

Proposed shared introduction

Teesside University is committed to supporting care-experienced students. This is the collaborative, whole-institution response evidenced through the Care Leaver Covenant.

Teesside University is a Partner of the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP). NERAP is a long standing (established in 2011) collaboration of the five universities in the region (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) who fund pre-16 outreach activity where economies of scale and added value are gained through a collaborative approach. This activity focuses on joint representation visits to pre-16 schools highlighting the higher education opportunities in the region, and specific targeted work to support care-experienced students and young carers throughout their educational journey.

To ensure support for care-experienced students is sustained throughout their higher education journey, all five universities have signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant as a regional partnership via the existing NERAP Partnership. This means that students who choose to study at any of the university Partners will be guaranteed continued support to access, succeed and progress.

Teesside University along with the other four Partner universities have committed (during 2022-23) to developing a level of support that is consistent at each institution. All care-experienced students get the same core access to interventions aligned to the Care Leaver Covenant core outcomes, complemented by additional bespoke support where offered within individual institutions.

As a Partnership, we have adopted the broader definition of 'care-experienced,' as this term is inclusive of the range of care settings someone may have experienced.

Our definition of care-experienced is someone who, at any stage of their life, and for any length of time, has been in care e.g., looked after by the local authority. This includes the following:

- spent time in the care of the local authority (e.g. foster care or children's home)
- privately fostered
- 'looked after at home' under a supervision order
- in kinship foster care (where a friend or family member becomes the foster carer). Kinship care through a formal arrangement, recognised by a Local Authority, and could be prior to a Special Guardianship Order.

Core offer

Student

Pre-entry support

NERAP-

- [Choices Together Progressive programme](#) from Year 7-13.
- Accompany students to any open days, interviews etc. Cover expenses for getting to and from campus and lunch where needed.
- Tailored UCAS and Student Finance application support.
- Offer advice and guidance and potential CPD sessions for student support workers, parents/carers, local authorities, and virtual schools around UCAS and Student Finance.
- Create a guide for staff supporting young people considering Higher Education using the NNECL guide for staff as a basis.

- Work with the five Partner universities to develop and maintain the core offer. Facilitate regular working group meetings and maintain a Teams group to allow easy communication.
- Provide a comprehensive virtual school/Local Authority contacts list and detail local offer for each area, all in one place. Ensure that this is regularly maintained and kept up to date.

Partner University-

- Named University contact who engages with the working group and has, or is willing to develop, an underlying knowledge of care-experienced students. The named contact should form part of a staff member's role and time should be allocated for CPD opportunities to further develop their understanding of this role.
- Consider how student data can be collected, via UCAS and via enrolment form. Reach out directly to students, pre-entry, and post-entry.
- Offer a visit to campus and meeting with a named contact offering specific advice around application, finance, and accommodation options.
- Automatic eligibility for University supported entry routes where relevant.
- Consider guaranteed contextual offer for care-experienced students.

Post-entry support

Accommodation

NERAP-

- Support with moving in, to include personal meet-and-greet at station/airport etc. and help with moving belongings where required.
- Fund a welcome pack for any Choices Together students joining Partner universities, to include basics such as £20 supermarket voucher and new home card with contact details.

Partner University-

- Option for early arrival.
- Consider waiving accommodation deposit.
- Year-round accommodation and possible social activities through vacation periods.
- Consider free summer storage facilities. Consider this for placement/study abroad years too.

Financial support

NERAP-

- Finance and budgeting sessions as part of Choices Together progressive programme.

Partner University-

- Consider offering a £2,000 bursary for all care-experienced students.
- Signposting to additional financial support.
- Appointment with University financial advisor offered.
- Priority for hardship funds and offer support with applying.

Wellbeing support

NERAP-

- Work towards providing specialist training for personal tutors/other staff working with students

- Birthday and Christmas cards where this is celebrated sent right from beginning of the Choices Together Progressive Programme throughout university studies.

Partner University-

- Contact made when a student registers confirming the wellbeing services available.
- Individual referrals made for mental health support where appropriate.
- Work with University Students' Union to offer informal meet ups, coffee mornings etc. and social media groups. Employ care-experienced Ambassadors to support this. Look at supporting the setup of a care-experienced Student club/society.

Graduation and beyond

NERAP-

- Attend graduation ceremonies where appropriate.
- Work towards setting up a care-experienced alumni network, offering support to alumni but also supporting new students coming through. Sharing knowledge and continued support for alumni.
- Celebrate successes with case studies on the NERAP website.

Partner University-

- Graduation day package - free gown hire, photography package and free tickets.
- Consider graduation bursary to support with transition from university.
- Consider extending financial support to postgraduate students.

Employment

NERAP-

- Careers and employability sessions included in Choices Together Progressive Programme.
- Consider hosting a work experience placement/voluntary opportunity to support NERAP delivery.

Partner University-

- CV/application/ interview support offered by university careers services during course and up to three years post-graduation.
- Look to actively target care-experienced Students for Student Ambassador or equivalent positions and offer a guaranteed interview.
- Named contact within careers team, introduced during Freshers' week and working with students throughout.

Community

Partner University-

- Offer rooms on campus for care-experienced student events, e.g., Local Authority foster carer training.
- All to become NNECL and NorthCLASS members.
- All university Partners to sign Care leaver Covenant.
- Consider holding a regional Christmas dinner via the [Christmas Dinner Project](#)- Joint effort between Partners and NERAP working with the wider community.