



NNECL webinar: Supporting students' success and social capital development

Tuesday 19 November 2024

Today we are joined by

Wendy Price, Head of Widening Access and Participation at the University of Sunderland

Corin Barton, University of Law

And I'm **Denise Rawls**, ED at NNECL



**University of
Sunderland**

The
University of
LAW

NNECL
National Network For the
Education of Care Leavers





NNECL began as a volunteer network within the university widening participation space in 2013. We became a registered charity in 2018.

Together with our members who are embedded in post-16 education or leaving care teams, we are laser-focused on supporting, connecting and empowering professionals so more young people with care experience, who are estranged or who seeking sanctuary, consider, access and are supported to flourish through apprenticeships, further and higher education, into fulfilling careers which will sustain them for life.

Our Quality Mark, cited as good practice in the 2022 independent review of children's social care and by Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills creates learning environments where our young people thrive.

Why does post-16 education matter?

The single most important thing for adults in our society to live a happy and healthy life is a job that sustains them. Being able to feed, clothe and house yourself gives you mental security and the foundations on which to build a life, go out with your friends, go travelling, fall in love, have a family, enjoy hobbies, climb Ben Nevis or become a turkey farmer.

The World Economic Forum's [*Future of Jobs Report 2023*](#) finds 23% of jobs are expected to change in the next five years, driven by industry transformation caused by increased adoption of technology, the green economy and macro-economic conditions.

Good jobs help people to build themselves up, provide stable incomes and a sense of accomplishment, hope and belonging. Good jobs are fundamental to the growth of economies in the short run and across generations and in raising standards of living.



Supporting our students' success and social capital development through our programmes of support

**Wendy Price OBE
Head of Widening Access and Participation**

**WE ARE THE LIFE CHANGING
UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND**



**University of
Sunderland**

Overview



- Our approach to supporting students with experience of care or estrangement
- We Care Team and institutional commitment
- Support at each stage of the student lifecycle
- Regional commitment – North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP)
- Q&A Panel

