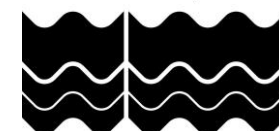
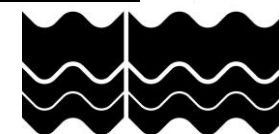


Equality Impact Assessment

Title of Project / Service / Policy	Proposal to revise the university support offer for East Sussex Care Leavers.
Team	Care Leavers Service - Looked After Children Services
Department	Early Help & Social Care - Children's Services
Provide a comprehensive description of your project (or service/policy, etc.) including its purpose and scope	Background and current published university offer for care leavers All local authorities are required to publish a Local Offer to their care leavers, as outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and subsequent government guidance (Children and Social Work Act 2017). The Local Offer outlines how care leavers will be supported and includes their entitlements. Supporting care leavers to remain in education is a key requirement of the offer. There is a government mandated minimum offer to care leavers attending university which ensures that they are provided with a £2,000 grant over the length of the course and an expectation that accommodation is funded during holiday periods. East Sussex places high value on encouraging care leavers to be aspirational and achieve good standards of education. The Virtual School has been a frontrunner in championing young people aged 16+ and the current offer has resulted in increasing numbers of care leavers accessing higher education. This number includes young people for whom this option may not have seemed attainable due to the complexity of their journey in care; for example, young people who have experienced multiple placements or unstable mental health, resulting in disruptions to their education. East Sussex currently has an enhanced university offer to encourage and support care leavers to attend university. This offer predates the nationally mandated 'Local Offer' and has been in place for at least the last twelve years. The current published offer of local authority support to care leavers is:



	• Funding for UCAS or CUCAS applications for university if needed and support with interview costs • Help with attending open days • Funding and support for the cost of travel to attend university pre-course • Accommodation costs will be paid, including during the holidays if needed • A £2,000 bursary and support to apply for extra finance and maintenance grants via student finance • Link up with the university contact to find out about bursaries - and we will ask you to stay in touch with your support network at university • A PA will support with the move, including moving costs • Specialist worker available to contact universities, tutors, and support services. • If an internship is part of their course, accommodation is paid for and some help with travel expenses • Graduation ceremony supported Proposed revised offer Given the significant financial challenges across the local authority, the Care Leavers Service has considered various options for a reduction in spend in the context of benchmarking against other local authorities and the impact on East Sussex care leavers. The Care Leavers Service proposes to reduce the offer available to care leavers while still providing sufficient support for them to be able to access university. The revised offer would still provide more support than the statutory requirement of local authorities. The details of the revised offer are: • Continuing to meet the statutory duty to provide: ○ A £2000 bursary to be used over the duration of a three-year degree course. ○ Funding for accommodation during university breaks, i.e. Christmas, Easter and the summer holidays. • In addition to the statutory duty, providing the following: ○ 50% of universal credit rate per week during term time (9 months).
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	○ £15 per month during term time towards Wi-Fi / travel. ○ £150 towards graduation costs at the end of the course. The groups affected would be potentially all East Sussex children in care and current care leavers who will not have started university by September 2026. However, it is likely to be in the region of 7% of care leavers as this is currently the proportion attending university from the wider East Sussex care leavers cohort. A consultation has been undertaken to gather the views of people with care experience, as well as their foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders such as teachers.
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1. Update on previous EqlAs and outcomes of previous actions (if applicable)

What actions did you plan last time? (List them from the previous EqlA)	What improved as a result? What outcomes have these actions achieved?	What <u>further</u> actions do you need to take? (add these to the Action Plan below)
Not applicable.		

2. Review of information, equality assessment and potential actions

Consider the actual or potential impact of your project (service or policy) against each of the equality characteristics.

Age - people of all ages are protected under the Equality Act. Consider: older adults, under 5s, transition-aged young people (16-24), working age adults etc.	
(Age) What do you know? Summary of recent data, census information, research and insight about people who access your services and/or staff	Certain care leavers are legally entitled to support from the local authority where we have been their 'corporate parents'. For a local authority to hold legal obligations towards a care leaver, that young person must have been looked after by the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and left care after their 16th birthday. Corporate parenting responsibilities extend to young people up until at least their 21st birthday and can extend up to the age of 25. All care experienced young people under the age of 18 would be affected by the proposed revised offer. Care leavers over the age of 18 and under the age of 25 who have not yet attended university would also be affected by this proposal.
(Age) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback from people who access your service and/or staff feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers) to gather their views on this proposal.
(Age) What does this mean? Impacts identified from data and feedback (actual and potential)	Within the group of care experienced young people who have yet to start university, people of any particular age will not be impacted any more or less than those of any other age.
(Age) What can you do?	Care leavers up to the age of 25 would be able to access the same revised package of financial, practical and emotional support, irrespective of their particular age. Please see section on care experience for mitigation actions.

