

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

Statement

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

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

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

College Responsibilities

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

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

- Ensure activities are accessible, eg taster days, open days, information events and interviews which are not a barrier to participation.
- Encourage access to FE/HE and include them as a specific target group.
- Provide impartial pre-entry guidance on FE/HE.
- The 'Designated Teacher' (Mandy Downing) –will have a lead responsibility to act as a key point of contact and advisor for LAC/CLA/CL/YC/UCs, to co-ordinate support prior to

and on entry, as well as throughout the learning programme, in accordance with the Personal Coach Strategy and she is assisted by the LAC co-ordinator, Catherine Caseley.

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

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

Beneficiaries	Actions
Learners (and their Carers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will receive early support and guidance, eg IAG, targeted support, informal tour of the campus, transition meetings • Familiarisation with College expectations eg attendance, commitment, behaviour, progression opportunities • Provision of information regarding Safeguarding/Wellbeing, support, contact names/faces
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Designated Teacher (Mandy Downing) is the point of contact for all LAC/CLA/CL/YC/UCs assisted by LAC co-ordinator, Catherine Caseley. • Tutors are aware of learners support needs at an early stage so they can be actioned. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) can be reviewed termly or sooner if there is a problem. This includes updating actions on the EBS central system and My Halesowen. • Head of Student Support/Pastoral Lead/Personal coaches to be made aware of any issues in past education that may affect learning, behaviour or attendance, which will require intervention strategies, eg advocacy, targeted support, early one to one meetings • Head of Student Support/Pastoral Lead/Personal coaches to inform the Designated Teacher / coordinator and the key worker/carers, in the case of disciplinary or personal problems and not to permanently exclude a student without informing these contacts
The College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College provides early interventions regarding poor attendance, behaviour, and study issues. Working with the Virtual School Heads to access tutoring support when required. • Improved outcomes, ie successful completions, progress to further study, training and/or employment, as well as learner experience, are reported to the College Leadership Team

Reviewed / Approved	By	Date
Reviewed by	Jo Williams	August 2024
Consulted with	Jen Morrison	August 2024
Approved	-	
CLT approved	Yes	17.09.2024
Website	Yes	
Next Review date		01.08.2025

Care Experience

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

What does Halesowen College mean by care experienced?

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

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

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

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

If I am care experienced, what should I do?

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

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

Who will know I am care experienced?

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

At Halesowen College, we pride ourselves on making sure all young people feel they can share in a safe place. Our Safeguarding team will know more details about your care experience as they will be your first point of contact. Your Head of Student Support/Pastoral Lead and personal coach will know only relevant details of your care experience. They will only know that you have declared. Unless of course you want to share your experiences with friends and others, no one else will know about your care experiences.

Our Safeguarding Team: Jennifer Morrison, Renate Broomhall, Mandy Downing, Kylie Penn and Ann-Marie Walkley work to keep the College a safe place for all students and that all students receive the correct support. They do not only work with care experienced learners, they work with students with a range of different issues. Mandy Downing is the Designated Teacher and Catherine Caseley as LAC co-ordinator and they will attend your PEP meetings and LAC reviews. We also support teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children reach their potential. In addition we have a Wellbeing Team who offer a service to students struggling with mental health and wellbeing.

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

What do you offer care experienced students?

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

Financial Support

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

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

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

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)

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

What should I do now?

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

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