



# MidKent College

## Care Experienced Policy

2025

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**\*\*Major change is defined as:**

*Anything that represents a significant change of working practice, legal requirement, procedure or process within the organisation, or a change that impacts an employee's terms and conditions of employment.*

**\*\*Minor change is defined as:**

*Any change of dates, job titles or terminology that do not represent a significant change to working practice. Examples changes of terminology to reflect current legislation/ DfE/Ofsted such as the change of terminology in the safeguarding policy from peer-on-peer abuse to child-on-child abuse.*

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<b>Policy Cross References - This policy should be read in conjunction with any other associated policies, with particular reference to</b>	
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Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at Risk Policy	MKC-Safeguarding-002

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## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 MidKent College is committed to delivering high-quality technical education and training for all students, underpinned by the principles of equality of opportunity, access, and outcomes.
- 1.2 The Executive Directors and Senior Leadership Team recognise the importance of championing the progress and achievement of Care Experienced students and are fully committed to improving outcomes for this group. Supporting these young people to succeed and progress into further education, higher education, employment, and independent adulthood is a key priority for the College.
- 1.3 We are dedicated to ensuring that all Care Experienced students receive the right support at the right time — both before they start college and throughout their learning journey. This includes tailored academic, financial, and pastoral support designed to remove barriers and raise aspirations.
- 1.4 This policy complements the College's Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy and outlines additional responsibilities and commitments that MidKent College undertakes to meet the specific needs of Care Experienced students.

~~MidKent College will provide high quality technical education and training for all our students, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. The Directors and Senior Leadership Team recognised the need to champion performance for Care Experienced Students and are committed to improving outcomes for them. Supporting these young people to succeed and progress to further education, higher education, employment, and a better future, as set out in this policy, is a priority for MidKent College. We are committed to helping all care experienced students get the right support, both before starting college and during their studies. This policy complements the College's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy and identifies further responsibilities that the College believes it should undertake in relation to Care Experienced.~~

## 2. Scope and Aim of Policy

- 2.1 At MidKent College, we use the term 'Care Experienced' to refer to children and young people who are currently, or have previously been, looked after by a local authority, as defined by the Children Act 1989. This includes:
  - Children Looked After (CLA)
  - Care Leavers
  - Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
  - Young people under Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders, or Residence Orders
- 2.2 Care Experienced students may be living in a range of settings, including foster care, kinship care, shared accommodation, semi-independent living, or supported housing. Within the education context:

- Students **under the age of 18** are referred to as **Children in Care**.
- Students **aged 18 to 25** are referred to as **Care Leavers**.

2.3 This classification helps ensure that appropriate support, safeguarding measures, and funding entitlements are aligned to the learner's circumstances and statutory status.

~~We use the term 'Care Experienced' to mean Children Looked After or young people who have previously been looked after as defined by the Children Act 1989, and includes Care Leavers, Unaccompanied Young People, those under 'Special Guardianship' or other orders. Care experienced students may be living with families, or living in shared, semi-independent, or supported accommodation from 16+.~~

### 3. Why do Young People become Looked After?

- 3.1 Young people may become looked after by a local authority for a variety of complex and often difficult reasons. Many have experienced abuse or neglect, including physical, emotional, or sexual harm. Others may enter care due to family breakdown, bereavement, or because their parents are unable to care for them due to illness, mental health issues, or substance misuse.
- 3.2 Some young people may have disabilities or additional needs that require specialist support. A small number may be in care due to concerns around offending behaviour, though this is relatively rare.
- 3.3 Each young person's circumstances are unique, and it is important to approach their experiences with empathy, understanding, and without judgement.

~~Many of these children coming into care will have a history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Some may have suffered the death of a parent or have parents who are unable to look after them properly because of illness. Others may have disabilities and many different needs. A very small number are in care because of criminal behavior.~~

### 4. How does a Young Person become Looked After?

- 4.1 Children and young people can become looked after by a local authority through two main legal routes:
- **Section 20 of the Children Act 1989:** This applies when a child or young person is accommodated by the local authority with the **voluntary agreement** of their parent(s) or guardian(s). In these cases, **parental responsibility remains** with the parent or guardian.
  - **Section 31 of the Children Act 1989:** This involves a **Care Order** granted by the court when there is evidence that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. An **Interim Care Order** may be issued under **Section 38** while proceedings are ongoing. In these cases, the local authority shares **parental responsibility** with the parent(s).