All potential actions to remove or reduce barriers and increase equality.	Care leavers who have already started at university and are eligible for support from the Care Leavers Service will continue to receive the current published offer, irrespective of their age.
Disability - A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Consider: sensory and mobility impairments; fluctuating, recurring or developmental conditions; learning difficulties; mental health; and people with cancer, multiple sclerosis or HIV. Neurodivergence and effects of menopause can also apply.	
(Disability) What do you know? Summary of data	The Department for Education published data in 2024 highlighting that care experienced young people are disproportionately likely to have special educational needs.¹ The Department for Health and Social Care published a discussion paper in 2023 in which it was highlighted that care experienced young people are disproportionately likely to experience mental health problems.² As of February 2025, 6 out of the 31 care leavers attending university were recorded as having disability. This represents approximately 19%. Within the wider East Sussex care leaver population, 82 out of 439 care leavers had a disability. This also represents approximately 19%. The Census 2021 recorded 20.3% of East Sussex residents as having a disability.³ The Office for National Statistics published data in 2022 highlighting that people with a disability were less likely to obtain a degree than non-disabled people: one-quarter (24.9%) of disabled people aged 21 to 64 years in the UK had a degree as their highest qualification compared with 42.7% of non-disabled people.⁴
(Disability) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers) to gather their views on this proposal.

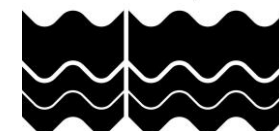
¹ [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

² [Mental health and wellbeing plan: discussion paper - GOV.UK](#)

³ [East Sussex 2021 Census Briefing: Disability](#)

⁴ [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK 2021.pdf](#)

	Care leavers with a disability expressed concern about needing to work alongside their studies as accessibility issues can reduce the options available for work. Many respondents also expressed concern about the emotional impact of reduced financial support on care leavers who are already disproportionately likely to experience mental health conditions in the context of the general population. In 2023, the local authority commissioned Coram Voice to use their Bright Spots research and service improvement tool with East Sussex care leavers to understand care leavers' experiences. This included exploring care leavers' mental health and the impact of any disabilities. Key findings of this research are as follows: • Care leavers were asked about their thoughts and feelings over the past month as part of a 'perceived stress scale'. Care leavers in East Sussex received a higher stress score than their peers in the general population. • 17% of care leavers were 'very positive' about their future, which is a significantly lower proportion than care leavers nationally (27%). 31% did not feel positive about their future. • Care leavers told us that where they live has a significant impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Those who reported feeling pessimistic about their future were statistically more likely to report not feeling safe or settled where they lived. • Care leavers who were pessimistic about their future were also more to not be in employment, education or training; to have a long-term health condition or disability; and were experiencing financial difficulties. • Care leavers in East Sussex (38%) were significantly more likely to report that they did not feel happy yesterday compared with care leavers nationally (26%). • 42% of care leavers recorded low life satisfaction compared to 3% of young people in the general population and 26% of care leavers nationally. • A significantly larger proportion of care leavers in East Sussex (34%) felt the things they did in life were not worthwhile compared to care leavers nationally (23%) and their peers in the general population (4%). • Care leavers who reported that they had a long-term health condition or disability were statistically more likely to have low well-being than other care leavers in East Sussex.
(Disability) What does this mean? Impacts identified	Care leavers are disproportionately likely to experience poor mental health in the context of their peers in the general population and, in some cases, when compared to care leavers nationally. Consultation responses indicate that reduced financial support risks contributing to



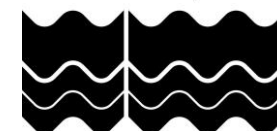
	mental health difficulties; for example, because of needing to work alongside studies, and due to the concern about a lack of a 'safety net'. Consultation responses also indicate that there may be a negative impact on children in care and care leavers' mental health stemming from a perception that their future prospects are not being prioritised or valued. The data highlights that a proportionate amount of East Sussex care leavers with a disability attend university when considering the wider population of East Sussex care leavers. The proportion of care leavers with a disability is also roughly proportionate to the wider East Sussex population. In the UK, people with a disability are statistically less likely than non-disabled people to attend university.
(Disability) What can you do? All potential actions	Care leavers will be advised of any decision to reduce financial support for university with sufficient notice for them to make the necessary arrangements. This may help to alleviate concerns about how feasible it is for them to attend university. Those care leavers who report having a disability will be supported to find out about support at university and/or in the area local to their university in relation to their disability. This could include a referral to pastoral support or to mental health services or being supported to arrange equipment to support with accessibility. All care leavers attending university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience.
Gender reassignment - In the Act a transgender person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. A person does not need to be under medical supervision to be protected	
(Gender reassignment) What do you know? Summary of data	The Census 2021 does not ask questions about gender identity of those under the age of 18 and therefore Children's Services do not routinely ask this question of young people as part of equality data monitoring. The Census 2021 highlighted that 1% of all 16-24-year-olds in East Sussex identified as transgender or non-binary. The Public Health LGBTQ+ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2021) highlighted that LGB+ people are disproportionately likely to experience mental health difficulties.⁵ Care experienced people

