



# Inclusive Employment Toolkit

Your guide to creating  
effective employment  
programmes and  
initiatives for care leavers



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# Foreword

## Welcome to the Care Leaver Covenant's Employment Toolkit, an essential set of inclusivity guidelines for the times we're operating in.

Care Leaver Covenant team have developed this toolkit to equip progressive employers with the necessary guidance and resources to effectively recruit, onboard, and nurture the immense talent of young care leavers.

As employers, you have the opportunity to make a profound impact on the lives of these remarkable individuals who, despite their vulnerabilities, possess exceptional skills and potential.

By recognizing the value that care leavers bring to the workplace, your business stands to gain numerous benefits, contribute positively to society and empower care leavers to thrive.

The toolkit provides practical strategies and resources, ensuring that you can create an inclusive and supportive environment that allows care leavers to flourish within your organisation. From recruitment best practices to ongoing mentorship, the toolkit takes you through key themes and includes examples from the public and private sector, as well as insights from care leavers themselves. It is a strong starting point for any organisation wanting to become more diverse and inclusive.

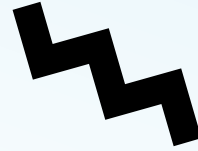


Thank you for reading and being part of this social impact journey with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter Bazalgette".

**Sir Peter Bazalgette,**  
Chair of the Care Leaver Covenant Business Council  
(Non-binding board)

# 10 top takeaways



### 1. Set a strategy

- Set a strategy that feels right for your organisation – will you tweak existing processes, or build a bespoke programme?

### 2. Consider the potential

- Consider the personal qualities and potential of the young people, as well as their qualifications and experience when recruiting. Can you tailor a role for them?

### 3. Find and recruit

- To find and recruit care leavers, consider using the specific communications channels and bespoke approaches outlined on pages 18-22



### 4. Be clear

- Be clear from day one on dress code, points of contact, itinerary, expectations.

### 5. Extra support

- Can you provide extra support, via a loan, to help with pre-payday transport costs? Be clear about pay dates, their post-tax expected pay, and consider a session on understanding payslips. If they are receiving benefits, encourage them to check with their personal advisor on how their wages might impact this.

### 6. Co-create goals

- Co-create goals and objectives with the care leaver, as well as monitoring and review mechanisms that feel constructive, not punitive.

### 7. Celebrate success often

- Dial up motivation and encouragement.

### 8. Be mindful

- Be mindful of the disclosure of the young person's care status.

### 9. Build a strong support structure

- Build a strong support structure within your organisation – remember to assign an approachable buddy, ideally at a junior level.

### 10. Utilise external resources

- Utilise external resources available, especially safeguarding and additional support for care leaver's wellbeing.

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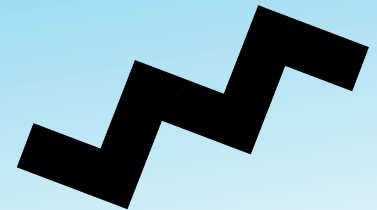
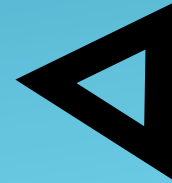
**3. Recruitment**

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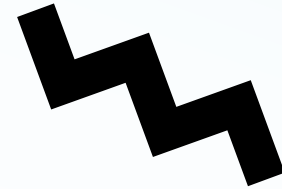
**6. Relationship building**

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# **1. The unique opportunity**



# The unique opportunity

Care leavers are defined as young people aged 16-25 who have previously spent time in care. They are a diverse group and come to the workplace with a huge breadth of backgrounds and life experiences.

In this toolkit, we have sought to take account of this diversity whilst paying attention to common experiences and characteristics, which we know that many care leavers share.

Many care leavers show great determination and resilience in the workplace, wanting to contribute to organisational goals and activities.

**"For any businesses thinking of joining the Care Leaver Covenant, I would say just be there for your [care leaver] employees, understand them and be there to support them."**

Young person, F, working at Merlin Entertainments

For more information about care leavers and why the Care Leaver Covenant was launched, visit [mycovenant.org.uk](https://mycovenant.org.uk)



View a short video about Eden's experience at Merlin Entertainment at [vimeo.com/860246101](https://vimeo.com/860246101)

## 1. The unique opportunity

It is also important to recognise the difficult experiences that many care leavers have faced.

Children are taken into care for different reasons, including family breakdown, abuse, neglect, and parental ill-health. They can be placed far from home, separated from friends and responsible adults, such as teachers, who they have relationships with. Some will permanently lose contact with their biological families.

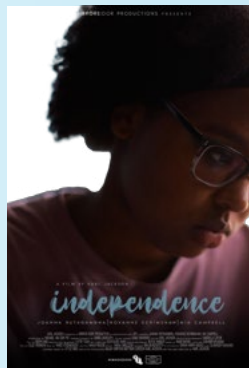
These life experiences often mean care leavers have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers, including: poor mental health, financial difficulties, increased risk of homelessness and poor educational outcomes.

Many care leavers also lack connections in the world of work and struggle to find routes into employment. But with support and opportunity, care leavers can contribute greatly to the workplace.

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

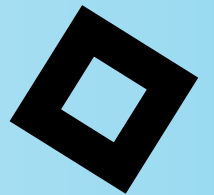
**"After I was taken into care, [I was with a foster family] I was left out of family meals and gatherings. There was a door alarm on my door so I didn't feel a sense of freedom. This is what I experienced when I should have just been having fun as a child."**

Young person, M, working for the NHS



**Watch a film about a young woman called Amba!**

**In 2022 Spectra exec-produced a short feature film by Karl Jackson, about a young woman in her first days after leaving care and moving into her own flat. Email [info@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto:info@mycovenant.org.uk) to receive a password and watch the film.**



## 1. The unique opportunity

Care leavers are a diverse group and all have different experiences in childhood but engaging care leavers in recruitment will have many benefits for your organisation.

Through engaging care leavers your organisation can:

### 1. Foster diversity in your workforce

Care leavers bring diverse backgrounds and perspectives, offering a valuable advantage to your business.

### 2. Empower ambitious individuals

Many care leavers are driven to succeed and willing to work hard when provided with the right support and guidance.

### 3. Create a positive impact

Collaborating with care leavers allows them to thrive, challenging societal stigmas and demonstrating that care leavers can achieve great things.

### 4. Enhance your business

Engaging with young care leavers supports your social impact goals, promotes inclusivity in your organisation, and brings fresh creativity and energy to your workplace on a daily basis.

**"Being a successful and profitable retailer is of course important, but for me, a program like this transcends this. It's about doing what's right, not what is easy.**

**Here in Southampton we were lucky enough to have four eager to learn young people who came with insightful questions and a desire to work for our business.**

**As I spoke to one girl about her enthusiasm for fashion, her beaming smile gave life to the impact this program could have."**

Sean Mark Pearce, Partner at John Lewis Southampton

Supporting the Building Happier Futures Employability Programme

## 1. The unique opportunity

“ 2022 was a really difficult year for me. I had dropped out of college and was struggling with my mental health. I really was not sure what I wanted to do with my future.