AT THE HEART OF A CITY ON THE RISE

Proud to be a

**TOP 40
UNIVERSITY**

*Guardian University
Guide 2025*

Shortlisted for the

**UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR**

*Times Higher Education
Awards 2024*

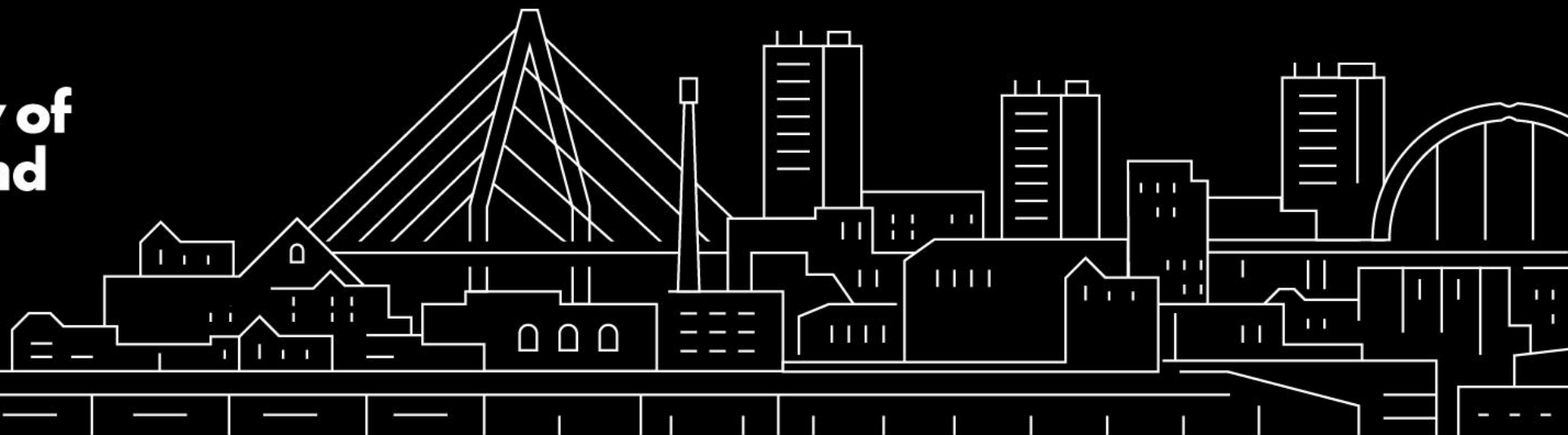
University of the year for

**STUDENT
SUPPORT**

*Daily Mail University
Guide 2025*



**University of
Sunderland**



We Care Team

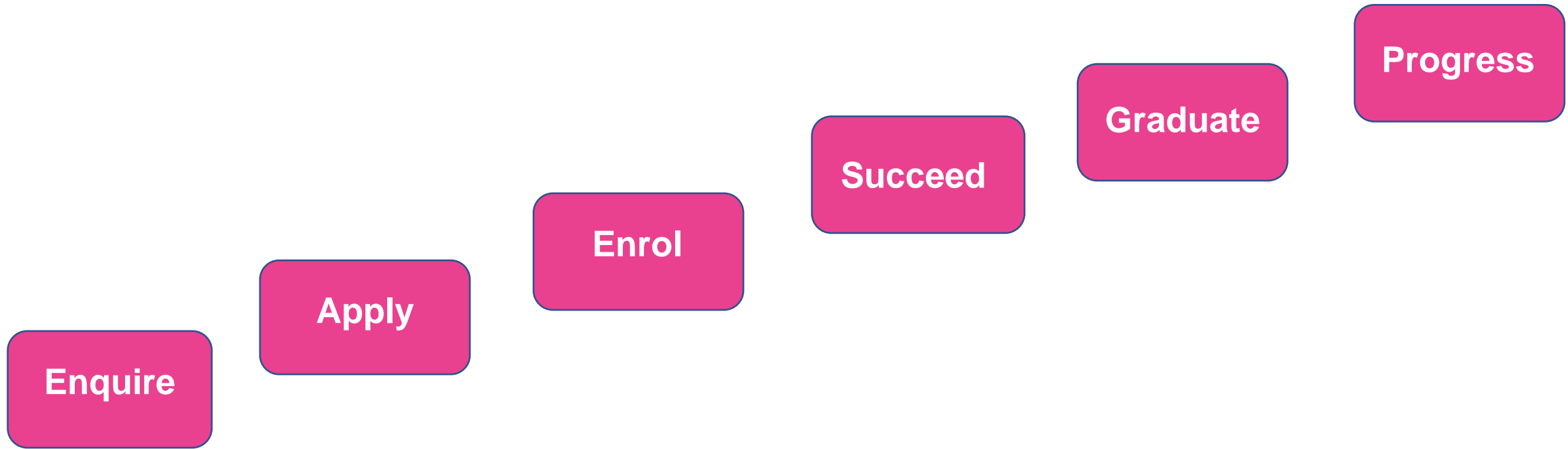


- Currently supporting 134 students (2024/25)
- 53 with experience of estrangement
- 81 with experience of care
- Also support armed forces and GTRSB students



Left to right: Safeenah, Wendy, Jess and Nicola

We Care Team – transition support



Enquire & Apply

- We Care Team – single point of contact
- We Care Champions in other teams
- Applicant campaign – relationship building
- Regular ‘touch points’
- Engage with external partners to support prospective students
- Attend meetings, Open Days, individual tours
- Web content – student spotlights



Enrol & Succeed

- Welcome meeting and pack
- Sharing agreement
- We Care events
- Social channels – peer support
- Student Ambassadors
- Placement opportunities
- Informal catch ups – internal and external
- Training / CPD – internal and external
- Student voice and celebrating success



Graduate & Progress

- Graduation preparation and support
- Sharing students' updates and successes
- We Care Champion – Graduate Prospects
- Summer support
- Postgraduate transition
- References and employment opportunities
- We Care Alumni – events, keeping in touch



Review of content



- Our approach to supporting students with experience of care or estrangement
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I AM NOT DEFINED BY MY PAST, I AM ON A JOURNEY TO SUCCESS!

TURNING 18 LIKE....

I'M OFFICIALLY
AN ADULT!!!

WHAT TO
DO FIRST?



ADULT LIFE AS
SOMEONE WHO GREW
UP IN CARE OR WAS
ESTRANGED...



TRYING UNI
LIFE ALONE
LIKE



PHONING THE
WE CARE
TEAM OVER
ANYTHING TO
DO WITH UNI
LIKE



QUESTIONS?

care.contact@sunderland.ac.uk

NNECL Webinar

**Training university staff
to support learners
with Care Experience**

Corin Barton
corin.barton@law.ac.uk

About ULAW




A specialist provider of legal education, particularly post graduate professional courses (e.g. training for barristers and solicitors)



Providing a range of undergraduate courses across a wider range of disciplines

Specific support for staff on care experience

Why? - Recognising the need for training




What? - Identifying the gaps



Where now? - Changing perceptions

Why? - The need for training

The impact of care experience is not always well understood by staff, especially if it is outside their own lived experience



Students with care experience benefit from increased staff awareness/understanding

Why? – The need for training



Recent research explored lecturers' perceptions of inclusion in the HE classroom



A small group of very experienced lecturers across a range of disciplines were surveyed



Asked what inclusion meant to them

Why? – The need for training



Lecturers mentioned a wide range of factors impacting inclusive classroom teaching



They also mentioned some specific groups

Factors:

Language	Additional needs	Disability	Mental Health	Culture
Race	Religion	Gender	Neurodiversity	Sexuality
SLD	Social background	Colour	Ethnicity	Age
Learning style	Digital poverty	Economic disadvantage	Health inequality	Family setting

Groups:

Carers

Young offenders

International students

Low paid workers

Refugees and asylum
seekers

Why? – The need for training

No mention of care experience

No specific mention of trauma

No reference to disrupted education

No reference to housing need

One reference to avoiding
stereotyping

One reference to family
circumstances

2. Identifying the gaps

Inclusivity is viewed through a personal experiential lens

Each lecturer focused on personal experience e.g. as a carer, an international student or a person with a disability

They viewed inclusive teaching through their own lived experience

2. Identifying the gaps

Inclusivity is viewed as intentional

Knowing that steps need to be taken

Knowing what steps to take

The training profile



Online and face to face training sessions as part of induction or ongoing annual staff training



Aimed at staff with student facing roles and academic staff

Training content



Language



Background and experiences of students with care experience



Barriers to university access



Possible issues whilst at university



How staff can support students with care experience

Language matters



Terminology around care leavers and students with care experience is not well understood



Terms can sometimes be used loosely or inappropriately



Using the correct terms is respectful and builds confidence

Language matters



Explain the definition of a care leaver



Explain that it is a legal definition with statutory responsibilities



Explain the broader term of care experience

Background and experiences

Try not to generalise - students with care experience are a diverse group of individuals



They have all experienced disruption in their home and family life



They may have experienced trauma and/or neglect

Barriers to university access



The statistics are striking



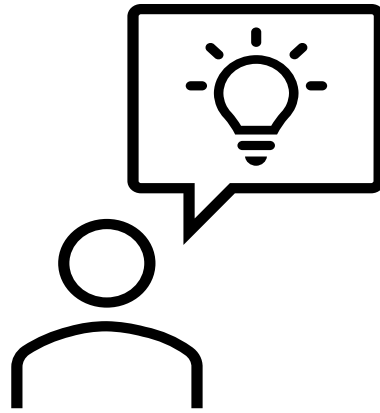
Various measures, but around 14% of care experienced young people go to university by the age of 19 compared with around 47% of their age group



The drop-out rate is six times higher for students with care experience



It's usually the first time that staff have heard the extent of the disparity



“Looked After Children aren’t
less clever than other children
they are just less lucky”

The Centre for Social Justice, *12 by 24* (2019)

The student voice



By far the most powerful teaching resource



Web content is used to illustrate student experience



Aim to have live student involvement



Extremely impactful

4 things I've learned from training others



Many staff have a limited understanding of the care system



Most lack confidence in their use of terminology



There is a lack of awareness of the issues facing students with care experience



Staff are very willing to help and want to know what they can do

What has most impact on staff?



The statistics on university access



Hearing about the challenges faced in terms of disruption to education up to the age of 18



Hearing from students with care experience (using web resources from the student perspective)



Highlighting university 'pressure points' e.g. Freshers' Week, holidays and money

A focus on administrative support

1

Provide a
named
person

2

Be
consistent
and specific

3

Follow
through

4

Don't make
assumptions

5

Don't ask
students to
repeat
themselves

A focus on academic support

1

Be aware of
practical
issues

2

Consider
transitions

3

Be proactive

4

Don't make
assumptions

5

Be aware of
pressure
points

A focus on the classroom

1

Use
appropriate
examples

2

Be aware

3

Check in
occasionally

4

Don't make
assumptions

5

Maintain
confidentiality

Inclusive language

We have heard language referred to as one of the things we can change to create social capital and inclusion.

“Language does not just describe the reality; language creates the reality”
Bishop Desmond Tutu

The power of language cannot be underestimated. Our young people generally have low self-confidence and are stigmatised by society. Using inclusive language is one thing we can all do. Inclusive language avoids assumptions that may lead to people feeling excluded and challenges conscious and unconscious biases.

Looked after children (LAC)
Care leaver
Care experienced students
Asylum seeker
Placement
Siblings

Never use this
Care background
Students with care backgrounds
Seeking sanctuary
Home
Brothers and sisters

Questions for the panel?

Wendy Price
Corin Barton



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NNECL, educations best kept secret?

Do include your NNECL membership on your website and marketing material, if you need a logo pack drop us an email – info@nnecl.org

Invite us to take part in your events and webinars

Help us beat the algorithms by liking and sharing our posts on social media

NNECL spotlights

We always need success stories to spotlight in newsletters and funding applications. If you have an interesting story to share, please get in touch.

Save the date

Our annual conference is taking place on Monday 10 November 2025.

Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee will deliver our keynote speech.

Follow us on social media

Twitter / X @_NNECL

Instagram @NNECL_

LinkedIn @National Network for the Education of Care Leavers

Thank you!
**Please take a minute to complete our quick
feedback poll.**



<https://www.menti.com/al7ncqgvsfsf>