⁵ [east-sussex-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-queer-plus-needs-assessment-final \(10\).pdf](#)

	are also more likely to have mental health difficulties - please see sections on disability and care experience for more details.
(Gender reassignment) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	Restrictions in the Council recording systems make it challenging to record gender identity in a consistent way. A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). Young people's gender identity was not mentioned in any responses and so it has not been possible to discern any distinction in the types of concerns being expressed based on the gender identity of the person providing a response.
(Gender reassignment) What does this mean? Impacts identified	There is no clear evidence that young people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment are disproportionately likely to be impacted by this decision. However, the available research suggests that this cohort of young people may be more likely to experience mental health difficulties and may therefore find it more difficult to cope emotionally at university if they experience financial strain.
(Gender reassignment) What can you do? All potential actions	All care leavers who wish to attend university would be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience. Transgender or non-binary young people wishing to attend university would be supported to find out about support at universities or in the local area for trans/non-binary/LGBTQ+ people.
Pregnancy and maternity - Protection is during pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave.	
(Pregnancy & maternity) What do you know? Summary of data	Research from Barnardo's indicates that young people with care experience are around 2.5 times more likely to become pregnant when compared with other teenagers. ⁶ They are likely to face a range of challenges, including financial difficulties.
(Pregnancy & maternity) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). Pregnancy and maternity were not mentioned in any consultation responses.
(Pregnancy & maternity) What does this mean? Impacts identified	Pregnant East Sussex care leavers, or care leavers with children under the age of 6 months, may face additional health complications and/or financial pressures when compared to care leavers who are not pregnant or do not have young children. East Sussex care leavers who are

⁶ [Care-experienced Parents Unite for Change | Barnardo's](#)

	pregnant/have a young child and wish to attend university may find it more challenging to work alongside their studies when compared to the wider East Sussex care leaver population and may face more financial hardship.
(Pregnancy & maternity) What can you do? All potential actions	The Care Leavers Service would support any young person who is pregnant or has a young child to access any pregnancy and maternity support that may be available at universities or in the area local to a university. All care leavers who wish to attend university would be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience.
Race (ethnicity) - This includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality, and includes refugees and migrants, and Gypsies and Travellers.	
(Race / ethnicity) What do you know? Summary of data	The breakdown by ethnicity of the East Sussex care leaver population is as follows: 235 White British: 53.5% 75 Any other ethnic group: 17.1% 51 African: 11.6% 19 Any other White background: 4.3% 16 Any other Asian background: 3.6% 14 Any other Mixed background: 3.2% 9 Gypsy/Roma: 2.1% 7 White/Black African: 1.6% 4 White/Black Caribbean: 0.9% 2 Any other Black background: 0.5% 2 White/Asian: 0.5% 1 British/Caribbean: 0.2% 1 Chinese: 0.2% 1 White/Irish: 0.2% 1 White/Traveller of Irish heritage: 0.2% The breakdown by ethnicity of care leavers attending university as of April 2025 is as follows: 23 White British (74%) 2 Mixed White / Asian (6.5%) 1 Mixed Chinese British (3.2%)



	1 'Other White' background (3.2%) 2 Mixed White / Caribbean (6.5%) 1 African (3.2%) 1 'Other ethnic group': Arab (3.2%) The Runnymede Trust published research in 2020 highlighting that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are disproportionately likely to earn less than their White British peers and to face discrimination when seeking employment.⁷
(Race / ethnicity) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	It has not been possible to discern a difference in the types of concerns being raised by young people from ethnic minority backgrounds when compared to young people from White British backgrounds. None of the consultation responses highlighted concerns about racism. The Coram Voice Bright Spots survey of East Sussex care leavers, published in 2023, did not conduct an analysis of responses by ethnicity. The survey was also completed by a disproportionately high number of White young people (83%), making it challenging to identify whether people from ethnic minority backgrounds have particular concerns about going to university that differ from their peers from White British backgrounds.
(Race / ethnicity) What does this mean? Impacts identified	The ethnicity data for the wider East Sussex care leaver population and the East Sussex care leaver population attending university highlights that proportionately fewer young people from ethnic minority backgrounds attend university compared to care leavers from White British backgrounds (46.5% young people are from ethnic minority backgrounds in the wider East Sussex care leaver population compared with 26% for the cohort attending university). Reducing financial support may impose further barriers to young people from ethnic minority backgrounds attending university as they may face more barriers to employment compared to their White peers.
(Race / ethnicity) What can you do? All potential actions	Care leavers will be advised of any decision to reduce financial support for university well in advance.