- 4.2 Young people may enter care due to concerns about their safety, wellbeing, or because their parents are unable to provide appropriate care. Each case is assessed individually, and decisions are made in the best interests of the child.

~~Children come into care by two main routes: because the parents have asked for this help or because the child is in danger of being harmed.~~

- ~~• **Under section 20** of the Children Act 1989: children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents. Parental responsibility remains with the parent/guardian.~~
- ~~• **Under section 31 (1)**: children who are subject of a care order or interim care order (**section 38**).~~

## 5. Procedures

- 5.1 The College's approach to supporting the achievements of Care Experienced students is guided by a commitment to equity, inclusion, and personalised support. It aims to ensure these students are identified early, welcomed effectively, and supported throughout their educational journey to achieve positive outcomes.

~~The College's approach to supporting the achievements of Care Experienced will aim to:~~

The College aims to:

### Pre-entry

- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with local authorities, Health and Social Care Trusts, schools, Virtual Schools, and other relevant agencies to promote access to FE/HE for Care Experienced students.
- Establish clear systems for early identification of Care Experienced applicants through local authority referrals, support agencies, internal teams (e.g. ALS, Transition), or self-disclosure.
- Provide impartial, confidential, and accessible pre-course guidance on study options, financial support (e.g. Vulnerable Bursary, travel, meals, equipment), and wellbeing services to Care Experienced young people.
- Work closely with students' carers and guardians in navigating college systems and processes.
- Ensure outreach activities (e.g. welcome days, taster sessions, summer schools) are inclusive and promoted directly to Care Experienced students and their support networks.
- Offer a range of accessible information materials (digital and hardcopy) tailored to the needs of Care Experienced students.

- Allocate a Designated Member of Staff (DMS) to act as a named contact for Care Experienced students, providing a clear outline of available support including:
  - Pre-entry visits and campus tours
  - Interview support
  - Application and enrolment guidance
  - Financial and pastoral support
- ~~Develop and maintain effective links with local authorities, Health and Social Care trusts, schools, and other partners to publicise and make available information, advice, and guidance (including financial and other forms of support) about progression and study in FE/HE.~~
- ~~Provide impartial, free, and confidential pre-course guidance on FE/HE study options, including financial and other forms of support, to those in care and their carers. This could include travel, free meals, and some course related costs.~~
- ~~Provide accessible information about outreach activities: welcome days, taster days, summer schools or other events, to those in care and their carers.~~
- ~~Provide a range of informational materials relevant to study and support options and make them available and accessible through a range of formats.~~
- ~~Put systems in place that will help to identify care experienced through local authority contacts, support agencies, internal Additional Learning Support and Transition team or through self-disclosure.~~
- ~~Allocate a designated member of college staff and provide a clear outline and offer of the support available, including the 16-19 Guaranteed Bursary, specialist support, support at interviews, tours of College.~~
- ~~Inform the Personal Tutor, if consent is given by the young person, to facilitate effective support at transition to the College.~~

## On Course

- The DMS and allocated Student Welfare Officers will act as key contacts throughout the student journey, offering proactive and ongoing support.
- Upon identification or disclosure, a personalised support plan will be developed and monitored in collaboration with the Course Tutor and relevant staff.
- Weekly **Retention Panel** meetings (during the first six weeks of term) will include Care Experienced students as a standing agenda item to ensure early intervention and wraparound support.
- The DMS and Student Welfare Officers will maintain regular contact with Course Tutors to monitor academic progress, attendance, and wellbeing.
- Attend and contribute to statutory and multi-agency meetings (e.g. PEPs, LAC Reviews) to ensure the College meets its corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Monitor attendance closely, particularly for students under 18, in line with safeguarding and bursary requirements. The DMS will investigate concerns and liaise with carers, Social Workers, or Personal Advisers as appropriate.