I was anxious and put off applying for jobs because I really lacked confidence. I felt so inferior to my friends in university and was terrified of the idea of failing again.

My partner's Dad helped me with the application form and I got my job offer in November. This was such a huge turning point in my life. I felt so much more confident and motivated. The move and new role excited me so much. My line manager emailed me the same week explaining about the role and it fitted my long-term plans so well. He also called me to discuss I have always found phone calls difficult so I was really nervous but hearing how interesting and engaging the position was outweighed the anxiety. I also met with my line manager and a few other members of the team in the office before I started which eased my anxiety. ”

Young person, F, Department for Education

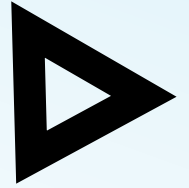
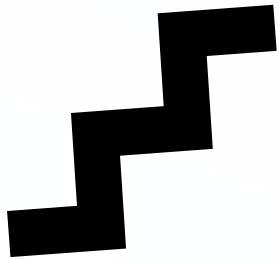
## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

“ I started the care internship scheme in March 2021 and settled in quickly and had a wonderful team/manager to help me. The first year I trained and worked from home, I did feel very nervous about this however I found it really beneficial and I managed to settle in and achieve more than I thought I could. I know this is a great opportunity for care leavers to start work and leads to 'many open doors'. Since finishing the internship scheme, I was given a full permanent place here, and it's been 2 years now since I joined. I've achieved more than I ever thought I could. It just goes to show that it doesn't matter where you come from or how you got there so long as you prove to yourself that you can do it and you are capable of anything. ”

Young person, F, HMRC



# 2. Building a strategy



## 2. Building a strategy

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

Before getting into the detail of job specifications, it is important to set a strategy that works for your organisation.

Decide whether you are going to a) build a new bespoke initiative for recruiting care leavers, b) tweak existing processes or c) something in between.

Since the [Covenant](#) launched in 2018, organisations of all sizes have signed up, from small family businesses to the NHS, the largest employer in Europe. All organisations are different and your way of engaging and employing care leavers will to be tailored to your organisation's culture and processes.



If you're not sure what would be best for your organisation, the bullet points below will hopefully help guide you...

### Building on existing processes

This might be a good fit for your organisation if...

- Your organisation already has strong internal HR/people processes for working with groups from minority backgrounds
- You have limited internal resources for building a bespoke programme
- You are new to hiring individuals with specific needs, and want to explore ways to make your existing processes work for this group

### Create a Bespoke Programme

This might be a good fit for your organisation if...

- You feel your existing processes are not sufficient - and it might help to build a unique, distinct programme that will more effectively meet the needs of young care leavers
- You have internal support and resources to build new processes in according with this guidance
- You have already tweaked existing processes to engage care leavers and you want to try a more bespoke approach



**"I've worked with the Covenant team, building opportunities for young people, for almost five years – firstly with a massive multinational company and now with my current employer, GMI. I really believe that companies of all sizes can create support offers for care leavers. If you can get senior buy-in and you have the will to support young people, you can overcome certain challenges that SMEs might face in signing up to programmes like the Covenant."**

Claire Preston, GMI Construction Group Ltd.



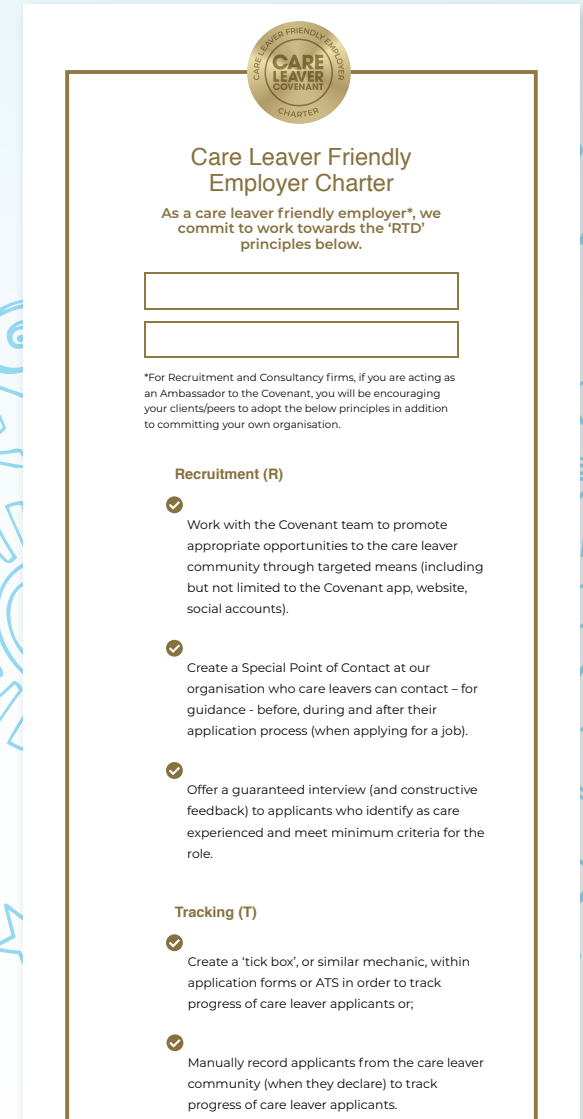
If you decide that tweaking what you're doing already is right for your organisation at the moment, read on:

### Building on existing processes

#### 5 things your organisation can do to get going:

- Enlist senior sponsorship within your organisation
  - Sign a Statement of Intent on the Care Leaver Covenant website and speak with Covenant team about creating an initial published offer.
  - Work with HR/People teams to map out current employee journeys and identify a) what cannot be changed b) what could be changed quickly and easily and c) what could be changed in the medium term.
- Identify roles / vacancies that would be most suitable for a diverse group of 18-25 year-olds and identify, where applicable, key requirements E.g. driver's license or a particular qualification.
  - Review and, when applicable, sign up to the principles of the Care Leaver Friendly Employer Charter (pictured right) at [mycovenant.org.uk/support-the-covenant/care-leaver-friendly-employer-charter/](https://mycovenant.org.uk/support-the-covenant/care-leaver-friendly-employer-charter/)

**NOTE: Tips on creating a bespoke strategy are on the next slide!**



The image shows a document titled "Care Leaver Friendly Employer Charter". At the top left is a circular logo with the text "CARE LEAVER FRIENDLY EMPLOYER", "CARE LEAVER COVENANT", and "CHARTER". Below the logo, the title "Care Leaver Friendly Employer Charter" is centered. Underneath the title, a paragraph states: "As a care leaver friendly employer\*, we commit to work towards the 'RTD' principles below." There are two empty rectangular boxes for a signature or stamp. Below these boxes, a small note reads: "\*For Recruitment and Consultancy firms, if you are acting as an Ambassador to the Covenant, you will be encouraging your clients/peers to adopt the below principles in addition to committing your own organisation." The document is divided into two sections: "Recruitment (R)" and "Tracking (T)". Each section contains a list of bullet points, each preceded by a checkmark icon. The "Recruitment (R)" section has three bullet points, and the "Tracking (T)" section has two bullet points. The document is set against a light blue background with decorative elements like stars and swirls on the right side.