⁷ [The Colour of Money](#)

	Care leavers from ethnic minority backgrounds will be supported to apply for any bursaries, grants or scholarships available to young people from ethnic minority backgrounds attending university. Care leavers from ethnic minority backgrounds will be supported to explore informal sources of support at university, for example, university societies for people of a particular ethnic heritage. All care leavers who wish to attend university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirement - please see section on care experience.
Religion or belief - Religion includes any religion with a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. The Act also covers lack of religion or belief.	
(Religion /& Belief) What do you know? Summary of data	Please see guidance above, in 'Age' section - click here to jump back. The local authority holds incomplete data about care leavers' religion or beliefs.
(Religion /& Belief) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). One young person currently attending university highlighted their faith in their consultation response: they felt that the financial support provided to them allowed them the time and space to explore their faith, which contributed to a sense of belonging. It is not possible to discern any clear distinction in the types of concerns being expressed based on the religion or belief of the person providing a response.
(Religion /& Belief) What does this mean? Impacts identified	There is no evidence that the proposed revised offer will have a disproportionate impact on care leavers who hold certain beliefs over others, or who follow/practise any particular religion.
(Religion /& Belief) What can you do? All potential actions	Care leavers who practise or follow a religion, or hold a particular belief, will be supported to find out about places of worship and/or interest groups/organisations. All care leavers who wish to attend university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirement - please see section on care experience.
Sex - Women and men are protected under the Act.	
(Sex) What do you know?	The data on the sex of the wider East Sussex care leaver population is as follows:

Summary of data	Female: 151 (34.5%) Male: 287 (65.5%) The data on the sex of the East Sussex care leavers attending university currently is as follows: Female: 16 (approximately 52%) Male: 15 (approximately 48%) In the UK, a higher proportion of women attend university than men. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows that 57% of all UK-domiciled undergraduate students were female in 2023/2024 and this rate has been consistent for several years.⁸ The Coram Voice Bright Spots survey of East Sussex care leavers highlighted girls in care felt the stigma of their situation more keenly than boys, and girls aged 11-17 were less likely to say that life was worthwhile compared with boys in care. This is likely to be proportionate to the experiences of the wider population of girls: the ONS (2020) found that young women in the general population were significantly more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and depression than young men. On wellbeing scores, there was no statistically significant association between low well-being and sex.
(Sex) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). There are no significant differences in the nature of the feedback that the local authority has received about the proposal between male and female care leavers. None of the feedback received suggests that a young person of either sex views this proposal as disadvantaging them based on their sex.
(Sex) What does this mean? Impacts identified	The numbers of female and male care leavers attending university are roughly equal and are also roughly proportionate to the ratio seen in the university student population more widely. A much higher proportion of female care leavers in East Sussex attend university when considered in the context of the wider East Sussex care leaver population.

⁸ [Who's studying in HE? | HESA](#)

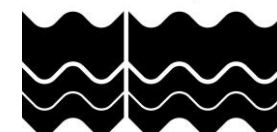
	There is evidence that girls and women are more likely to experience poor mental health: this is true for the general population as well as the care leaver population. Consultation responses highlight concerns that the reduced financial support will contribute to mental health difficulties and, as female care leavers may be more likely to experience poor mental health, the impact of less financial support may be felt more acutely by women than men.
(Sex) What can you do? All potential actions	Care leavers will be advised of any decision to reduce financial support for university well in advance. This may help to alleviate concerns about how feasible it is to attend university. All care leavers wishing to attending university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience.
Sexual orientation - The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.	
(Sexual orientation) What do you know? Summary of data	The Census 2021 did not ask questions about the sexual orientation of those under the age of 16 and for those over 16, those questions were not mandatory. Because of this, the local authority does not ask questions about young people's sexual orientation as part of standard equality data monitoring. This means it is difficult to get an accurate percentage of care leavers who are LGB+. The 2021 Census indicates that 3.3% of the East Sussex population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other (LGB+). This is similar to the national average of 3.2%.⁹ The Public Health LGBTQ+ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2021) highlighted that LGB+ people are disproportionately likely to experience mental health difficulties.¹⁰ Care experienced people are also more likely to have mental health difficulties - please see sections on disability and care experience for more details.
(Sexual orientation) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). It has not been possible to discern a difference in the types of concerns being raised by LGB+ young people compared with heterosexual young people, in part because it is not standard practice to record this type of information about young people as part of routine equality data

⁹ [State of the County 2022: Focus on East Sussex](#)

¹⁰ [east-sussex-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-queer-plus-needs-assessment-final \(10\).pdf](#)

	monitoring. None of the consultation responses highlighted concerns about the impact of the proposal on the basis of sexual orientation.
(Sexual orientation) What does this mean? Impacts identified	There is no evidence of a direct, disproportionate impact on LGB+ care leavers. However, as LGB+ young people are disproportionately likely to experience mental health difficulties at the population level, it is possible that the reduced financial support available for university will have a greater negative impact on the wellbeing of LGB+ care leavers attending, or hoping to attend, university in the future.
(Sexual orientation) What can you do? All potential actions	All care leavers wishing to attending university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience. LGB+ young people wishing to attend university would be supported to find out about support at universities or in the local area for LGB+ people.
Marriage and civil partnership - Only in relation to due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.	
(Marriage & civil partnership) What do you know? Summary of data	
(Marriage & civil partnership) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	
(Marriage & civil partnership) What does this mean? Impacts identified	There is no evidence of any disproportionate impact of this proposal on the basis of marriage and civil partnership.
(Marriage & civil partnership) What can you do? All potential actions	All care leavers wishing to attending university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience.