- Provide access to in-house and external mental health and wellbeing services, with priority referral pathways for Care Experienced students.
- ~~The Care Experienced Coordinator (DMS) and allocated Student Welfare Officers are key contacts for all Care Experienced students. This member of staff will also offer and provide support prior to entry and is available throughout the duration of the student's course.~~
- ~~Following disclosure or identification, suitable support arrangements will be put in place and monitored by the DMS in conjunction with the course tutor.~~
- ~~Follow up contact by the DMS will be made with Course Tutors to check on progression and monitor support needs.~~
- ~~Conduct statutory and professional meetings in liaison with external agencies to meet care status requirements.~~
- ~~Absences of care experienced students under 18 will be monitored in accordance with the College's existing policy for managing student absence. Curriculum Staff can request that the DMS investigates cases of longer absence on their behalf.~~
- ~~Care Experience attendance will be monitored as attendance is a requirement to receive payment of the 16-19 Guaranteed Bursary. Where there are concerns, the DMS will investigate and may contact Foster Carers/Social Workers/Personal Adviser's or other appropriate persons in order to support the young person's retention and success.~~

### **End of Course**

- Offer tailored, impartial careers and progression guidance, including support with UCAS, apprenticeships, and employment applications.
- Collect and analyse feedback from Care Experienced students on the quality and impact of support received, and report findings to the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- Track and report on recruitment, retention, achievement, and progression outcomes for Care Experienced students to inform continuous improvement.
- Provide training and resources to staff on the experiences and needs of Care Experienced students, including trauma-informed practice and safeguarding.
- ~~Provide free and impartial career guidance relating to progression within FE/HE or careers and support with applications.~~
- ~~Obtain feedback from students who are Care Experienced about our support offer, delivery and their distance travelled. This will be fed back to SMT.~~
- ~~Maintain records of the recruitment, retention, achievement, and progression of our Care Experienced students.~~
- ~~Offer information and training to College staff about issues affecting young people in or leaving care.~~

## GENERAL

- Co-design support services with Care Experienced students through regular consultation and student voice mechanisms.
  - Ensure information about support is visible and accessible at all stages: interview, enrolment, induction, and throughout the academic year (e.g. posters, digital platforms, 1:1 meetings).
  - Maintain accurate records of support provided, and use data (attendance, retention, achievement) to evaluate effectiveness and inform strategic planning.
  - Share insights and feedback with relevant college committees to embed a whole-college approach to supporting Care Experienced students.
  - Work collaboratively with external agencies to ensure accurate identification, effective support, and successful transitions.
  - Provide ongoing CPD opportunities for staff to understand the barriers faced by Care Experienced students and how to respond effectively.
- ~~• The support offered and the delivery will be developed in conjunction with student voice.~~
  - ~~• Information about the support offer will be available at interview and at enrolment through 1 to 1 meetings and information points. Information via posters, hand-outs and electronic formats are also available through the College's website.~~
  - ~~• The DMS will keep accurate records of contacts and support provided. In addition, attendance, retention and achievement data will be used to assess the effectiveness of this support.~~
  - ~~• Feedback about the quality of support will be communicated to relevant college committees.~~
  - ~~• The College will collaborate with Local Authorities and other agencies and providers to ensure accurate identification of Care Experienced students and their attendance and progress.~~
  - ~~• Progression support to enable successful transition to FE, successful learning and achievement and further progression to HE or work.~~
  - ~~• College staff will be able to access training opportunities about the requirements of Care Experienced students and the support available to them. Please refer to the DMS.~~

### 6. Designated Staff with Responsibility for Care Experienced Students

6.1 A member of the College's Governing Body holds designated responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection, which includes oversight of provision for Care Experienced students.

6.2 The Director of Safeguarding and Student Welfare is the Senior Leader responsible for strategic oversight of support for Care Experienced students.

6.3 The Care Experienced Coordinator (DMS) is responsible for leading the

operational implementation and monitoring of this policy. The DMS, alongside allocated Student Welfare Officers, will:

- Liaise with external agencies and internal staff supporting Care Experienced students.
- Coordinate targeted interventions.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive support offer tailored to individual needs.

6.4 All individuals with designated responsibilities for Care Experienced students will receive appropriate and ongoing training to ensure they are equipped to fulfil their roles effectively in line with statutory and best practice guidance.