**Care Leaver Friendly Employer Charter**

As a care leaver friendly employer\*, we commit to work towards the 'RTD' principles below.

[Signature Box]

[Signature Box]

\*For Recruitment and Consultancy firms, if you are acting as an Ambassador to the Covenant, you will be encouraging your clients/peers to adopt the below principles in addition to committing your own organisation.

**Recruitment (R)**

- ✓ Work with the Covenant team to promote appropriate opportunities to the care leaver community through targeted means (including but not limited to the Covenant app, website, social accounts).
- ✓ Create a Special Point of Contact at our organisation who care leavers can contact – for guidance - before, during and after their application process (when applying for a job).
- ✓ Offer a guaranteed interview (and constructive feedback) to applicants who identify as care experienced and meet minimum criteria for the role.

**Tracking (T)**

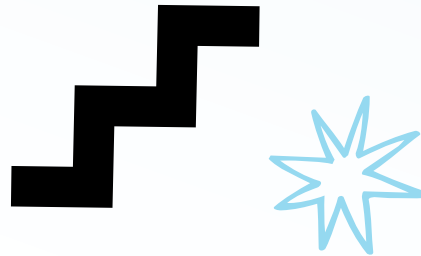
- ✓ Create a 'tick box', or similar mechanic, within application forms or ATS in order to track progress of care leaver applicants or;
- ✓ Manually record applicants from the care leaver community (when they declare) to track progress of care leaver applicants.

# If you're ready to create your own programme, read on!

## Create a Bespoke Programme

### 5 things to consider:

- Have you signed a Statement of Intent on the Care Leaver Covenant website – [mycovenant.org.uk](https://mycovenant.org.uk) – and spoken with the Covenant team to gain initial knowledge and insight?
- What barriers might you face and who, within your organisation, can help remove barriers?
- How much time and funding are you able to invest and do you need to link that to employment 'outcomes' E.g. job starts or interviews conducted?
- Do you have the skills and experience within your current workforce to operationalise the programme? If not, what do you need to bring in? What external partnerships do you need to pursue?
- Do you have specific vacancies/job types linked to the programme?



Learn about how Amazon began their care leaver support journey with a tweak to existing recruitment processes and gradually developed a bespoke employability programme.

Amazon were an early signatory of the Care Leaver Covenant and quickly developed a number of distinct processes to engage care leavers in recruitment. These were tweaks to existing processes and were informed by experience of engaging and recruiting from other underserved communities.

A dedicated email inbox – [careleaver@amazon.co.uk](mailto:careleaver@amazon.co.uk) – was created and is still in active use, being monitored by a group of workforce engagement personnel in different parts of the country. With young people being encouraged to get in touch directly with Amazon via this mailbox, Amazon teams actively support and encourage candidates during the application process, often finding ways to overcome functional and emotional barriers to complete the application.



This process was promoted to local authorities and jobcentres across England. However, the number of care leavers starting jobs, and retaining jobs, was relatively low and Amazon wanted to go further in engaging care leavers and supporting them into meaningful work. This was the motivation for what has become the JOBS Project:

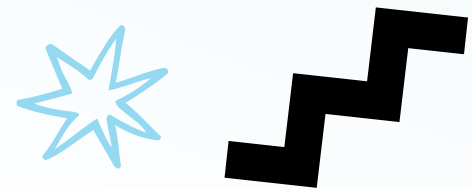
The JOBS project – [www.barnardos.org.uk/the-jobs-project](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/the-jobs-project) – was created in partnership with Barnardo's as an addition to our direct hiring offer with the Covenant.

The project was set up to support the work readiness of care experienced young people who were unemployed and felt furthest from work.



The 10 week course focuses on tackling the broad barriers care leavers often experience to work, including mental health and wellbeing, finances and financial management, drug and alcohol dependency and job seeking confidence.

The course has had over 100 completers, with 80%+ progressing in to work, and 90%+ sustaining work after 3 months.

Amazon have a goal to support 500 care experienced and other vulnerable young people by 2025.

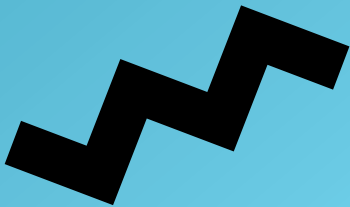


**"Growing up in foster care didn't really help my mental health, and I suffered a lot. I didn't feel fit to be in foster care and struggled to settle in. The JOBS programme has really helped give me focus."**



**"It focused my mind on something better, and I feel like I am on a good path. I enjoy work and I enjoy being in the team. I have hope for the future now and want to continue working here."**

Young person, M, Amazon JOBS project



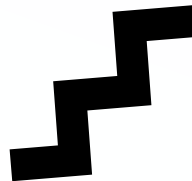
Part of building your strategy will be exploring what types of jobs and roles are, potentially, most suitable to recruits from the care leaver community (specifically on entry-level hires). There are certain things you should think about while exploring this - here are our tips:



### Permanent Roles

#### Great:

- Structure and stability - emotional and financial
- Likelihood of better pay Vs. more casual work arrangements
- Time to settle in, get to know colleagues
- Feeling of belonging as fully fledged employee



### Internships and work experience

#### Great:

- Experimenting with different areas of work
- Time for employer and employee to get to know each other

#### Watch out:

- Short-term arrangement might impact on benefits payment without longterm offer of employment
- Unpaid or low paid opportunities may not be feasible if young person is fully independent.

### Apprenticeships

#### Great:

- Structured learning and work
- Earning a qualification while working
- Although fixed-term, long enough to settle in, get to know colleagues.

#### Watch out:

- Low pay can be a big barrier for people who need to be financially independent. See chapter seven for further resources on creating inclusive apprenticeships.

# 3. Recruitment



### 3. Recruitment

As with engaging any new target audience, recruiting care leavers requires building trust and connection with that community.

