitled to as a result of moving between boroughs is deeply worrying.

Both Debbie Jones from Croydon Council and Matthew Blood emphasised the importance of working towards a pan-London offer.¹³⁶ Debbie Jones added that this did not mean that all London boroughs would have the same local offer; each borough is different, and therefore there should still be some scope for differentiation. However, she clarified that there should be a “basic offer” that is consistent across London.¹³⁷ Similarly, Bethany Caunter told the Committee that at a minimum, support for the “foundational parts” should be consistent.¹³⁸

Ensuring a level of consistency in the offer for care-experienced people across London is an area where the Mayor can play a leading role. As part of the Mayor’s 13 commitments to care leavers published in 2021, the Mayor committed to working with London boroughs and the third sector on sharing best practice and ways to work collaboratively for the benefit of care-experienced Londoners.¹³⁹ In the same year, the Mayor also established the London Local Authority Network for Care Leavers. One of the network’s aims has been to share best practice and improve the experiences for all care-experienced Londoners.¹⁴⁰

The varying levels of basic support contravene basic principles of fairness for care-experienced people living in the same city. There is a need for a coordinated London-wide “basic offer” to end this injustice, which should be informed by the views of care-experienced people and developed in collaboration with London’s local authorities. Whilst we recognise the importance of allowing some inter-borough variation to reflect the different needs of care-experienced people in each borough, we feel strongly that every care-experienced Londoner should have access to the same baseline level of support.

There is also an opportunity to leverage the relationships boroughs have established with local employers and make opportunities available to all care-experienced Londoners. The Mayor is best placed to lead on this work, utilising the London Local Authority Network for Care Leavers and building on the achievements of the Care Leaver Compact and the Care Leaver Covenant.

¹³⁴ Evidence heard as part of a roundtable discussion held by the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee on 15 January 2025

¹³⁵ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance. Published alongside report.

¹³⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (pp.4-5)

¹³⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.4)

¹³⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.12)

¹³⁹ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London’s actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

¹⁴⁰ Mayor of London, [MQT 2022/2660](#)

Recommendation 9

By the end of 2025, the Mayor should convene a working group with all of London's local authorities via the London Local Authority Network for Care Leavers to agree on a set of support measures every local authority can implement, building on the commitments made as part of the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact. In addition to a set of measures aimed directly at supporting care-experienced people with their transition into education, employment or training, this should include support measures relating to mental health, housing and financial support.

Recommendation 10

During this Mayoral term, the Mayor should use the Pan-London Care Leaver Compact to create a platform where all London boroughs can share employment or training opportunities arranged with local employers, making them accessible to all care-experienced Londoners.

London's higher education institutions

Care experienced young people are disproportionately more likely to withdraw from their studies at university.¹⁴¹ Higher education institutions in the UK have recognised this, and frequently provide support for care-experienced young people.

The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) told us about a particularly notable example of this: five universities¹⁴² in the North East of England have signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant through the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP).¹⁴³ As part of this, the universities provide a broad and consistent support offer for care leavers, and this has had a positive impact on withdrawal rates.¹⁴⁴ The NNECL has developed a "quality mark" for higher and further education institutions in collaboration with care-experienced young people and experts. To achieve the mark, universities and colleges must evidence that they provide a range of support for people with care experience.¹⁴⁵

The costs of being a student in London are significantly higher than in the rest of the country, with recent findings from the London School of Economics estimating students' living expenses to be between £1,400 and £1,500 per month.¹⁴⁶ These costs can put a substantial pressure on care leavers. Although London is home to more universities than any other city in the UK,

¹⁴¹ Feinstein, L. et al. (2025) [Pathways into and through higher education for young people with experience of children's social care](#), Rees Centre, University of Oxford

¹⁴² This includes Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University Newcastle, University of Sunderland and Teesside University

¹⁴³ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers. Published alongside report.

¹⁴⁴ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers. Published alongside report.

¹⁴⁵ National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, [NNECL Quality Mark](#)

¹⁴⁶ London School of Economics, [London on a budget](#)

Matthew Blood told the Committee there is currently no standard offer for care-experienced university students in London.¹⁴⁷

Care-experienced people are far less likely to go to university than their non-care-experienced peers. Those who defy the odds and go on to attend university in London deserve support to help them while studying. This is all the more important given the high drop-out rates among care-experienced students. The Mayor should raise this issue with London's universities, encouraging and assisting them to provide a specialist offer for students with care experience.