Armed Forces - protected by the Armed Forces Act 2021 which aims to help prevent service personnel, veterans and their families being disadvantaged when accessing public services. The duty applies to specifically housing, education or healthcare functions, but check whether any impacts may apply in your case.	
(Armed forces) What do you know? Summary of data	Questions about whether young people are from an Armed Forces background are not currently part of the standard local authority equality data monitoring questions for young people. Teams have discretion to ask this if there were a business need. This means that it is difficult to get a complete picture of the proportion of children in care and care leavers who are from an Armed Forces background.
(Armed forces) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken by the Care Leavers Service with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders (such as teachers). None of the consultation responses highlighted concerns about the impact of the proposal on the basis of having an Armed Forces background.
(Armed forces) What does this mean? Impacts identified	There is no evidence of any disproportionate impact of this proposal on the basis of care leavers having an Armed Forces background.
(Armed forces) What can you do? All potential actions	All care leavers wishing to attending university will be provided with a package of support which is above the statutory minimum requirements - please see section on care experience.
Impacts on community cohesion - Consider impacts on how groups see one another or how the council's resources are seen to be allocated. Include opportunities to positively impact on good relations between groups.	
(Community cohesion) What do you know? Summary of data	
(Community cohesion) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	
(Community cohesion) What does this mean? Impacts identified	
(Community cohesion) What can you do?	



All potential actions	
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Additional categories

(identified locally as potentially causing or worsening people's experience of inequality)

Rurality - issues can include isolation, access to services (eg: GPs, pharmacies, libraries, schools), low income / part-time work, infrequent public transport, higher transport and fuel costs and lack of affordable housing. Deprivation can be more dispersed and less visible.	
(Rurality) What do you know? Summary of data	No relevant impacts identified.
(Rurality) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	
(Rurality) What does this mean? Impacts identified	
(Rurality) What can you do? All potential actions	
Carers - A carer is anyone, of any age, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.	
(Carers) What do you know? Summary of data	No relevant impacts identified.
(Carers) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	

(Carers) What does this mean? Impacts identified	
(Carers) What can you do? All potential actions	
People with care experience: the term ‘care experienced’ refers to anyone who has been, or is currently, in care or from a looked after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short. Consider financial impacts for things like travel or access to projects; maintaining continuity of care and support (including mental and physical health and wellbeing, community and social connections), and access to opportunities.	
(Care experience) What do you know? Summary of data	There is strong evidence that care leavers are significantly disadvantaged by their experiences of being in care. Please also see the section on disability for information about the high prevalence and impact of disabilities in the East Sussex care leaver population. In addition to the higher likelihood of having a disability, care leavers experience the following: • Since 2018-19, there has been a 33% rise in the number of care leaver households aged 18-20 assessed as unhoused or threatened with homelessness. This is compared with the overall number of households facing homelessness, which rose by 10.7% over the same period.¹¹ • More than half (52%) of people born in the academic year ending 1994 who had been in care and who attended school in England, had a criminal conviction by the age of 24 compared with 13% of children who had not been in care. 1 in 7 (15%) previously looked after children had received immediate custodial sentence by the age of 24; that is over 10 times the proportion of children who had not been in care. 92% of previously looked after children who received an immediate custodial sentence by 24 had been identified as having special educational needs.¹²

¹¹ <https://becomecharity.org.uk/press-release-33-increase-in-homelessness-among-care-leavers/>

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/articles/theeducationbackgroundoflookedafterchildrenwhointeractwiththecriminaljusticesystem/december2022>

- Only 22% of care experienced people aged 27 are in employment, and there is on average a £6,000 pay gap compared with those of the same age without care experience.¹³
- Care experienced people are 360% more likely to die prematurely, as well as more likely to die by unnatural causes such as violent deaths, accidents and taking their own lives.¹⁴
- According to a survey by Barnardo's in 2017, 45% of looked after children (and 72% in residential care) had a mental illness compared to 10% in the general population. For care experienced young adults with identified mental health needs, 65% were not currently receiving any statutory support for their mental health. Previously looked after children and care leavers are between four and five times more likely to attempt suicide in adulthood.¹⁵

At the end of February 2025, there were 463 care leavers over the age of 18 in East Sussex. This figure includes Separated Migrant Children; excluding this group of care leavers, the total was 328. At the same point in time, approximately 7% of all care leavers over the age of 18 were attending university, and 10% of care leavers who are not Separated Migrant Children. The percentage of over-18s in the UK population applying for university in 2024 was 36.4%.