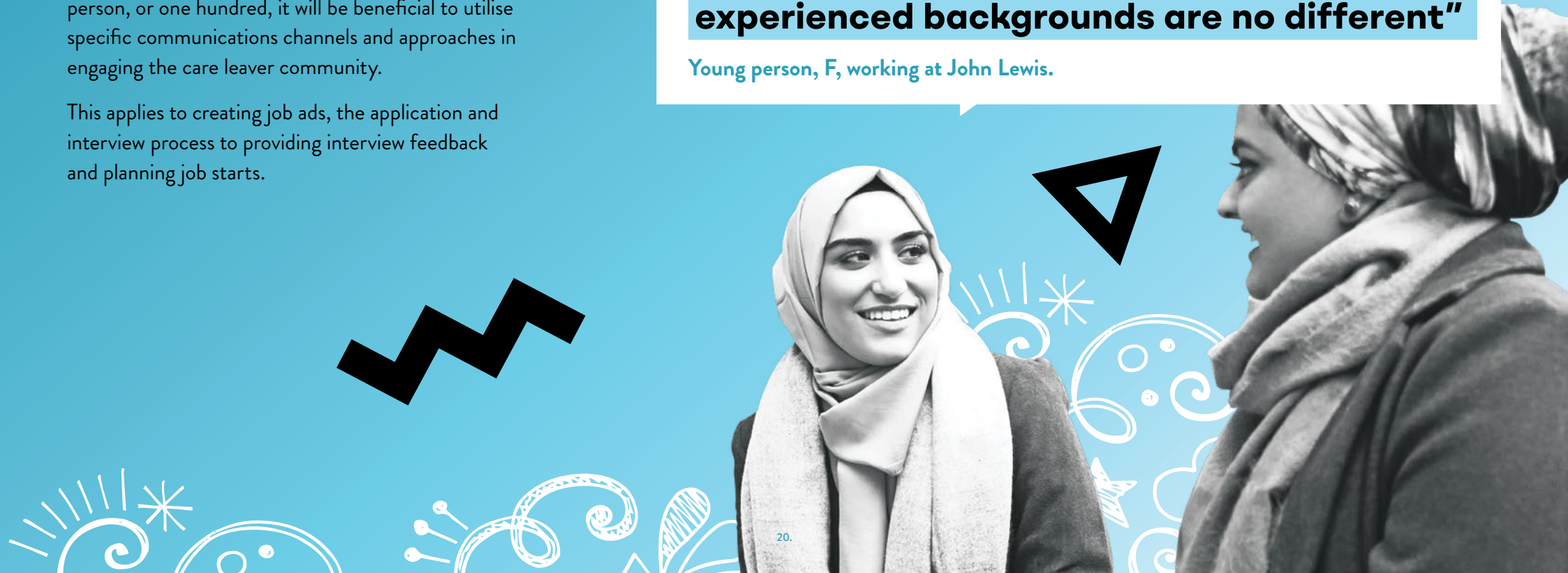
Whether you are aiming to recruit one young person, or one hundred, it will be beneficial to utilise specific communications channels and approaches in engaging the care leaver community.

This applies to creating job ads, the application and interview process to providing interview feedback and planning job starts.

### Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

**"When looking for an employer of choice, candidates want to see themselves reflected in the company through ... a diverse workforce. Those from care experienced backgrounds are no different"**

Young person, F, working at John Lewis.



If you are looking to engage care leavers through recruitment activity, you first need to understand where care leavers are and who they might have existing relationships with.

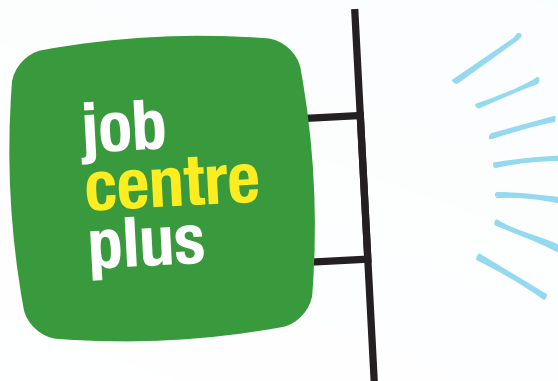
Think about these channels and institutions...

### Local Authorities

Local Authorities provide statutory support for care leavers up to age 25 and should have the most up-to-date record of care leavers living in that area. All care leavers have an assigned Personal Advisor (PA) who is an employee of the local authority, within the 'leaving care' service (part of Children's Services). Building a relationship with the leaving care service is a great place to start.

### Jobcentres (care leaver SPOCs)

With around 40% of care leavers not in education, employment nor training, a large number will be job seeking and registered with their local jobcentre. There is a care leaver Single Point of Contact (SPOCs) in every Jobcentre who can provide support to care leavers. They will also act as a point of contact for the Local Authority Leaving Care team.

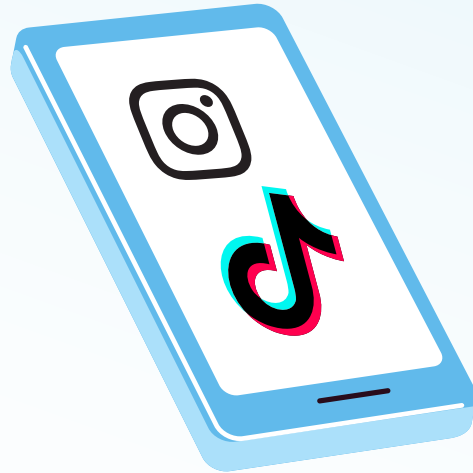
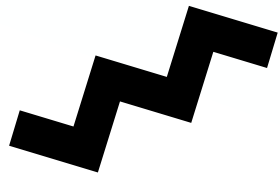


### Care Leaver Covenant and Local Charities supporting care leavers

If you're a Covenant signatory you will know that you can promote opportunities to care leavers, for free, through the Covenant. You can also build relationships with charities – in your local area – that work with care leavers (such as Drive Forward, Action for Children). Along with the local authority, this is a great way to get opportunities directly to young people.

### Further Education Colleges and Universities

Many FE colleges and universities have support measures in place for care leavers and have records of care leavers (though certainly not all care leavers) studying at their institution. Particularly if you're keen to engage young people who are studying specific subjects, communicate with local colleges and unis.

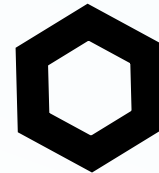


### Social Media

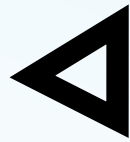
It's important to use channels where young people are most likely to see your messages. LinkedIn can be effective for work-based recruitment, but also consider more creative approaches on more youth-centric channels like TikTok and Instagram.

### Fostering Networks

About two-thirds of all children-in-care are in foster care settings I.E. living with foster carers or foster parents, rather than in local authority housing. Foster carers and networks of foster carers can still be in close contact with young people after they've left care and fostering networks can be a good way to share information.



## 3. Recruitment



Ways you could tweak your recruitment processes to increase engagement with care leavers. You might already do some of this in your recruitment!

### 1. Job adverts

- Focus specifications on attitudinal traits not extensive lists of qualifications
- Use straightforward and accessible language.
- Provide contact details of a named contact and welcome informal enquiries.

### 2. Applications

- If you have direct contact with young people before they apply, consider that it might be the young person's first online application or first time completing an application of the type your company uses.

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

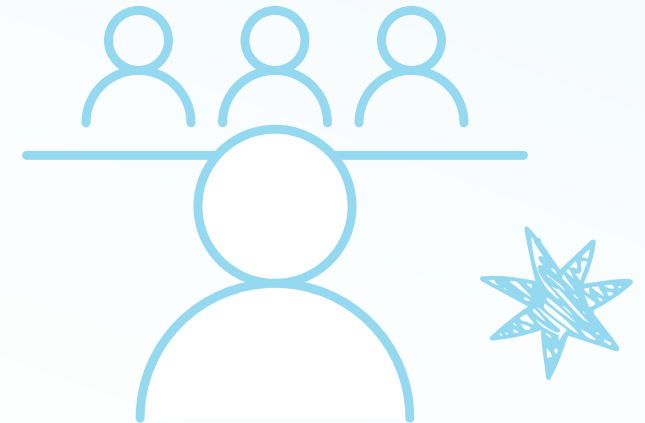
- Understand any functional barriers to completing an application. For example, the young person may not have a laptop or consistent access to the internet.
- Can you provide support overcoming connectivity barriers? For example, can you provide a space in an office for the young person to complete an online application? Could you switch the online application for an in-person discussion?