Recommendation 11

The Mayor should convene public universities in London and work with them to create a basic support offer for student care leavers for all of London's public universities. The Mayor and London's universities should either create a London-specific offer or work with the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) to adopt the NNECL Quality Mark. The Mayor should further monitor the impact this has on care leaver withdrawal rates.

¹⁴⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.9)

The benefits system and the labour market

The benefits system

Care-experienced young people not in work typically have to rely on benefits for support. Concerningly, we heard that the benefits system, particularly Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB), are difficult to understand and actively disincentivise care-experienced people from working. Our guests were highly critical of the benefits system: Will McMahon from the Care Leavers' Association called the benefits system a "complete nightmare",¹⁴⁸ whilst Debbie Jones from Croydon referred to it as a "car crash".¹⁴⁹

Bethany Caunter from the Care Leaver Covenant told us that care-experienced people are usually placed on UC very early once they leave care.¹⁵⁰ However, the rate of UC a person is entitled to depends on whether they are over or under 25, with the latter group receiving a lower rate.¹⁵¹ In 2021, the Department for Work and Pensions justified this by stating the lower rate for younger claimants reflects that they are more likely to live in someone else's household and have "lower living costs and lower earnings expectations".¹⁵² But this doesn't always apply to young people with care-experience. In its submission to our call for evidence, the charity Become noted that care-experienced people effectively receive a lower rate of benefits with no parental support to supplement their income.¹⁵³

Some of the evidence we received on how this works in practice is deeply worrying. We heard there is a tension between benefits and work, whereby care-experienced people reliant on benefits risk infringing on their entitlements by taking on more work.¹⁵⁴ Citing its own research, Centrepont stated that 36 per cent of care-experienced young people said they were unable to get a job or take on more hours because of the effect this would have on their benefits.¹⁵⁵

This can cause particular difficulties for care-experienced young people living in supported accommodation. Care-experienced people who are NEET and living in supported accommodation receive both UC and HB (paid by local authorities) to pay towards their rent. In

¹⁴⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.14)

¹⁴⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.6)

¹⁵⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.6)

¹⁵¹ As of 2024/25, the current standard rate for a single claimant under 25 is £311.68, whilst the rate for people aged over 25 is £393.45

¹⁵² UK Parliament, [Question for Department for Work and Pensions, UIN 149302](#), 4 February 2021

¹⁵³ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Become. Published alongside report.

¹⁵⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.6)

¹⁵⁵ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

its submission to our call for evidence, Centrepont stated that once a young person works enough hours that their UC “tapers” to zero, their HB also begins to taper, leaving them responsible for paying rent.¹⁵⁶ It should be noted that the taper rate for HB is steeper than it is for UC, with claimants losing 65p for every pound they earn above their allowance, as opposed to 55p for every pound under UC.¹⁵⁷ The Centrepont submission highlights that this means that most of the hypothetical earnings obtained by working extra hours would be spent on rent.¹⁵⁸

Additionally, we heard the wages most care-experienced people earn are likely to be low. Matthew Blood told the Committee that care leavers entering the workforce will likely be at or below the minimum wage, particularly when undertaking an apprenticeship.¹⁵⁹ According to a survey of care-experienced young people aged 16 to 25 supported by Centrepont, 43 per cent of them said they were not being paid enough, with 25 per cent stating they struggled to buy food.¹⁶⁰ This amounts to an unacceptable set of circumstances to put young people in.

We were not surprised to hear that this situation makes care leavers reluctant to find work. Bethany Caunter told us that care-experienced young people are “trying to balance constantly the cost of going into employment versus the benefits that [they] are entitled to”.¹⁶¹ Will Kerridge from the Drive Forward Foundation emphasised that this makes the transition into work more difficult for care leavers, particularly when many of the employment opportunities available to care leavers are low paid.¹⁶²

“Fundamentally and morally, we cannot disadvantage our care-experienced young people by giving them that tension between benefits, training and work.”¹⁶³

**Debbie Jones, Director of Children’s Services
Croydon Council**

The Committee welcomes the Government’s recent announcement of investing £1 billion in employment support measures to support those with disabilities and long-term health conditions into work.¹⁶⁴ However, research by the Learning and Work Institute shows that there

¹⁵⁶ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

¹⁵⁷ Department for Work & Pensions, [Guidance: Housing Benefit guidance for supported housing claims](#), May 2022

¹⁵⁸ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

¹⁵⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.7)

¹⁶⁰ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centrepont. Published alongside report.

