



Care Experienced Residential Report

Inspiring Choices

March 2025



**inspiring
choices**

York & North Yorkshire



ofs

**Uni Connect
Programme**

1. Context

Inspiring Choices is based in York and North Yorkshire and is one of 29 Uni Connect partnerships across England. The aim of these partnerships is to provide impartial advice and guidance on higher education and careers to young people in local schools, colleges and communities. A second aim is to bridge the gap in higher education between the most and least represented groups. One way in which Inspiring Choices address this is by working with City of York Council and North Yorkshire Council Leaving Care Teams to support care experienced young people.

Care experienced young people have poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population and access to higher education is much lower for young people who have been in care (Office for Students, 2022). Only 13% of pupils who were looked after continuously for 12 months or more entered higher education in 2018-19 compared to 43% of all other pupils (Department for Education, 2020). The risk of NEET (Not being in Education, Employment or Training) is also higher for care experienced young people. The NEET rate for 19–21 year old care experienced young people was 38% compared to 11.6% for all young people (Department for Education, 2019).

“I really enjoyed the trip. As a worker it was lovely to see the young people have an opportunity like this, most have never been to London before. The young people and staff built up great relationships during the trip, and the relationships that developed between the young people from both groups was lovely. The experiences at UCL, John Lewis and the Science Museum were fantastic.” - Leaving Care Team Staff.

“I have worked for North Yorkshire Council for the past 14 years in Children and Families Service and I can honestly say that this was the best project I have been involved in. The young people were absolutely fantastic, very respectful, committed, motivated but also had a lot of fun too. I know most of them will never forget this trip and value the memories for a long time. Penny, Annie and Alex were flawless in planning, preparing, communication, managing travel logistics, producing the timetable, problem solving and developing genuine and positive relationships with our Care Leavers and staff.” - Leaving Care Team Staff

“The people we met on the trip motivated me and inspired me to aim higher and achieve more in life.” - Care Leaver.

2. Residential Overview

In July 2024, Inspiring Choices took fourteen 18-25 year old care experienced young people, four North Yorkshire Council Leaving Care Team staff and two City of York Leaving Care Team staff on a two-day residential to London.

The residential aimed to:

- (1) Increase knowledge of the different routes that are available into higher education and employment.
- (2) Increase their sense of belonging in higher education.
- (3) Improve awareness of “hidden” job roles (i.e., non-customer facing roles).

Pre Two weeks before the residential, the young people gathered at York St John University to get to know each other before the trip.

Day 1

- University of the Arts London
- Walking Tour

Day 2

- National Science Museum
- John Lewis and Partnership

Accommodation at University of Central London Halls of Residence

- To provide the young people with an insight into what university life could be like, each young person stayed in single room en-suite accommodation with access to a common room.

Post Two months after the residential the young people and Leaving Care Team staff participated in a reflective focus group at York St John University

4. University of the Arts London

Due to the vocational interests of the young people attending and the University's connections with a vast number of creative industries, Inspiring Choices organised a visit to University of the Arts London (UAL). The young people were given a tour of the St Martin's campus, a talk about student life at UAL, and the specific support the university offered for care leavers. The young people were then divided into groups, given a polaroid instant camera and provided with a series of creative briefs. For example, take a photo of something that inspires you.

The young people found the university visit informative. The tour of the university's St Martin's campus showed the young people "the many different courses available." They said "it was a great experience seeing the other side between college and uni" and "it has given me an insight that not all universities are the same." One young person shared that "it has let me see what avenues I could take within the world of art," and another thought "all the different art options were really interesting."

"Thank you all for everything and it was amazing experience ... this trip is very useful for young people as care leavers don't really feel like they can do things but this has really gave me that push that I needed." - Care Leaver.

5. National Science Museum

The National Science Museum provided an opportunity to meet people with "hidden" job roles. The museum staff talked about different careers on offer within the Science Museum Group, and explained how exhibits are carefully curated. A Research Technician spoke about the degree apprenticeship they were studying with the National Science Museum, which was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The young people thought museum staff talks on educational opportunities were useful. One care leaver shared "I loved learning about the apprenticeships" and another said, "the most useful part was talking about the apprenticeships you can get to different courses in the science field." They also found it useful hearing about the job roles available at the National Science Museum Trust; "I loved hearing about all the different roles in the museum as I didn't even know there was that many." One young person reported "the most useful part was when they explained how the different job roles within the museum industry differ from other roles and the duties behind each role."