### 3. Interviews

- Contact the young person to understand functional barriers to completing an in-person interview (for example, travel costs or business attire); or completing an online interview (for example, high quality internet connection for video calling).
- Can you provide support overcoming these barriers? (See p41-42 for more details) At interview, where a young person has little-to-no work experience, encourage candidates to talk about their attitude towards new experiences and work activities.

### 4. Feedback and following up

- Can you make a point of guaranteeing detailed feedback for care leaver candidates?
- Be clear and transparent about next steps following interview: when will candidates receive feedback and decisions and what kind of feedback should they expect.
- Keep in touch with candidates if feedback or follow up deadlines are not met.



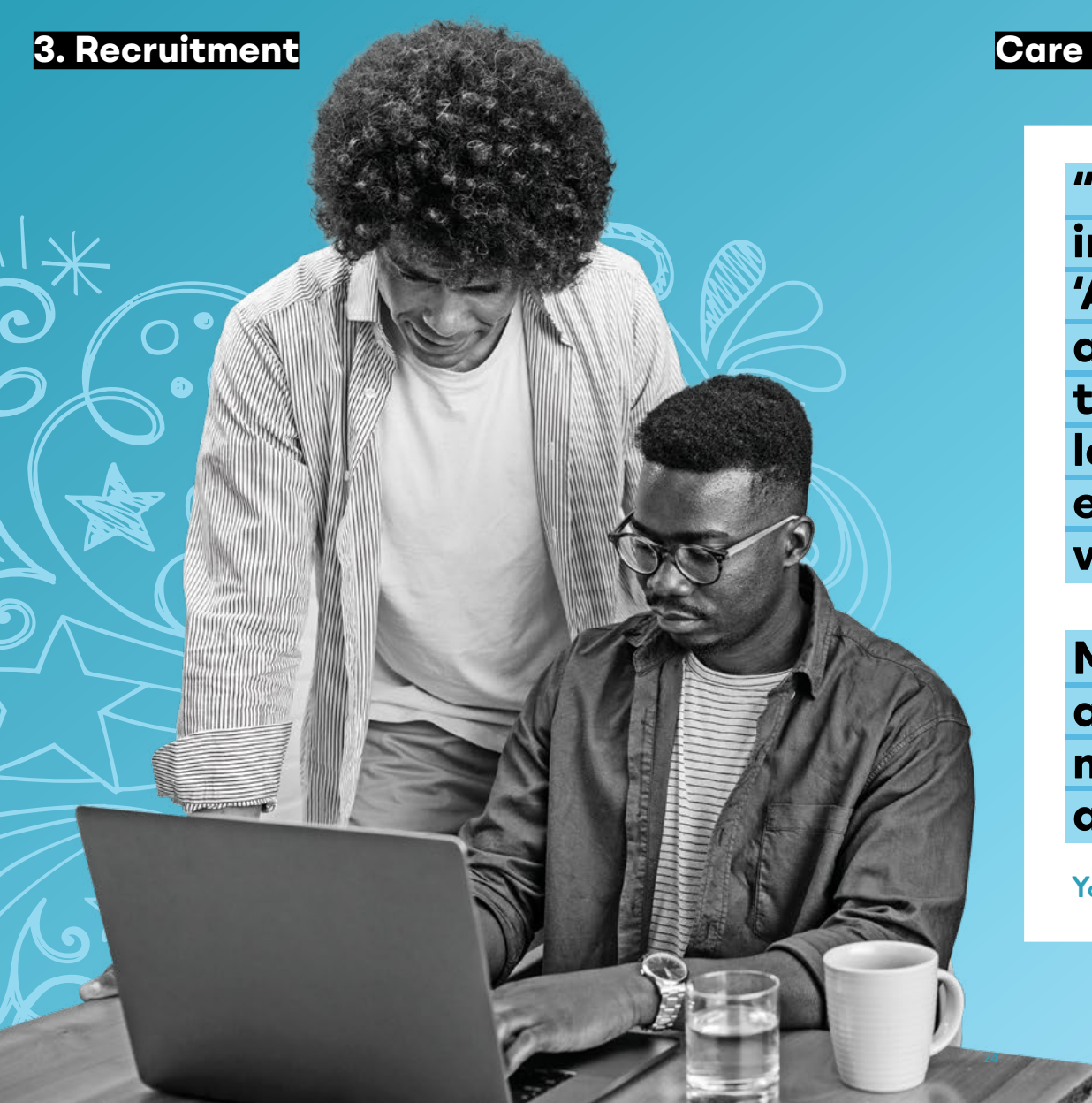
### 3. Recruitment

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

**"I found out about the care leaver internship scheme through the 'After Care' Team at my local authority. I was studying law at the time and already dabbling in local politics and they thought exposure to the Civil Service would be good for me.**

**My personal advisor, foster carer and university tutor all supported me in making an effective written application."**

Young Person, M, working at Border Force, Heathrow Airport



Learn about how the civil service built a national network of recruitment partners - through close partnership working - to offer 136 care leavers internships in 2022.

#### Scheme overview

- The Care Leavers Internship Scheme is a 12-month fixed term appointment at AO (Administrative Officer)/EA (Executive Assistant or EO (Executive Officer) grade for one to two years depending on the requirements of the role.
- These are AO/EA & EO roles paid at the same salary as any fixed term appointment in the government department that the young person is allocated to.
- In 2022, 136 interns started posts across 26 departments in cities across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

#### A partner-based recruitment strategy with sponsorship and support from the senior ranks.

There is an annual recruitment exercise for the scheme, managed by Dept. for Education (DfE) HR team. Each summer, DfE's Permanent Secretary (similar to a Managing Director) writes to their counterparts in each Government Department, inviting them to identify the number and locations of posts that they would like to fill through the scheme. Government departments then submit bids (in principle) - prior to the application window opening - as the locations of the vacancies need to be made available to potential applicants. Whilst the DfE HR team continue to manage the overall process, all GDs become integral to the scheme as they support with applicant sifting and onboarding for their respective intern hires.

When intern posts have been identified, they are all advertised on the online recruitment site 'Civil Service Jobs' but this is just one piece of the puzzle. The DfE HR team kicks off a process of close

partnership working with 'referral' agencies that work directly with care leavers including:

- Local Authorities: information is sent to Directors of Children's Services (the most senior local govt officials responsible for care leavers) and to leaving care service managers (middle managers, closer to frontline work with care leavers);
- Charities: including all of the charities that are members of the Children in Care Alliance and other smaller charities that work specifically to help care leavers engage in Employment, Education and Training.



Department  
for Education

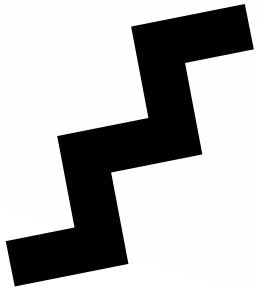
- There is a care leaver Single Point of Contact in every Jobcentre who can provide support to care leavers
- University careers services
- Further Education College Networks
- Local Careers Services As well as this direct outreach, the DfE HR team will oversee social media marketing through Twitter and Instagram, using an effective mix of Government Departments' accounts as well as promotion direct from Ministers, which brings an ambassadorial angle to recruitment.

