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Sharing Educational Success Story: The Greater Manchester Looked After Children's Forum

Emma Lewis-Kalubowila, SRWP Officer, The University of Manchester

Greater Manchester LaC Forum: Structure

- Formed in **2011** to support the educational progression of young people who are care experienced from across Greater Manchester.
- Meetings take place **once a term**, and are supplemented by an **email list**, to circulate information and updates in between meetings.
- The forum not only allows the opportunity for **sharing information, experience and knowledge**, but also for the planning of collaborative activities, such as the annual Care Leaver Awards.

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Membership

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Greater Manchester LaC Forum: Membership

- It has **93 individual members**; from HE providers, FE colleges and virtual school staff to leaving care teams, careers advisors and a number of charities/third sector organisations.
- Meetings are attended by an equal mix of HEI, local authority, and third sector organisations.
- In the last three years, the forums membership has grown to include active representation from **all 10 GM local authorities, two government agencies, nine FE providers, 10 charitable organisations and two private sector organisations**.

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Impact

- Increased take up of HE outreach activities
- Increased involvement of HEIs in local authority-led activity
- Increased take up of support for CLs whilst at university, due to local authority knowledge of support
- Increased knowledge across all colleagues of relevant developments in HE, education and social care
- Increased HE progression rates reported across GM local authorities.

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Engagement in HE outreach activities

Young people from a care background

Step up to Uni 3 7
Y11+

20 November 2019, Manchester Metropolitan University

This event is a VIP Open Day for young people who are care-experienced and considering applying to university. It aims to increase their understanding of the pastoral and financial support they can access from local universities and their local authority. Learners will interact in small groups with care experienced university students who can offer insight into their educational journey and answer questions.

Greater Manchester 3 7 Care Leaver Awards

Royal Northern College of Music, Autumn Term*

Delivered in conjunction with the Greater Manchester local authorities, the annual Care Leaver Awards celebrates and rewards the achievements and successes of Care Leavers from across Greater Manchester.

Nominations are open from early July and close Friday 20 September 2019.

**Date TBC, please check our website for information*

Success4Life project 3 7
Y8 – 10

Various locations

This programme brings together looked-after young people to take part in interactive sessions to develop their confidence, key skills and raise their awareness of HE. We have a number of programmes running throughout the year.

> “Enjoyed meeting new people and learning about further education.”

Targeted Learner CPD

We offer a range of bespoke events for key supporters of targeted learners. These sessions provide an interactive forum for professionals to find out more about HE and to explore how best to support learners.

Breaking Barriers 3 7
Disabled Learners

27 November 2019, University of Bolton

Breaking Barriers is aimed at staff in the FE sector and other professionals who support students with disabilities in their transition to HE. The event will include networking, workshops and a marketplace with internal and external specialists in disability and student support/guidance.

Supporting the Supporters 3 7

6 May 2020, The University of Manchester

This event is for adults who support looked after children and/or care leavers, including social workers, foster carers, personal advisors, designated teachers and other professionals. Find out the benefits of attending HE, how to apply and learn about specific financial and pastoral support for care leavers. The event will also contain information about post-16 pathways; a variety of workshops relating to post-16 education and give you the chance to meet current HE students who have been through the care system. By attending this event, we hope you'll feel more confident advising the young people you support.

HE Uncovered CPD 3 7
Looked After Children/ Care Leavers

On request

This 30-minute session is suitable for foster carers, social workers and other key influencers of care-experienced young people. It gives an overview of HE, including financial and pastoral support and tips on supporting young people making decisions. We are happy to deliver this session as part of any training or information events that may be happening locally.

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Engagement in HE outreach activities (both HEI and LA led)

Year	Young People	Key Influencers
2014/15	161	397
2015/16	232	487
2016/17	278	525
2017/18	326	196
2018/19	361	369

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Support for CLs at University

- Strong relationships developed between the HEI named contact and leaving care managers/personal advisors, has helped to ensure the necessary support is in place for learners to succeed in HE.
- Partner universities are being informed of their institution's student applications earlier on in the process.
- Students are now receiving greater support when they arrive at university
- This has also enabled colleagues to intervene when young people have expressed a desire to leave education, stopped attending their course or are experiencing other issues, all of which requires a collaborative support service.

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Knowledge sharing

- **Two-way exchange**
- Keeping HEI colleagues up-to-date with national and local policy changes that may affect their work with LAC/CLs, e.g. Ofsted framework, local offer requirement.
- Ensuring that local authorities and other colleagues understand developments in the HE sector and the support on offer, which may affect their young people, e.g. APP guidance/targets, NNECL quality mark, DfE principles, academic research.
- Supported lunch and learn session for NORTHCLASS about engaging with LAs, soon to be made into a webinar to support NNECL members

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Increased HE progression rates

- Currently anecdotal, but now included in all 5 GM HEIs Access and Participation Plans with data being captured from 2018/19 onwards:

  "We are committed to working collaboratively with other HEIs in the region through the Greater Manchester Higher partnership to raise awareness of, and encourage progression to, the full range of Higher Education opportunities. We aim through our collaborative work to:

  - *Raise the HE participation rate for learners from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 in Greater Manchester*
  - ***Increase the proportion of Care Leavers from the 10 Greater Manchester Local Authorities who progress to HE"***

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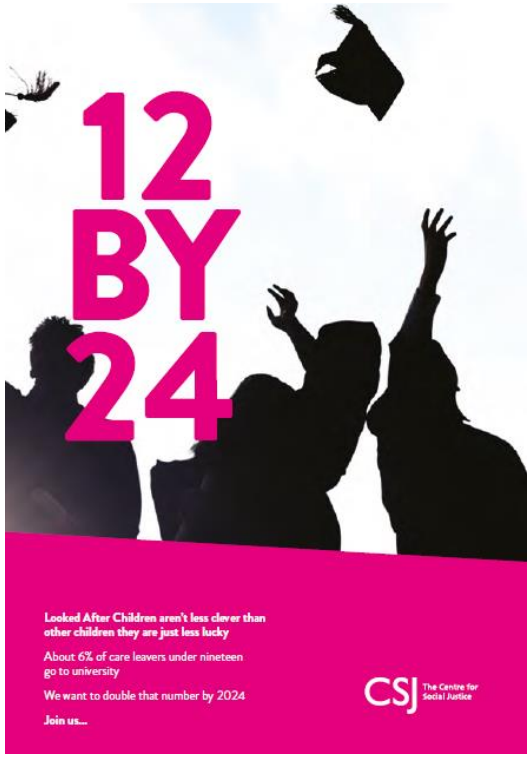
Reach

- NEON Widening Access Partnership Award 2018
- Case study in Centre for Social Justice 12x24 report



MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Manchester Access Programme

The Manchester Access Programme (MAP) is a programme for talented year 12 students in Greater Manchester, who have the potential to study in a university like The University of Manchester.

email: map@manchester.ac.uk
www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/map

CARE LEAVER COVENANT

Student WORK EXPERIENCE

GMH Care Leaver Awards

- **Greater Manchester Care Leaver**
- 2019 saw the 7th year deliver a record number of submissions for awards (326 in total).
- The event is a very positive and supportive, shining a spotlight on the achievements of care leavers in our region.
- One nominator who attended with their young person commented*: "the person I nominated didn't want to come, she didn't want to go on stage and she wanted to leave early. She was doing Mexican waves, dancing and laughing at her by the end. I was so proud of her getting her certificate".*

Supporting the Supporters

- Annual event for adults who support care experienced students to access higher education, to ensure they're up to speed with current support and options at university.
- 54 delegates attend in 2019, who commented:
- *Very informative and well delivered. There are issues for me to take back to our own local authority in terms of how we advise / support our care leavers in respect of attending higher education.*
- *It is brilliant that Manchester is pulling together as one to support the supporters of care leavers. The idea is brilliant and the event was helpful.*

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LA perspective

'I have been attending the Greater Manchester LAC forum for a number of years. As a leaving care manager, the forum has offered an **insight into the challenges facing care leavers in HE and the networking has enabled closer relationships with those working within HE**. These relationships have developed constructively and assisted in **reducing barriers**, particularly when working with a vulnerable and often isolated young person. The common aim is to retain high levels of care leavers achieving a HE qualification. The universities have also assisted greatly by increasing the aspirations for young people who may not have previously considered attending HE. This includes, the offer to all LAC and their carers to attend bespoke information gathering sessions about HE opportunities. These are organised enthusiastically within the LAC forum.'

Phil Varghese, Service Manager Next Step (Leaving Care Service), Salford Local Authority.

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LA perspective

‘The Greater Manchester LAC forum has been an extremely useful and beneficial forum for NW professionals working with LAC. The forum gives the region the ability **to share/coordinate its experience**, knowledge, expertise and resources in planning events that aim to **improve the educational outcomes for the LAC/care leaver young people across the region**. The GM LAC forum brings together a membership of key people from the regions universities, local authorities and care providers ensuring that all views are considered. I consider it a true and effective partnership, which is well managed. The partnership share inspirational goals and works towards these goals as a collective.

I have been a member of the GM LAC forum for the past 2 years and in that time, my knowledge has increased enormously. **I regularly network with other members when I need advice**; I feel very supported. In my opinion, the work of the group has helped to impact on the widening participation across the region. In the past 2 years, I have seen how care leavers, looked after children, social workers, foster carers, virtual schools, local authorities and leaving care workers have all benefitted; including an increase in young people engaging with the prospect of HE/university path. I have personally worked with all the NW universities to organise bespoke visits, supported young people with applications and raised awareness with school aged young people about the benefits of university. The highlight of the year is the Care Leaver Awards evening where the achievements of the young people are recognised and celebrated; the categories are very wide ranging, thus enabling 'inclusivity'. This event has shared responsibility - planned, organised and delivered by the partnership.

The GM LAC forum works, because it has a fully inclusive membership group and has its 'widening participation and access' brief at the heart of everything it does.’
Edward Salmon, Post 16 Lead - Looked After Children, Manchester City Council - Virtual School for Looked After Children

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