Be curious, about my care-experience;

Care-experienced students tell us how you can help them with their studies.

The HUB for SUCCESS
Supporting those with care-experience to get in, stay in or return to education
In 2019, the HUB for SUCCESS, worked together with a group of care-experienced students to design a workshop to co-present at a conference. This work was put together to share with you.

The students ages, areas of study, care backgrounds, interests, passions, hobbies, views and personalities were all varied, however they had 3 things in common;

- They were all care-experienced
- They wanted to help others by providing an insight into their lived experience
- They wanted to share their views to improve the student experience for others with care-experience
What would I like people to know and understand about my care-experience and how this may impact on my learning?

• "How my difficulties outside of the university environment might affect me with deadlines, mental health and motivation"

• "Sometimes I say things without thinking about the circumstances surrounding the situation – it’s never done out of malice"

• "My concentration span varies day to day – please ask how my studies are going, if you are worrying about my engagement in class"

• "Some subject matters are touchy – when discussing family related matters in class please encourage other students not to voice their opinions when it comes to care-experienced students"

• "I may not show my emotion, but it is always there"

• "If something reminds me of my past, ask me about it rather than judge from your own viewpoint"

• "Having a point of contact at uni/college - one person is key to me – it's really, really important"

• "Mental health – it can have a big impact sometimes and less at other times"

• "Understand my stress and coping strategies"

• “The difficultness” – I am complex not tragic"
Some good things to ask me!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can you do to support me (information about accommodation over summer, etc)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do I have a confidante to talk to when things are tough?</td>
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<td>Is the environment you find yourself in outwith education safe?</td>
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<td>Is there anything worrying you outwith your studies that might impact on your learning?</td>
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<td>Is there anything the uni/college could do to make your time here easier?</td>
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<td>How can we support you?</td>
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<td>How do past experiences affect you, e.g. emotionally? How can I help with this?</td>
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<td>Ask me open questions, then I can omit parts of my journey if I want/need to?</td>
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<td>How I’m coping, if I need support in any way</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it going well?</td>
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<td>How I’m finding Uni?</td>
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Here are some tips for teachers, lecturers and others about what you could be curious about:

- "Allocate somebody who we could meet on a regular basis who has at least some understanding of the difficulties we face"
- "It doesn’t matter what I HAVE been through, it’s what I’m GOING through now that matters"
- "I am not fragile, please don’t treat me like I am"
- "Don’t assume that my story is my own fault, don’t assume where I began is where I’m going to end up"
- "If you’re going to be my friend, please be willing to stick around, I don’t always mean what I say"
- "What happened to make you care-experienced and how does it impact you?"
- Point of contact, quiet space, open questions.
What would I like you to understand

Other barriers such as mental health, time off for counselling, etc.

I may have issues with groups – if I am keeping up with the work but not with my attendance, take into account why this is and still pay me my bursary

General issues faced by people in care / looked after.

What care-experience is. Do you have a good understanding of what this is?

How special it is for care-experienced students to be at university/college.

I would personally just like a mentor who I could take my queries to
What information could you be collecting and why?

NUMBER OF CARE-EXPERIENCED INDIVIDUALS AT THE UNIVERSITY – PASS/FAIL RATES – NUMBER OF ‘DROP OUTS OR PAUSES’

WHAT CARE-EXPERIENCED INDIVIDUALS END UP DOING POST-UNI

WHAT CARE-EXPERIENCE IS AND SHARING THIS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

STATISTICS ON OUR EXPERIENCES

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN BEFORE?

MAKE BOXES EASIER TO UNDERSTAND ON ENTRY FORMS AND EXPLAIN WHAT CARE-EXPERIENCED MEANS.

AGE OF STUDY, WHERE LIVING (UNI OR NOT), ACCESS COURSE?

GET A FULL PICTURE, LEARN FROM THIS AND APPLY THIS TO YOUR WORK – TRY AND REACH US BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE
Why is it important to collect this information? Continued....

If you have knowledge of the care backgrounds of students in your college or university – for example if a high number of your students came from an adopted background or from a foster care background – what does this tell you?

How may it help you guide and direct your work to reach a wider group - i.e. to reach more people who are looked after at home and inspire and encourage them to get into education?

How are you taking this information into account when you are planning your work and or programmes?

Are you reaching us early enough?
Open Questions by theme; Motivation and goal setting

Motivation/goal setting

What do you want out of your time at university/college?

What would make this year a good year for you?

What support can we offer to help you achieve this?

Are there any barriers you think you might face – how can we help you get over those?
Support in a crisis

- How will you know if I am struggling?
- What should you be looking out for?
- What do you think I might need if I am having a difficult time?
- What kind of contact am I likely to respond to if I'm not coping?
- Work out some of these things with me – be more proactive and less reactive
General support, I may need some help to learn how to plan my study time. Ask me about this.

How can we help you keep on top of things?

What would you do if you were worried about something?

What is challenging for you - is there anything you would like your teaching staff to be made aware of?
Background knowledge

How are you feeling right now?

How are you feeling in general – this week / this month / this term?

Where’s home for you just now, and how is it while you’re there?

If you are working alongside studies – how’s that going? Are you happy with the balance?
And the big gnarly one

• Be curious about me, if I don’t want to say I won’t, but let me have the choice to do so - no one else may be asking

• What was your care-experience, were you in foster care residential care, kinship care – how was it?

• How do you feel about it now / what sort of impact does that have on you at the moment?

• What do you think I should know about you if I’m going to support your learning?

• The two bits of this question could be bridged by acknowledging how hard each care experienced student has worked just to get in the door of a college or university – well done, we value this effort, we’re glad you’ve chosen us, we are committed to your success.

• Be aspirational in your approach! Remind me that I can do this!
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From Lorraine and Shona xx