**DfE offers internships in offices across the UK**



Department  
for Education

# 4. Job starts



# Pay & logistics



Care leaver candidates will be starting their jobs from a variety of backgrounds and contexts.

Their circumstances might be very different to that of a young person living with their parents or sharing a house with friends. Some care leavers will be transitioning from Universal Credit into paid employment.

For hiring managers, and those responsible for communicating job offers, we recommend exploring these points with candidates while they are preparing for their first day.

### Working hours



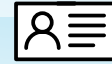
- Does the candidate have non-negotiable commitments outside of work E.g. caring responsibilities that need to be factored into the working week?
- If the candidate is full-time and has never worked full time hours before, would a phased approach, working up to this, be beneficial?

### Pay dates / timeframes



- Let the candidate know exactly when their first pay date will be and roughly how much they will receive after tax (could be part of a broader pay slip intro).
- Particularly if the candidate is beginning their first job, is there an option to pay weekly – for a fixed period – to help with budgeting.

### Identification & bank accounts

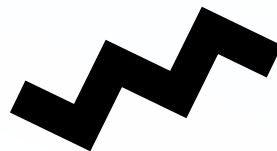


- Find out whether the young person has suitable ID for your employer requirements. If not, can you support with funding a provisional driving license?
- Understand whether they have an active bank account that they can be paid into. If not, Metro Bank have a dedicated and streamlined system for care leavers' opening bank accounts. See [The Care Leaver Covenant site](#) for Metro account application details

### Benefits / other sources of income



- If the role is not paid / not full time, that candidate may continue claiming benefits and the impact of the employment opportunity on those benefits must be considered.
- Check in with the young person about this and encourage them to talk to their Personal Advisor or work coach in jobcentres.



### Transport

- Transport costs to and from work can be prohibitive, especially up until first payday or if the opportunity is unpaid.
- Can you offer support with travel costs for a fixed period or offer a travel loan to help reach payday?



### Amazon JOBS

**The newly launched Springboard Fund gives care experienced young people access to up to £500 in quick funds which help them with the practical costs of entering work: the simple things such as bus passes, new clothes, and even an electric bike!**

**To date 42 applications have been made, with over £10,000 allocated to supporting young people.**



# Planning day one

Hiring managers and recruiters should provide a clear brief and guidance for the young person's first day at work, and encourage the young person to go through this guidance with their Personal Advisor (or Job Coach / other support worker) if they would like to.

While the points below might be standard practice for any new joiner, consider that many care leavers will not have extensive social and family networks in the world of work so casual advice on starting work is often not easy to come by. We encourage sharing this information well in advance of Day One and then checking in with the young person the week before their first day.

### Friendly contact



Provide the candidate with the name and contact details of someone they can get in touch with if they any questions ahead of Day One.

This might be someone who was involved in the application/hiring process or someone they'll be working closely with during their early employment. It's important this person has capacity/ bandwidth to respond to questions.

### Itinerary



Provide a clear sense of what will be expected of the young person on their first day, even if this is just to reassure them that they won't be expected to know/do anything in particular and they will be receiving inductions etc. The more information and reassurance, the better.

### What, where, when, who...



Provide clear instructions for when and where the young person should arrive at their workplace, and who will meet them.

Also provide contact details for who they should speak to if they are running late / having trouble finding the office.

### Dress code



Consider that the candidate might be starting their first job – provide clear dress code guidance, where applicable, and for very flexible dress codes, provide examples of what colleagues wear to the office and what they wear for video calls if working from home.

NB. see resources in chapter seven for info on support with clothing for candidates.

# Day one checklist

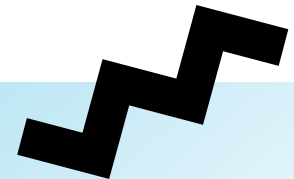


- Provide the candidate with the name and contact details of someone they can get in touch with if they any questions ahead of Day One.
- Provide clear instructions and for when and where the young person should arrive at their workplace, and who will meet them.
- Provide a clear sense of what will be expected of the young person on their first day e.g. dress code, itinerary etc.
- Consider that a care leaver may be experiencing a high level of stress in the early stages of their employment – be warm and welcoming, make adjustments where necessary.
- Create an induction, and welcome, that considers the potential challenges a care leaver may be facing.
- Take the time to get to know the young person and to understand a bit better some of the challenges they may be experiencing.
- During induction, ensure to cover: exactly what is expected of them in their role (avoiding jargon), email / phone conduct and example ways to communicate, office rules / etiquette and conventions, lunch breaks, food and drink, working effectively (scheduling time, taking breaks, managing email inbox, organising their desk), entitlements around pension schemes, annual leave, childcare support, flexible working etc., payslips and payroll, how absence and paid leave are managed
- Think about the role of a ‘buddy’ and/or ‘task manager’ as well as the formal line management and make these introductions on the first day.



**"I felt like a fish out of water at first, I was unsure of what to expect and didn't realise how much support was available. I was hesitant to reach out for help, feeling like an imposter who didn't belong. I remember thinking I was kicked out of school at one point and what if they know... Looking back, I wish I had taken advantage of the support available and had more confidence in myself. I wish I didn't view myself with a negative lens, but rather positively for the strength and resilience I had to overcome setbacks in life. I enjoyed working with developers and business analysts the most as it allowed me to exercise my passion for finding and solving problems. While I struggled with speaking at first, my colleagues helped me gain confidence and realise the value of my ideas."**

*Young Person, M, Department for Education*





Through Sky Up Grants, Sky have been supporting care experienced young people to live independently, providing them with technology, connectivity and events that focus life skills. Now, they're going one step further. Learn about how Sky News are creating a best-in-class environment for new joiners from the care experienced community...'

Working with specialist recruiter, TwentyFive-7, Sky created a 6-month News Researcher internship for a care experienced individual, an opportunity that would bring the young person into the heart of the newsroom. Inspired by Azra Kemal, a member of

**"Newsrooms should be as diverse as the communities they serve. We want to break down barriers to access and create new training opportunities."**

Louise Hastings, Managing Editor, Sky News

the Sky News team who tragically died in 2020, the Internship initiative aims to create a more diverse newsroom and reflect the diversity of Sky News' audiences.

At each step of the process, Sky News and TwentyFive-7 supported candidates in a tailored way, with a particular emphasis on giving the successful candidate a great introduction to the fast-paced newsroom – a distinctive working environment

### Application process

- All marketing and promo material – across recruiter sites and social media - highlighted that care leavers were encouraged to apply.

- TwentyFive/7 sought referrals from FE colleges, universities, local authorities, charities and fostering networks in the areas surrounding Sky News' office in West London – building personal relationships in these frameworks led to strong interest from young people.

### Interview process

- **CV Polish** – 10 people shortlisted and four selected for a final interview. Candidates were also supported with CV preparation, which is intended to support candidates beyond this one application process.

- **Pre-Interview Coaching** – we worked with candidates to build confidence and preparedness ahead of interviews, aiming to demystify the interview process and encourage candidates to see the Sky News team as supporters, rather than evaluators.
- **Interview Wardrobe** – we introduced candidates to the brilliant team at [smartworks.org.uk](https://www.smartworks.org.uk) who provide personalised wardrobe consultations and clothing for interviews and job starts.