~~A member of the College's Governing Body has responsibility for Safeguarding Young People/Child Protection, and this includes responsibility for Care Experienced students.~~

~~The senior member of staff with responsibility for Care Experienced students is the Director of Safeguarding and Student Welfare (Senior Leader for Care Experienced Students).~~

~~The Care Experienced Coordinator (DMS) will lead on managing and monitoring the implementation of the policy and procedures. The DMS and allocated Student Welfare Officers will also liaise with external agencies and those members of staff working with or supporting Care Experienced Children. They will also have additional responsibility in coordinating interventions and developing an offer of support.~~

~~All the above will receive appropriate training to allow them to carry out their responsibilities.~~

## 7. Members of Staff

Designated Care Experienced Governor	<del>Marie Woolston</del> Sarah Vaux
Designated Care Experienced Senior Leader (DSL)	Emma Mernagh
Care Experienced Coordinator (DMS)	Helen Hook
Allocated Student Welfare Officers	Michelle McDonnell
	Cherrie Bunch
	Rosie Forman
	Heather Viggers
	Jemma Jerrett
	Sarah Stevens Mount
	Paige Collins
	Natasha Smith
	Samantha Anderson
	Kirstie Bottiglieri
	Jennie Bowes
	Mia Franklin
	<del>Clare Carruthers</del>
Allocated Student Welfare Assistants	Lorna Ridley
	Alice Wood
	Lorette Green

## 8. Responsibilities of Designated Care Experienced Governor

### 8.1 The designated Governor will:

- Monitor the College's implementation of the Care Experienced Policy, associated procedures, and strategies to promote the achievement, wellbeing, and progression of Care Experienced students.
- Ensure that a senior member of staff is appointed with clear responsibility for leading and coordinating support for Care Experienced students.
- Champion staff development by ensuring that relevant staff receive appropriate training on the needs, experiences, and challenges faced by Care Experienced students.
- Report annually to the full Governing Body on safeguarding and child protection matters, including the attainment, retention, and progression of Care Experienced students, as part of the College's wider commitment to inclusion and equity.

### ~~The designated Governor will:~~

- ~~• Monitor the College's implementation of the Care Experienced policy and related procedures and strategies to promote the achievement and well-being of this vulnerable group.~~
- ~~• Ensure that the College has a senior member of staff with responsibility for Care Experienced students.~~
- ~~• Ensure all relevant staff receive training on issues affecting Care Experienced.~~
- ~~• Present an annual report to the full governing body on Safeguarding Young People – Child Protection issues including the attainment and progress of Care Experienced students at the College.~~

## 9. Responsibilities of Designated Senior Leader

### 9.1 The Designated Senior Leader will:

- Ensure that a named manager is in place with operational responsibility for supporting Care Experienced students.
- Provide termly updates to the Executive team and Governing Body on the progress, retention, and achievement of Care Experienced students, highlighting areas of success and identifying any emerging needs or gaps in provision. This will be shared at QTL and Safeguarding Committees.
- ~~• Ensure the College has a manager with responsibility for Care Experienced students.~~
- ~~• Inform the Senior Leadership Teams of the progress of Care Experienced students on a termly basis~~

## 10. Responsibilities of Care Experienced Staff

### 10.1 The DMS will:

- Liaise with **Local Authorities** and **Virtual Schools** to ensure the College

is aware of all students with Care Experienced status.

- Ensure that all staff with responsibilities for Care Experienced students receive **appropriate and ongoing training**.
  - Coordinate a **tailored induction programme** to support a smooth transition into college, taking into account individual needs.
  - Facilitate **Support meetings** for each Care Experienced student, involving the student, and their carer / guardian / social worker, where appropriate.
  - Ensure that **statutory meetings** (e.g. PEPs, LAC Reviews) are completed within required timescales and that all relevant documentation is returned to the Local Authority or Virtual School.
  - Promote the **educational achievement** and **wellbeing** of every Care Experienced student, ensuring their personal, emotional, and academic needs are prioritised.
  - Monitor and review each student's **progress and engagement**, setting targets to ensure retention and achievement, where appropriate.
  - Track and respond to **attendance concerns**, ensuring timely intervention and communication with relevant stakeholders.
  - Lead on the **development, implementation, and regular review** of the College's Care Experienced Policy.
- 
- ~~• Liaise with Local Authorities (LAs) to ensure that the College is aware of all students who have Care Experience status~~
  - ~~• Ensure that staff with Care Experience responsibility receive appropriate training~~
  - ~~• Ensure that the transition to college is as smooth as possible through an Induction programme which takes account of their needs~~
  - ~~• Ensure that a one to one is completed for each student in conjunction with the student, the student's foster care and social worker~~
  - ~~• Ensure statutory meetings are completed within timescales and relevant paperwork is returned to the Local Authority/Virtual School.~~
  - ~~• Promote the educational achievement of every Care Experienced student ensuring their personal, emotional, and academic needs are prioritised.~~
  - ~~• Review students' progress regularly and liaise with their Personal tutor to target support appropriately~~
  - ~~• Monitor students' attendance carefully and target support appropriately~~
  - ~~• Be responsible for the writing and updating of the College's Care experienced policy~~

## 11. Identification of Care Experienced Students

11.1 The College provides an opportunity for applicants to self-identify as Care Experienced by ticking a box on the application form. When a student selects this option, the information is securely shared with the Care Experienced Coordinator (DMS), who will make early contact to offer tailored support and ensure a smooth transition into college life.