The number of Care Leavers who have been supported to attend university since 2021 is outlined below:

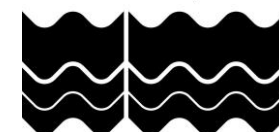
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Year 1	9	12	7	12	
Year 2	7	5	12	7	
Year 3	6	6	4	12	
Master's	x	x	2	2	
New Intake					9
	22	23	25	33	

¹³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1111/childrens-homes/news/171939/host-of-indefensible-system-failings-damaging-educational-and-employment-outcomes-for-children-in-care/>

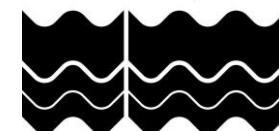
¹⁴ <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-lifelong-health-and-well-being-of-care-leavers.-Nuffield-Foundation-and-UCL-policy-briefing.-Oct-2021.pdf>

¹⁵ [neglected-minds.pdf \(barnardos.org.uk\)](https://neglected-minds.pdf(barnardos.org.uk))

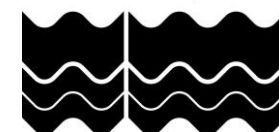
(Care experience) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	A consultation has been undertaken with children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other stakeholders e.g. school staff. Methods of engagement are as follows: • Emails to children in care, care leavers, foster carers/guardians and other key stakeholders. • Focused discussion sessions with the Children in Care Council • Focused discussion session with the Care Leavers Council A number of concerns were raised. A summary is as follows: • The proposed reduction of funding for university students will serve as a barrier to higher education for care leavers: all respondents highlighted this as one of the largest concerns. • The proposed reduction in funding has resulted in young people feeling let down and has created an element of distrust in corporate parenting. • The proposed reduction in funding would reduce equality of opportunity between those with care experience and those without care experience. • The proposed reduction in funding would incur additional negative impacts for disabled young people with care experience; for instance, due to more barriers to accessing work



	• The impact of the proposed reduction of funding could potentially impact and exacerbate mental ill health for both those who feel that university is no longer an option due to reduced funding and those who choose to go with less support. • Pressures of ‘surviving’ at university with decreased funding may impact completion and qualification outcomes - as students risk burnout or drop out due to the additional financial burden. In 2023-2024, the local authority commissioned Coram Voice to use their Bright Spots research and service improvement tool with care leavers, to understand their experiences. East Sussex care leavers highlighted a number of barriers to achieving and maintaining a positive sense of wellbeing, including lack of financial support and dissatisfaction with their living situation. Care leavers expressed that in order to improve the leaving care experience, there needed to be more funding for education and better housing options for young people.
(Care experience) What does this mean? Impacts identified	The savings proposal allows some flexibility in where young people choose to study. However, as young people would receive no support from the local authority for their accommodations costs, it is recognised that it could limit places where accommodation is expensive e.g., London universities. There is a potential increase in young people choosing to ‘stay put’ and apply to local universities. For future cohorts of university applicants, this would likely incur higher costs for the local authority than with the current arrangements, whilst also limiting young people’s options. For example, they may have wished to study a course that is not available at a local university. It is also likely to put pressure on foster care placements locally. If young people have to undertake paid work alongside their studies, there may be a mental health impact as a result of the pressure, and care leavers are already disproportionately likely to have mental health difficulties (please see ‘disability’ section). It is recognised that accessing university is not straightforward for many care leavers, particularly those who, whilst at the same age, are playing ‘catch up’ with their peers in the general population as their stage of development is delayed due to the impact of the trauma that they have experienced, or disrupted education. Care leavers often have limited support networks outside of the professionals who work with them and little to no access to financial support from family members.



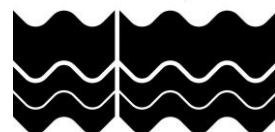
	There is ultimately a risk that fewer care leavers will choose to attend university at all. East Sussex care leavers who have attended since the academic year 22-23 and have been able to access the current offer of financial support have not dropped out once they started their studies.
(Care experience) What can you do? All potential actions	Whilst the Care Leavers Service proposes to stop funding term-time accommodation, the following financial support will be available: • Accommodation during term breaks i.e. Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. • A £2,000 bursary and support to apply for extra finance and maintenance grants via student finance. • 50% of the universal credit rate during term times (9 months). • £15 per month during term times towards Wi-Fi/travel. • £150 towards graduation costs at the end of the course. • Funding for UCAS or CUCAS applications for university if needed and support with interview costs. • Funding and support for the cost of travel to attend university pre-course. • Financial support with moving costs. In addition to this financial support, the Care Leavers Service will provide the following: • Help with attending open days. • Assist young people in the process of applying for university and student finance. • Support to ensure that young people have applied for all available grants, bursaries, scholarships and loans. • Support with applying for and securing accommodation. • Support to ensure that the young person is connected to the care leaver lead for the university. • Visiting young people at university regularly and a Personal Adviser will be available via phone/text/email. • A Personal Adviser to support with the move. The commitment to the current offer for those students now in years 1 and 2 will be maintained as it was the published offer at the time of applying. Those students who would be applying for September 2025 intake will also be eligible for the current published offer.