### Preparing for job starts

**Site visit** - facilitated an office and newsroom tour at Sky Campus so the candidate could become familiar with the office before their first day, and meet their 'buddy' – making connections before Day 1!

**Coaching sessions** – Ahead of the candidate starting her internship, we conducted coaching sessions to build confidence and work readiness, discussing the kind of work they might do, what they wanted to focus on and get out of the experience, as well as foundational tips about work and office culture.

**Line Manager Training** – as well as working with the successful candidate ahead of their job start, we also made sure the candidate's line manager was educated about care leavers and trained on specific themes like:

- Understanding the care system and the challenges faced by some care leavers
- Building an empathetic and supportive workplace culture
- What to do if you need support as a line manager
- Providing effective support and development opportunities

### Post job start support

**Bi-weekly check ins** – after the candidate has begun their Internship, we continue to support in the candidate as a trusted and consistent cheerleader, external to Sky News. These check ins cover:

- Overall wellbeing: commuting and office culture; personal matters affecting professional performance

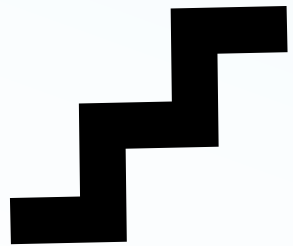
- Concerns or frustrations, any issues they feel uncomfortable to raise with colleagues / line managers

NB. these check ins can be reduced in frequency at the candidate's wishes – they are intended to support where needed.

**Management meeting** – TwentyFive/7 and Sky News also continue to check in following the candidate's job start, creating a collaborative support structure for the candidate. These meetings – which should be phased out over 3-6 months, can cover:

- Candidate performance
- Training / other support needs
- Future opportunities / developmental opportunities (E.g. could an Internship turn into a permanent role?)





# 5. Warm welcomes



## 5. Warm welcomes

Starting off in a new job can be a mix of excitement and anxiety for anyone. These feelings might be enhanced for care leavers.

Consider that a care leaver may be experiencing high-level stress in the early stages of their employment, which could be linked to a history of not feeling valued, not having been in professional settings before, lack of experience of strict deadlines, lack of confidence and self-belief, mental health issues or even practical challenges surrounding housing and financial stability.

Creating an induction, and welcome, that considers these potential challenges will give candidates the best chance of embracing their early days in work and starting to build confidence and competence in their work.



## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

**"When I got offered my current job I said to my family and friends, "If I have to do data and spreadsheets I would probably quit. But now my favourite part of my role is working with data. I make spreadsheets outside of work to track my finances. What a change! My role and team surpassed my expectations, I genuinely could not have found a better fit."**

Young person, F, working at the Department for Education

# Creating a warm welcome

For line managers and colleagues creating the induction plan, consider the following points:

- Exactly what is expected of them in their role (avoiding jargon)
- Email / Phone conduct and example ways to communicate
- Office rules / etiquette and conventions
- Lunch breaks, food and drink
- Working effectively (scheduling time, taking breaks, managing email inbox, organising their desk)
- Entitlements around pension schemes, annual leave, childcare support, flexible working etc.
- Payslips and payroll
- How absence and paid leave are managed



## 5. Warm welcomes

### Be mindful of disclosing a young person's status as a care leaver

A young person's status as a 'care leaver' should be handled sensitively - line managers and colleagues should speak with the young person about how best to do this.

Most care leavers will want to choose when and to whom they disclose their care leaver status. Hiring managers and colleagues should not use care leaver status as a 'label' to describe the young person, even if the intention is to be supportive.

We encourage colleagues to have a discussion with the young person periodically about who, within the organisation, they feel comfortable sharing their care status with.



## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

“I've been in and out of care since age 6, so I'm familiar with the challenges care experienced people have and the prejudices that can come with that. So, I am extremely grateful for the opportunities and career that the care leaver internship afforded me.

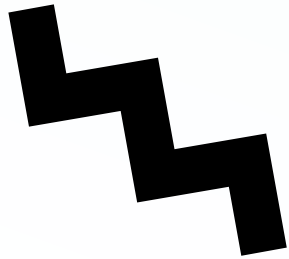
I never thought I'd be capable of doing a job titled, 'Risk Analyst' so I started the job thinking I might fail. Working at home and not having a human connection of being in the office made it harder to connect with my colleagues and fully envelop myself in the work culture at first.

I also never mentioned about being in the scheme, in case people thought differently of me, or thought I wouldn't be capable. I learnt quickly that my department has a strong ethos of helping each other out.

I've met so many wonderful people who supported and encouraged me, and I got involved in so many development opportunities. I even met some people who shared with me that they'd also been through the scheme. This gave me the confidence to finally share my experience with others.”

Young person, F, HMRC

# 6. Relationship building



## 6. Relationship building

Having positive relationships in the workplace is central to many organisations' inclusivity ambitions, and crucial to a young person's ability to thrive in employment.

While many care leavers will thrive with the same reporting and support structures as any other new hire, other young people will benefit from a stronger scaffolding of support around them, especially in the early days.

Think about the role of a 'buddy' and/or 'task manager' as well as the formal line management role. You could also facilitate the young person working with a mentor who's external to your organisation. Check out additional resources in chapter seven for ways to organise this.

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

We've illustrated potential roles below:



**Line manager**

- Formal professional development support
- Structured check-ins and appraisals
- Experienced in managing new joiners



**Task manager**

- Structured check-ins about specific tasks
- Works in same team / strong awareness of candidates work load and activities
- Line management experience not required



**Young person**



**Buddy**

- Informal check-ins about anything work related
- Doesn't necessarily work in same team but understands candidate's role
- 1-2 years into role so empathises with being new/junior
- Line management experience not required



**Mentor**

- External to the organisation
- Tightly structured in order to make expectations and arrangement very clear E.g. meet fortnightly for 12 months
- Mentor has completed mentor training and safeguarding training; can provide a perspective on the industry the young person is working in but does not need expertise.

Care leavers joining your organisation are individuals and require different levels of guidance and management styles.

As a professional development exercise, and to give care leavers the best chance of thriving in their new roles, we encourage line managers, task managers and buddies (or similar roles with different titles) to complete safeguarding training and a form of line management training that is tailored to working with care leavers.

There are various organisations that deliver this training - check out Chapter 7 - further Resources.

**"Each Care Leaver intern is different and has different needs. Our pasts/ trauma affects us differently. The best advice is to build a strong relationship, keep open and honest communication and have patience."**

Young Person, F, Dept. for Education



Although the emphasis of this Toolkit is on recruitment and onboarding, we hope you will think about career development for any care leaver recruits and, from the start, set goals and objectives with them as you would with any new joiner.

Consider the following areas:

### Create achievable and clear goals and objectives

Set clear objectives from the outset and consider co-creating these with the young person.

These should be measurable and should relate to the desired outcomes for care leavers. If the young person is on a fixed-term appointment, it is important to discuss enhanced career progression opportunities.

Take the time to understand the young persons' aspirations and how this can be supported.