¹⁶¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.6)

¹⁶² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.2)

¹⁶³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.6)

¹⁶⁴ Department for Work and Pensions, [Biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation to get Britain working](#), March 2025

is often little coordination between councils and Job Centres and that many care-experienced young people report feeling overwhelmed and confused when seeking to access the welfare system.¹⁶⁵ Personal Advisers and Job Coaches in Job Centres are not automatically informed that a claimant has care experience and are therefore less likely to offer tailored support or the full range of entitlements, such as bursaries for apprenticeships.¹⁶⁶

Care-experienced people below the age of 25 receiving a lower rate of UC is not justified given they cannot always rely on financial support from their families. This should be easy for the Government to remedy. The benefits system should support people into work. However, we heard that care-experienced young people, particularly those living in supported accommodation, are often unwilling to work more or progress into higher paying roles so as to not risk infringing on their benefits. This too, could easily be remedied by the Government, including by making changes to the personal allowance and taper rate currently in place for Housing Benefit claimants. We agree with Centrepoin, which has been calling on the Government to reduce the taper rate for Housing Benefit to bring it in line with the taper rate for Universal Credit. We would like the Mayor to lobby the Government on both of these issues.

Recommendation 12

The Mayor should lobby the Government to raise the rate of Universal Credit paid to care-experienced people under the age of 25 to bring it in line with the standard rate.

Recommendation 13

The Mayor should lobby the Government to raise the personal allowance for Housing Benefit for young people living in supported accommodation and reduce the taper rate to 55p for every £1 earned over the allowance.

¹⁶⁵ Learning and Work Institute, [Care leavers' experiences of the welfare system, summary of the challenges that care leavers face and proposed policy changes](#), June 2022

¹⁶⁶ Learning and Work Institute, [Care leavers' experiences of the welfare system, summary of the challenges that care leavers face and proposed policy changes](#), June 2022

The role of employers

Employers in London play a vital role in supporting young people with care experience in the workplace. We were pleased to be able to speak with both small and large employers who offer dedicated schemes for care-experienced young people. We believe many London employers can learn from this work and set up similar programmes.

Employers' perceptions of care leavers

We were concerned to hear that there is often a reluctance amongst employers to hire candidates with care experience. Centrepont and Become both stated that care leavers frequently suffer from stigma around having poor mental health and not being “hard working”.¹⁶⁷

Dr Neil Harrison told us that “there is a widespread, historic belief that young people are in care through their own fault.”¹⁶⁸ This was echoed by Ceira Thom, Head of Learning, Inclusion and Belonging at the John Lewis Partnership, a large employer which recruits people with care experience. She told us that “the awareness of care experience is low and often comes with shame or a cynical assumption of what that experience has been”.¹⁶⁹

We heard that these perceptions can be attributed to a lack of understanding. Bethany Caunter from the Care Leaver Covenant told the Committee that “most people do not understand the care system and, in, turn, do not understand the challenges that care-experienced people face getting into employment.”¹⁷⁰ This was also raised by Will Kerridge from the Drive Forward Foundation who told us that there was a “massive lack” of awareness and understanding.¹⁷¹ A 2023 report by the Health Foundation found that employers have limited experience of hiring young people who have experienced disadvantage.¹⁷²

Will McMahon told the Committee that there was an opportunity to highlight the positive traits care-experienced people bring to the workplace, such as their resourcefulness and ability to

¹⁶⁷ Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Become. Published alongside report.

¹⁶⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.16)

¹⁶⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.4)

¹⁷⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.12)

¹⁷¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.15)

¹⁷² The Health Foundation, [Bridging the Gap: making young people a vital part of every workforce](#), January 2023

“survive very complex systems.”¹⁷³ Ceira Thom told the Committee that the John Lewis Partnership saw care-experienced people as an “untapped talent pool”. She told the Committee that:

“It is just that you make a better business by the diversity of thought and experience, and often young care-experienced people are very, very innovative and resilient and they can build and amend their personalities to different situations. That makes our business better.”¹⁷⁴

There is an urgent need to counteract the stigma and negative perceptions associated with care experience. This is not grounded in fact and further adds to the difficulties care-experienced young people face in accessing employment. The Mayor can play a positive role in reducing stigma by highlighting the many positives associated with recruiting care-experienced young people and raising their profile amongst employers.

Recommendation 14

The Mayor should hold an event for London’s business employers in City Hall in 2025 to raise the profile of employing care-experienced young people. Employers that have taken steps to become care-leaver-friendly should be invited to showcase the work they have done to attract, recruit and support care-experienced people in the workplace, as well as care-experienced people themselves who have benefitted from these programmes.