"Actually knowing that there is a future and that you can go to uni or go for different job roles, like you're not stuck, if that makes sense." - Care Leaver

6. John Lewis Partnership

“It was a fantastic visit, and I think some of the care leavers felt quite emotional about finding out how much John Lewis as an organisation is committed to supporting and celebrating care leavers. I think the presentations representing the organisation’s commitment to care leavers made some of the people I was with feel seen, valued and respected. The tour of the department store was really interesting and the staff there were brilliant and very enthusiastic.” - Leaving Care Team Staff

The final part of the residential was a visit to the flagship John Lewis store on Oxford Street. Here the young people took part in a question-and-answer session; a group task to develop and present a product or experience; and a tour of the store. The John Lewis and Partners staff presented their ‘Building Happier Futures’ initiative which focuses on using their position as an employer to improve the lives and utilise the talents of care leavers. They also spoke about their 29 apprenticeship schemes many of which are “hidden” job roles. The Head Designer explained how the ‘Made by Care’ programme, grown from ‘Building Happier Futures’ aims to give care experienced designers opportunities to progress their career.

The young people reported it was useful hearing about the apprenticeships and jobs on offer at John Lewis and Partners, and also found their focus on helping children in care inspiring. One young person shared that they “liked how they explained their company and roles and how they treat their co-workers like family, I’m thinking of messaging John Lewis to see about any roles they may have.” Another young person left feeling like “my choices aren’t only limited to university; I could do apprenticeships as well.”

They also highlighted “the availability to do things in their company” and “getting more information about their roles that are available to care leavers.”

The talk from the Head Designer was considered useful and relevant to their aspirations “I enjoyed the product design activity the most because I want to open my own restaurant.” The young people also commented on how the design activity was insightful, “it shows everyone is creative in some form and that it’s not just a shop, it provides different careers too” and “it was useful as it gave us an insight into the creative process behind companies.”

“It has given me opportunities that I wouldn’t have known were available.” - Care Leaver

7. Questionnaire Results

A pre- and post-event questionnaire based on the TASO Access and Success Questionnaire was completed to evaluate the residential (TASO, 2023). The questionnaire focused on; sense of belonging within higher education, expectation of higher education, and confidence surrounding making decisions (see appendix). Questions were answered on a scale from strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). The post-event questionnaire also asked the young people what they found useful, whether it helped them think about their future and what they would improve about the residential.

Ten young people fully completed the pre- and post-event questionnaire. Therefore, due to the small sample size caution must be applied when interpreting these results.

For higher education expectations there was no significant difference between the pre- and post-event. However, there were more extreme answers (i.e., strongly disagree or strongly agree) in the post-event questionnaire suggesting that the young people were more confident in making an informed choice of whether higher education was right for them. Three young people had already completed a higher education course and four were currently studying. This could also potentially explain some of the disagree responses as they may feel it unnecessary for them to complete another undergraduate degree or continue with a post-graduate degree.

For sense of belonging, there was no significant difference between pre- and post-event. However, the young people did answer these questions slightly more positively in the post-event suggesting that they feel a sense of belonging in HE. Therefore, indicating that sense of belonging is not the reason for these young people deciding not to attend HE in future.

For the questions around confidence there was a small increase in presenting myself well in interviews, identifying strengths and making decisions but these did not show a significant difference. There was a significant difference in the ability to organise and take responsibility, suggesting that the young people have a greater confidence in their independence after attending the residential.

Overall, the questionnaire results, in conjunction with the focus group feedback suggests the care leavers residential was successful in meeting its aims of increasing knowledge of the different routes that are available into higher education and employment, and increasing awareness of “hidden” job roles.

8. References

Department for Education. (2019). Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2019.

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TASO. (2023). Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ).

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“We loved it. We thought you guys were fabulous. It was just brilliant. We had such a good time. The young people did, and it was just such an amazing experience, we want to thank you both so much for it. I wouldn’t change anything apart from maybe the length which is a positive. Make it longer.” - Leaving Care Staff.

“I came away from it thinking it was brilliant. I didn’t expect it to be as good as it was. I enjoyed being in London, the experience of London but also the relationship building with the young people. They were such a lovely bunch of young people. I felt really lucky to have been involved in it.” - Leaving Care Staff.

9. Appendix 1

	Mean (pre)	Mean (post)	Median (pre)	Median (post)	z	p
I am thinking about going to higher education in the future.	2.8	2.7	3.5	3.0	.21	.83
Higher education is for people like me.	3.7	4.2	4.0	4.0	.95	.35
I would fit in well academically with others in higher education.	3.1	3.9	3.0	4.5	1.52	.13
I would fit in well socially with other in higher education.	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	.85	.40
I can make decisions about which courses/jobs are right for me.	3.3	4.5	3.5	5.0	1.84	.07
I feel confident in presenting myself well in applications and interviews.	3.0	4.1	3.0	4.0	1.29	.20
I have the ability to organise and take responsibility.	3.5	4.6	4.0	5.0	1.98	.05*
I am confident to identify my own strengths and weaknesses.	3.8	4.3	4.0	4.0	1.04	.30
I know where to go for information or guidance on going to university/higher education.	3.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	.96	.34

Note. $n = 10$

* $p > .05$