### Monitoring and review mechanisms that are highly constructive and encouraging

Set clear objectives from the outset and consider co-creating these with the young person.

These should be measurable and should relate to the desired outcomes for care leavers. If the young person is on a fixed-term appointment, it is important to discuss enhanced career progression opportunities.

### Celebrate successes more often

Regular monitoring and review mechanisms should be established to track progress against the young person's goals and objectives, as well as the programme's goals and objectives.

This could include regular 1-1 meetings, feedback sessions, systems that are able to track progress and other key metrics.

### Make meetings feel less scary

Many care leavers have never worked in a formal office environment, and some additional reassurance can help a lot in the first weeks.

Explain what each meeting is about in advance and how they are expected to participate - eg. whether note-taking is needed.

Clarify - is it in-person or remote? If it's remote, ensure the young person understands if a smart dress is required for Zoom or not.

Appreciate that sometimes making lots of eye-contact in meetings can be overwhelming for some. Consider suggesting a walking meeting for 1:1 catch ups, as this may help the young person feel more at ease.



# Supporting young people in challenging scenarios

There are a variety of issues that may challenge care leavers to thrive and perform at their best in work. e.g. anxiety, a difficult situation with a friend or family member, an ongoing mental health issue or practical problems with their commute, housing or finances. Lots of this is common across all colleagues but circumstances may be more acute for a care leaver.

It is important to identify the issues causing disruption and work with the young person to identify what steps could be taken to help resolve the situation in a way that they are happy with.

Chapter seven includes a lot of support resources which you may find helpful!

### If the young person is often late

Take time to talk to them to discuss why this might be. They may just need additional support planning their morning routine, or travel route. For many young people, this may be the first time they are commuting regularly and an empathetic approach will help greatly.



The John Lewis Partnership put strong relationships at the heart of their bespoke programme for those who are care experienced, which is one strand of their Building Happier Futures initiative.

### How it works

#### Our aims

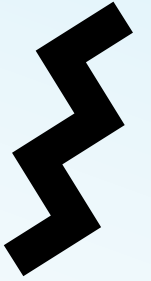
- Be the employer of choice for young people who are care experienced. We want to support them in finding meaningful long-term employment at the John Lewis Partnership or with other employers
- Support children in care to equip them for happier futures through partnerships with the voluntary and charity sectors.
- Raise awareness of the inequalities faced by those who are care experienced, empowering them to tell their own stories in their own words.

#### Planning

- Identify roles based on great culture, vacancies and good public transport links
- Work with local authorities (and/or charities) to signpost the programme and reach care experienced people
- Led collaboratively by a central team and leads and buddies in each location
- Care Experience awareness training for people managers and buddies

#### Drop in & tour

- The first time that the care experienced people meet the teams, this half day session gives them chance to see behind the scenes and make contact with the people who will support them during the programme. This is both educational and reassuring.



### Work experience

- Gives a true experience of work, providing real life examples in readiness for interviews and a chance to “try before you buy” ahead of interviews. Work experience includes a session on “how to ace your interview”.

### Application

- Vacancies held specifically for the care experienced people and interviews guaranteed for those who attended work experience
- Interview questions shared in advance which reduces anxiety and enables preparation
- Key contacts met during drop in and work experience hold the interview

### Support

- Offered a mentor after 6 months in role
- Dedicated Wellbeing support via our internal Wellbeing Support Team
- Ongoing buddy assigned



The John Lewis Partnership has woven its Building Happier Futures Programme into its strategy and key performance indicators, and directly linked this programme to the organisational Purpose of ‘Working in Partnership for a Happier World’

# 7. Useful resources



## 7. Useful resources

The Care Leaver Covenant team have a phrase, 'Universal Family', which we use to describe people, companies and networks coming together to support care leavers. We don't expect any one company to have all the resources required to support every young person's needs.

On the following pages are a list of useful resources covering different types of support. If you would like an intro to a company listed here, or a bit more info on any of the resources, please get in touch: [info@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto:info@mycovenant.org.uk)

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

### Support resources for care leavers

#### Become

A charity for children in care and care leavers who run a helpline (0800 023 2033) for care leavers to get practical and emotional support - or visit: [www.becomecharity.org.uk/](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/)

#### Young Minds

Free 24/7 support across the UK for young people experiencing a mental health crisis Text YM to **85258** or click here and visit [www.youngminds.org.uk/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/)

#### Mind infoline

Information on mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and advocacy services – email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk) or Text: **86463**

#### Catch 22

[www.catch-22.org.uk](http://www.catch-22.org.uk)

#### Career Matters

[www.career-matters.org](http://www.career-matters.org)

### Support resources for workplace mental health

#### Mind

How to Support Staff who are experiencing a mental health problem: [www.mind.org.uk/media/550657/resource4.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/550657/resource4.pdf)

#### Mind

How to implement the Thriving at Work mental health standards in your workplace: [www.mind.org.uk/media/25263166/how-to-implement-the-thriving-at-work-mental-health-standards-final-guide-online.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/25263166/how-to-implement-the-thriving-at-work-mental-health-standards-final-guide-online.pdf)

For the full set of free resources from Mind, visit [www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/useful-resources/](http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/useful-resources/)

## 7. Useful resources

### Apprenticeships

[apprenticeships.gov.uk](https://apprenticeships.gov.uk)

For information about supporting a young person with an Apprenticeship, and accessing bursaries, see:

<https://apprenticesupportcentre.apprenticeships.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/12245557406610-Support-for-Care-Experienced-Apprentices>

### Organisations that deliver line manager training with Care Leaver focus, include, but are not limited to:

#### Drive Forward Foundation

<https://driveforwardfoundation.org/>

#### Barnardos

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/>

#### Who Cares? Scotland

<https://www.whocarescotland.org/>

#### Become

Become charity - offer care advice line/coaching/link up sessions and help to navigate higher education.

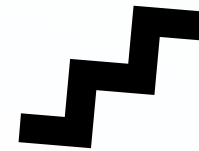
<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/>

## Care Leaver Covenant - Inclusive Employment Toolkit

### Care Leaver Covenant

The Care Leaver Covenant has a wide range of offers and opportunities exclusively for care leavers on our site. In addition to support on applications for work, training and education, our partners offer utility bill discounts, easy banking set up with Metrobank and much more.

Visit [mycovenant.org.uk](https://mycovenant.org.uk) to browse local offers.



# Glossary of terms

## Care leavers

Care leavers are defined as young people aged 16-25 who were in care for a period of at least 13 weeks, some of which must have been after their 16th birthday.

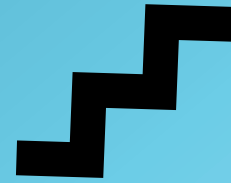
## Personal Adviser (PA)

All care leavers are entitled to support from a PA until age 25. The PA's role is to help care leavers access support from mainstream services (e.g. housing, health, benefits); and to provide practical/emotional support to help them prepare for/cope with the challenges of living independently.





# Inclusive Employment Toolkit



Learn more about and sign up to the  
Care Leaver Covenant at [mycovenant.org.uk](https://mycovenant.org.uk)

Get in touch with the Care Leaver Covenant  
team at [info@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto:info@mycovenant.org.uk)



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