Employers’ role in helping care leavers access jobs and career development

Employers play an important role in raising aspirations and supporting care-experienced young people throughout their early career years. The employers we spoke to emphasised that it takes a concerted effort to attract, recruit and support care-experienced young people in the workplace. Ceira Thom from the John Lewis Partnership told us that their policies and practices are guided by an ambition to become the “employer of choice” for care-experienced people.¹⁷⁵

We heard from employers that outreach must be part of any offering to care-experienced people. Both Bradie Marques, Community and Training Manager at Andron Facilities Management and Amelia Durkin, Associate at Squire Patton Boggs LLP, emphasised the importance of working with third-sector organisations to attract applicants and support them through the application process.¹⁷⁶ Likewise, Ceira Thom explained that the John Lewis

¹⁷³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.12)

¹⁷⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.2)

¹⁷⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.1)

¹⁷⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (pp.2-3)

Partnership runs drop-in tours for care-experienced young people, where prospective applicants can learn about the company. This also involves pre-application support, including support with CV writing and interview skills.¹⁷⁷

*"It is not a lack of gift, skill, vision or drive, it is just often the opportunity"*¹⁷⁸

**Bradie Marques, Community and Training Manager
Andron Facilities Management**

Amelia Durkin highlighted to us that many young people who spent time in care growing up may have no experience working in a professional environment and may find the prospect of attending an interview daunting at first. She told us that Squire Patton Boggs LLP frequently runs "insight days" to make prospective applicants aware of the opportunities available and make the work environment appear less daunting.¹⁷⁹ We were encouraged to hear that some London employers are leading by example and putting in place practices to actively reach out to care-experienced young people.

Crucially, we heard that engagement should not end once a candidate has secured a role. Bradie Marques told us that providing care-experienced recruits with a corporate mentor who has experience in a corporate setting and understands their ambitions can prove invaluable.¹⁸⁰ This was echoed by Amelia Durkin who said that the ongoing presence of a mentor who care-experienced employees can discuss their worries and concerns with is "absolutely fundamental".¹⁸¹

Given the widespread lack of awareness outlined above, we heard that providing training to line managers and the wider team within an organisation is imperative to creating a supporting environment for employees with care experience. Bradie Marques shared with us her perspective that the entire team, not just a person's line manager, must act in a trauma-informed way.^{182 183} Ceira Thom stated that the John Lewis Partnership runs internal training sessions specifically targeted at enhancing staff awareness and understanding in relation to care experience.

¹⁷⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.1)

¹⁷⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.2)

¹⁷⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.3)

¹⁸⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.4)

¹⁸¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.10)

¹⁸² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.5)

¹⁸³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers' Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 1\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.16)

However, we heard many employers require external support: Will Kerridge from the Drive Forward Foundation told us that it found employers often require additional training and that it works closely with psychologists to provide training on childhood trauma and development to employers. Amelia Durkin also raised how important it is for employers to listen to feedback and draw on the experiences of care-experienced people already in the organisation to make internal policies and practices more inclusive.¹⁸⁴

The GLA as an employer

Multiple guests told us that the GLA as a large employer can lead by example. We strongly agree with this.

Debbie Jones from Croydon told us that more public sector organisations should embrace the “family firm” approach.¹⁸⁵ The concept of a “family firm” refers to organisations that provide opportunities specifically for care-experienced people, functioning in a way similar to a hypothetical firm owned by a young person's family. In this context, public sector organisations would act as a “family firm” for care-experienced Londoners, offering opportunities specifically for them.¹⁸⁶ We heard that this has already been implemented by some organisations including London boroughs, but that there is scope for expanding this.¹⁸⁷

As part of signing onto the Care Leaver Covenant and publishing his 13 commitments to care leavers in 2021, the Mayor has pledged to make the GLA’s apprenticeship scheme more accessible to those with care experience.¹⁸⁸ This includes offering a guaranteed telephone interview, broadening pre-employment support and working with partners to increase the number of applicants with care experience.

The GLA told us that all GLA apprenticeship scheme candidates who have declared they have care experience and meet the minimum requirements were invited to interview.¹⁸⁹ We were also told that the GLA is taking steps to improve employment support: this involves holding sessions coaching care-experienced Londoners on how to answer interview questions and apply for apprenticeships, as well as involving a care-experienced apprentice in the interview panels and asking them for feedback about how to support the next cohort of apprentices.¹⁹⁰

The GLA also stated that it is working to improve the support provided to care-experienced current and prospective employees, telling us that:

¹⁸⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training](#), 15 January 2025 (p.7)

¹⁸⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.10)

¹⁸⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.5)

¹⁸⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Care Leavers’ Access to Employment, Education and Training \(Panel 2\)](#), 9 December 2024 (p.11)