	Care leavers who would be applying for university for a September 2026 intake and beyond will have over a year's notice of any reduction in the current offer, with a particular focus on communicating clearly with those care leavers who are considering applying for the 2026 intake as they will be the first to be affected.
Other people that may be differently affected and/or whose views are seldom heard - this will vary by service, but includes people who: • are homeless or in insecure housing, • in prison, • with low levels of literacy, • are digitally excluded, • experiencing severe loneliness (a feeling of lack or loss of companionship) • experiencing or in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction (and their families), • have or are experiencing domestic or sexual abuse	
(Other impacts) What do you know? Summary of data	No other relevant impacts identified.
(Other impacts) What do people tell you? Summary of feedback	
(Other impacts) What does this mean? Impacts identified	
(Other impacts) What can you do? All potential actions	
Staff impacts: if your proposal affects staff, have you consulted with the Staff Networks? (contact details are on the equality pages of the intranet: search for 'staff networks')	
Not applicable.	

Assessment of overall impacts, summary of actions and any further recommendations

- Care leavers are disproportionately likely to experience poor mental health in the context of their peers in the general population and, in some cases, when compared to care leavers nationally. Consultation responses indicate that reduced financial support risks contributing to mental health difficulties; for example, because of needing to work alongside studies, and due to the concern about a lack of a 'safety net'. Consultation responses also indicate that there may be a negative impact on children in care and care leavers' mental health stemming from a perception that their future prospects are not being prioritised or valued.
- The available research suggests that of young people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment may be more likely to experience mental health difficulties and may therefore find it more difficult to cope emotionally at university if they experience financial strain.
- Pregnant East Sussex care leavers, or care leavers with children under the age of 6 months, may face additional health complications and/or financial pressures when compared to care leavers who are not pregnant or do not have young children. East Sussex care leavers who are pregnant/have a young child and wish to attend university may find it more challenging to work alongside their studies when compared to the wider East Sussex care leaver population and may face more financial hardship.
- The ethnicity data for the wider East Sussex care leaver population and the East Sussex care leaver population attending university highlights that proportionately fewer young people from ethnic minority backgrounds attend university compared to care leavers from White British backgrounds. Reducing financial support may impose further barriers to young people from ethnic minority backgrounds attending university as they may face more barriers to employment compared to their White peers.
- There is evidence that girls and women are more likely to experience poor mental health: this is true for the general population as well as the care leaver population. Consultation responses highlight concerns that the reduced financial support will contribute to mental health difficulties and, as female care leavers may be more likely to experience poor mental health, the impact of less financial support may be felt more acutely by women than men.
- As LGB+ young people are disproportionately likely to experience mental health difficulties at the population level, it is possible that the reduced financial support available for university will have a greater negative impact on the wellbeing of LGB+ care leavers attending, or hoping to attend, university in the future.
- As young people would receive no support from the local authority for their accommodation costs, it is recognised that it could limit all care leavers in their application options due to accommodation being more expensive in certain areas e.g., London universities. There is a potential increase in young people choosing to 'stay put' and apply to local universities. For future



cohorts of university applicants, this would likely incur higher costs for the local authority than with the current arrangements, whilst also limiting young people's options. For example, they may have wished to study a course that is not available at a local university. It is also likely to put pressure on foster care placements locally.

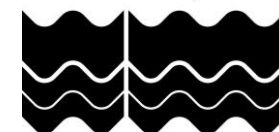
- It is recognised that accessing university is not straightforward for many care leavers, particularly those who, whilst at the same age, are playing 'catch up' with their peers in the general population as their stage of development is delayed due to the impact of the trauma that they have experienced, or disrupted education. Care leavers often have limited support networks outside of the professionals who work with them and little to no access to financial support from family members.
- There is ultimately a risk that fewer care leavers will choose to attend university at all. East Sussex care leavers who have attended since the academic year 22-23 and have been able to access the current offer of financial support have not dropped out once they started their studies.

Further consultation with young people would need to be undertaken to gauge how supported they feel by the Care Leavers Service and how successful they have been in finding alternative sources of financial support. It is recognised that the savings proposal is likely to have an impact on young people and that the proposed actions will not entirely mitigate the potential negative impact.