- 11.2 Students who meet the defined criteria for Care Experienced status are eligible for the Vulnerable Bursary, which is actively promoted through the College website and other communication channels. This promotion encourages disclosure and ensures students are aware of the financial support available to them.
- 11.3 The College maintains strong information-sharing arrangements with Medway Local Authority and Kent County Council, which support the identification and transition of Care Experienced students into further education. However, students placed in the area by other local authorities may not be known to the College unless they choose to self-disclose.
- 11.4 MidKent College is committed to improving its identification and support of Looked After Children and Care Experienced students, recognising the importance of early intervention in raising aspirations, supporting achievement, and promoting positive outcomes.

~~The college offers the opportunity for Care Experienced to tick a box on application to self-identify their care status. When student's tick this box, the information is shared with the Care Experienced Coordinator in order to make contact at the earliest opportunity with an aim to make transition to college as smooth as possible. Defined categories of Care Experienced students are entitled to a Guaranteed Bursary, which is widely promoted through the college website which encourages students to disclose their status. Information sharing on Care Experienced students, progressing to college, is good with both Medway Local Authority and Kent County Council. However, those placed in the area by other local authorities are often unknown unless they self-declare. MidKent College is committed to improving their knowledge Looked After Children in order to support them and raise aspirations.~~

## **12. Confidentiality**

- 12.1 All student records are treated as confidential and are accessed only by staff who require the information to carry out their professional duties. Access is restricted based on the sensitivity and purpose of the information:
- Academic progress reports may be shared with relevant teaching staff, parents/carers/guardians (where appropriate), and external agencies involved in the student's support.
  - Personal or sensitive information (e.g. care status, safeguarding concerns) is restricted to key staff, including the student's Course Tutor, Curriculum Manager, the DMS and the Director of Curriculum.

~~All students' records are confidential and access to them is restricted according to the nature of their content. For example, whilst reports on students' progress are shared with teaching staff, parents/carers and external agency contacts, reports giving students' personal details are much more restricted. Such reports are restricted to the students' Course Tutor, Curriculum Manager, the Designated Member of Staff, and the Director of Curriculum. All records are kept in a secure environment and shared on a~~

need to know basis.

### **13. General Data Protection**

- 13.1 All data relating to Care Experienced students is managed in accordance with the College's General Data Protection Policy, which is fully compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 13.2 Information is collected and held solely for the purpose of enabling the College to provide appropriate support, guidance, and advice to Care Experienced students. This includes facilitating access to financial support, academic interventions, and pastoral care.
- 13.3 All personal data is stored securely and shared only on a strictly need-to-know basis, ensuring that the privacy and dignity of each student is respected at all times.

~~All data relating to Care Experienced will be held in accordance with the College's General Data Protection Policy. This policy conforms to Data Protection. Information on Care Experienced will be held for the specific purpose of enabling the College to put in place any specific support, guidance, and advice these learners may need.~~

### **14. Policy Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

- 14.1 This policy will be formally reviewed bi-annually as part of the College's policy review cycle. However, an interim review may be conducted if prompted by a significant incident, changes in legislation, or updated statutory guidance.
- 14.2 The governance approval process for the Care Experienced Policy involves review by the Executive Team and the Governing Body. Oversight of its successful implementation lies with the Safeguarding Governor and Designated Senior Leader, who are responsible for ensuring the policy is embedded effectively across the college, aligns with safeguarding and support frameworks and satisfactorily meets legislative requirements.

~~The review process will include input from a range of stakeholders, including students, staff, Governors, and external partners, to ensure the policy remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of Care Experienced students.~~

~~The monitoring of this policy will form part of the annual process of review unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review and will involve input from a range of stakeholders including staff, students, Governors, and others.~~