¹⁸⁸ Mayor of London, [The Mayor of London’s actions for care leavers](#), July 2021

¹⁸⁹ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 5 March 2025

¹⁹⁰ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 5 March 2025

*"Following recommendations from our Children and Young Londoners Team, we will use feedback to enhance our support for care leavers by refining training for line managers and mental health advocates and increasing bespoke pre-interview sessions for care-experienced individuals."*¹⁹¹

However, the GLA added that it is not currently measuring the impact of the Mayoral commitments due to "the low numbers of care leavers and lack of resources within the team."¹⁹² Given the general lack of data that exists about the effectiveness of current interventions, as established above, we were disappointed to hear this.

The Committee firmly believes that the GLA must lead by example. Making the GLA apprenticeship scheme more accessible to those with care experience is a step in the right direction. The Mayor should also embrace the concept of the "family firm" and make opportunities available across the GLA Family. However, based on the evidence we heard, attracting candidates and making available opportunities is not sufficient on its own. The GLA itself should become more accommodating towards people with care experience. It should also use its influence to develop an accreditation scheme for employers along similar lines of the Good Work Standard.

Recommendation 15

The Mayor should organise outreach activities across the GLA Family targeted at care-experienced young people, in order to promote employment opportunities in these organisations. This should include a biannual "insight day" event for care-experienced young people to explore careers in the GLA Family.

Recommendation 16

The GLA should set specific targets for the number of applications received from care-experienced people for the GLA apprenticeship scheme in 2025/2026 and actively recruit to ensure those targets are met.

Recommendation 17

The GLA should produce training materials and run regular virtual workshops for line managers with regard to managing employees with care experience.

Recommendation 18

Based on the Mayor's Good Work Standard, the Mayor should produce an accreditation scheme for London employers to become more accommodating towards people with care experience.

¹⁹¹ Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 5 March 2025

¹⁹² Information provided to the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee via e-mail by the GLA on 5 March 2025

This should include a toolkit for employers. The Mayor should develop this in partnership with care-experienced young people, leading employers and third sector organisations working with care-experienced people.

Committee Activity

The Committee held two formal meetings on the topic of London's care leavers and their access to education, employment and training. The Committee's first meeting took place on 9 December 2024 and explored the reasons behind the high rates of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET). One of the meeting's main purposes was to gain a better understanding of the various barriers faced by care leavers seeking to access education, employment or training. The meeting was attended by the following guests:

- **Ayo Akande**, Interim Assistant Director, Skills and Employment – Delivery, GLA
- **Matthew Blood**, Virtual School Head, Islington Council
- **Bethany Caunter**, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Care Leaver Covenant
- **Dr Neil Harrison**, Associate Professor of Education and Social Justice, University of Exeter
- **Debbie Jones**, Director of Children's Services, Croydon Council
- **Will Kerridge**, Political Engagement & Policy Manager, Drive Forward Foundation
- **Will McMahon**, Project Worker, Care Leavers' Association
- **Nicola Smith**, Senior Policy Adviser, Barnardo's
- **Ann-Marie Soyinka**, Interim Assistant Director, Skills and Employment – Policy, GLA

The Committee's second meeting took place on 15 January 2025. This meeting involved a roundtable session with the Drive Forward Policy Forum, which is comprised of care leavers from London, arranged in partnership with the Drive Forward Foundation. It also involved a session with select London employers which have adopted care-leaver-friendly practices. The session was attended by the following employers:

- **Amelia Durkin**, Associate, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP
- **Bradie Marques**, Community and Training Manager, Andron Facilities Management
- **Ceira Thom**, Head of Learning, Inclusion and Belonging, John Lewis Partnership

Call for evidence

The Committee also launched a call for evidence which ran between 31 October 2024 to 6 December 2024 and received nine responses from the following organisations:

- Become
- Centrepont
- London Innovation and Improvement Alliance
- National Network for the Education of Care Leavers
- Ofsted
- The Care Leavers' Association
- Youth Futures

The Committee also received additional written evidence from the GLA.

Other formats and languages

If you, or someone you know needs this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Chinese

如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，
请电话联系或按上面所提供的邮寄地址或
Email 与我们联系。

Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang
tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện
thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα
σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί
μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini
okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon
numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta
adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ
ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ
ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में
चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये
गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান,
তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা
ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں
درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں
یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل
پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة
مفضلة أو الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي أو عنوان البريد
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં
જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો
અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઈલ સરનામા
પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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