

Spotlight on Good Practice The Care Experienced Student Bursary

The Care Experienced Student Bursary; Keeping the Promise; Further Education; Corporate Parenting; Through Care and Aftercare; Students voices, Student views; Student Finance, Student support and wellbeing

Lorraine Moore is a care experienced, qualified and registered social worker. Lorraine set up the HUB for SUCCESS (HfS) in 2018, a unique collaborative organisation providing bespoke support to people with care experience to get in, stay in or return to education. Lorraine has worked with the care experienced community for over 25 years.

Our places of learning work - if they work for everyone.



We know that our college communities are stronger if each and every learner has what they need to thrive. We also know that the number of care experienced young people continuing to leave school at 16 or before remains a stubborn and persistent statistic. Therefore, further education is an important route of learning not only for school leavers but for those returning at a later stage. Our colleges play a crucial role as adjacent parts of the wider scaffolding of care and are often instrumental in our learners' success. Colleges support students to gain qualifications at further education level as well providing opportunities to get into Higher Education.

So back in 2018 when our team heard the news that the care experienced student bursary (CESB) was to be extended to people in further education we celebrated the governments recognition and acknowledgement of the challenges faced by a specific group of people.

As the numbers of learners getting into college increased, so did demand for the HfS service. As an organisation in its infancy, we were also learning. As we analysed our data a clear theme emerged from student voice: that the payment of the bursary was linked to an attendance policy which required 100% attendance, or at least, that attendance was linked to the payment of the bursary in a way that was not intended in the SFC bursary guidance. Students were coming to us in increasing numbers reporting that because of a missed class, a missed day or more that their bursary was not being paid. Students were distressed, upset, bewildered, overwhelmed, frustrated, tearful, angry and at times confused.



Lifeline of support.

Not only was this policy approach worrying it also created a wave of pressure on other services as students reached out for financial and emotional support through other networks; throughcare and aftercare teams, social work teams, welfare teams, the HfS, college lecturers, kinship carers, foster carers, student support services, student finance teams and more. Was this the intention and spirit behind the introduction of bursary? When students are struggling to keep afloat, they often have to ask for help multiple times before the getting the right

support, leading to re-traumatisation, distraction from study and time away from learning.



Spotlight on Good Practice.

We reached out to our college partner to share our data (voice) taking a re-framing approach; what could be achieved if we looked at this differently and could we be better corporate parents by listening to voice as is encouraged by The Promise? Our college partners showed a real and serious commitment to taking the learners views seriously and to reviewing their policy and practice - they committed to exploring a different way of working. It was agreed that our students had given us a mandate for change and as good parents (corporate) surely it was our duty to listen? What resulted was a policy that leant towards the student's needs, one which was built on a foundation of trust, of taking a relationship based and trauma informed approach to attendance. A policy based on engagement as opposed to one based on a punitive approach which saw the removal of income. This approach also resulted in a 100% drop in referrals to the HfS in relation for support for this issues.



Voice and Keeping the Promise

Voice, and the individual work the HfS carried out helped us identify *and* evidence the issues as it affected individual students. By listening, by taking views seriously and by working in partnership we were able to help students on an individual basis, *but* we were also able to address the structural and systemic barriers getting in the way of our learner's progress. By working collaboratively with our learners' views as central to the mandate for change, together we were able to achieve much wider systemic change which if implemented well has potential to reach a much wider group of people.

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