List detailed data and/or community feedback that informed your EqlA

Source and type of data (e.g. research, or direct engagement (interviews), responses to questionnaires, etc.)	Date	Gaps in data (were there any people you didn't hear from? Does research include information on all characteristics?)	Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with? (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)
Department for Education report on children looked after in England including options: Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2022 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)	Published 2023		
Become charity press release on homelessness in care leavers: https://becomecharity.org.uk/press-release-33-increase-in-homelessness-among-care-leavers/	Published 2023		
East Sussex County Council 2021 Census Briefing: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation East Sussex 2021 Census Briefing: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation	Published 2021		
East Sussex LGBTQ+ Comprehensive Needs Assessment: east-sussex-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-queer-plus-needs-assessment-final (10).pdf	Published 2021		
East Sussex 2021 Census Briefing: Disability	Published 2021		

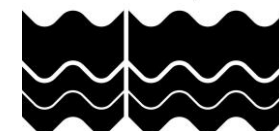
Who's Studying in Higher Education?: Personal Characteristics: Who's studying in HE?: Personal characteristics HESA	Published 2025		
Office for National Statistics: Outcomes for disabled people in the UK 2021.pdf	Published 2022		
Runnymede Trust, The Colour of Money: How racial inequalities obstruct a fair and resilient economy: The Colour of Money	Published 2020		
Coram Voice, Your Life Beyond Care: The views of care leavers in East Sussex on their well-being and what makes life good.	Published 2023		
Department for Education: Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK	Published 2023		
Department for Health and Social Care: Mental health and wellbeing plan: discussion paper - GOV.UK	Published 2023		
Barnardo's policy report: Care-experienced Parents Unite for Change Barnardo's	Published 2022		
State of the County Focus on East Sussex: State of the County 2022: Focus on East Sussex	Published 2022		
The education background of looked-after children who interact with the criminal justice system: The education background of looked-after	Published 2022		



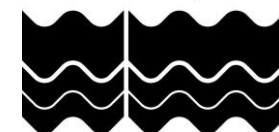
children who interact with the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics			
UK Parliament inquiry report: “Host of indefensible system failings” damaging educational and employment outcomes for children in care - Committees - UK Parliament	Published 2022		
Nuffield Foundation and University College London policy briefing: The-lifelong-health-and-well-being-of-care-leavers.-Nuffield-Foundation-and-UCL-policy-briefing.-Oct-2021.pdf	Published 2021		
Barnardo's, Neglected Minds: A report on mental health support for young people leaving care: neglected-minds.pdf	Published 2017		

4. Prioritised Action Plan

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
<i>To jump back to potential actions identified above, click on the relevant hyperlink: Actions from previous EqIA, Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion & Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Armed Forces, Community Cohesion, Rurality, Carers, Care Experience, Other Impacts, Staff Impacts</i>				
Care experience Disability Race	Clear communication of changes early in process, remembering need for Easy Read and translated versions of any information.	Young people are aware of timeframe for changes and can plan accordingly.	Young people say they are well informed and report that they have felt well supported to find out about other	From April 2025.

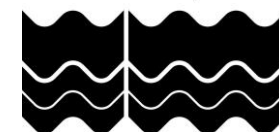


			sources of financial support.	
Care experience	A package of financial support as follows: • Accommodation during term breaks i.e. Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. • A £2,000 bursary and support to apply for extra finance and maintenance grants via student finance. • 50% of the universal credit rate during term times (9 months). • £15 per month during term times towards Wi-Fi/travel. • £150 towards graduation costs at the end of the course. • Funding for UCAS or CUCAS applications for	Young people are aware of timeframe for changes and can plan accordingly.	Young people say they are well informed and report that they have felt well supported to find out about other sources of financial support.	If proposal is approved, from September 2026.



	university if needed and support with interview costs. • Funding and support for the cost of travel to attend university pre-course. • Financial support with moving costs.			
Care experience Disability	A package of pastoral support via the Care Leavers Service: • Help with attending open days. • Assist young people in the process of applying for university and student finance. • Support to ensure that young people have applied for all available grants, bursaries, scholarships and loans.			If proposal is approved, care leavers applying to university for the September 2026 intake will begin to be supported in their application from at least a year in advance of the start date and will have ongoing pastoral support for the duration of their course.

	• Support with applying for and securing accommodation. • Support to ensure that the young person is connected to the care leaver lead for the university. • Visiting young people at university regularly and a Personal Adviser will be available via phone/text/email. • A Personal Adviser to support with the move. • Support to find out about informal sources of support at university, such as student societies.			
Disability	Young people will be supported to talk to the relevant contacts at university about accessibility support.	Young people with a disability feel that there is support available to reduce the impact of their disability on	Young people are not prevented from attending university due to disability and there is no significant reduction	If proposal is approved, care leavers applying to university for the September 2026 intake will begin to be



	Young people will be given clear information about local services for mental and physical health conditions.	applying to and attending university.	in the proportion of young people attending university with a disability.	supported in their application from at least a year in advance of the start date and will have ongoing pastoral support for the duration of their course.
(Add more rows as needed)				