

Action for Children recognise external factors can affect young people who are at greatest risk of withdrawal from learning, non-attainment and poorer long-term positive outcomes. This is particularly relevant within young people, who have been in care or who are referred to as “Care-Experienced”. Young people who have interacted with the care system, whether looked after at home (e.g. under a compulsory supervision order) or looked after and accommodated away from home, often reach lower attainment levels than their peers. The lack of predictability, discipline and support network for care leavers often draws the focus away from their education. Poor attendance and periods out with education can result in young people struggling to obtain the required grades to continue into higher/further education or feel able or confident to achieve. Additionally, concerns around housing and health can also affect care leavers confidence and their circumstances to commit to remain in education.

Need for the STAY service

The STAY service understands the positive changes colleges/universities, SFC and the Scottish Government have made to make FE/HE more accessible for care-experienced students. However, retention, completion and success rates for this group remain significantly poor. Therefore, the overall long term aim of the STAY project is that retention and attainment rates for care-experienced learners in the selected colleges do not differ significantly from the performance levels of the overall student population. (Scottish Funding Council National Ambition); there is **‘equal outcomes between care-experienced students and their peers by 2030’**.

We recognise that all colleges in Scotland offer traditional high-quality student support service covering issues like general course work support, admissions information, funding advice, bursary information, careers guidance and emergency support. But as a student from a care-experienced background, where can you turn for help when your personal circumstances reach beyond the boundaries of this traditional student support?

Our STAY programme aims to work alongside the existing college student support to offer care-experienced students an individual, personal and tailored service that crucially provides support outwith the college setting. This community-based provision offers students an enhanced student support service both at home (within the community) and at college.

We ensure that any student in need of additional support during their course can go on to access the service **at the point of need** (as they need it, when they need it). This reflects the fact that young people’s lives are not linear, and issues and problems can emerge and re-emerge at any point in their college life. Our ‘open door’ approach will ensure the right support for the right student at the right time.

Support

We offer a flexible service offering individualised support for each student in line with their unique needs, issues and circumstances. We seek to complement existing college support to make a positive impact on success rates. We understand that there is always scope for continued improvements in service delivery, reflecting ever changing needs. We will co-design future service provision alongside colleges and students, who contribute their ‘lived experience’. We work with a range of partners and statutory and voluntary services to provide holistic support to young people in need.

Based on our understanding of need to date (but ever evolving), we have identified 3 key support elements where Action for Children can make best impact working within existing college structures. *Students may access any or all of three support elements as part of their college journey and can access support at any time and for any duration to support their needs.*

Flexible Support Elements

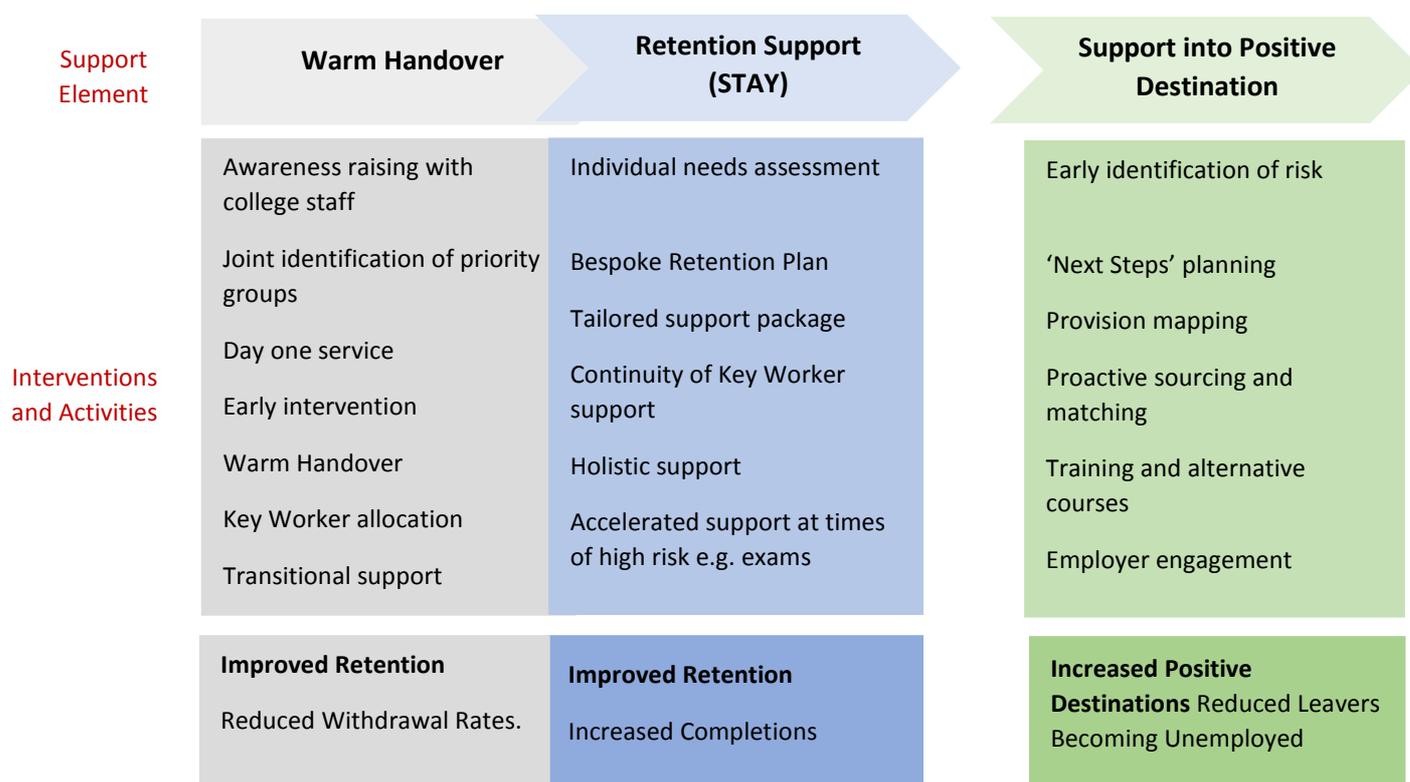
1. **Warm Handover** – Action for Children works with college staff to increase awareness of the issues facing those with care-experience and other priority groups. We will agree joint identification and referral processes to determine students who can benefit from a day one service from the point of admission. Action for Children conduct a ‘warm handover’ with these students as part of their admission and induction to the college. This will be a three-way meeting with the student, college and an Action for Children Key Worker to explain the support available. Our Key Workers will provide consistency and continuity of support for individuals throughout their entire college journey.

2. **Retention Support (STAY)** – our Key Workers will invest time and effort to understand the individual needs of each young person and put in place tailored support packages to improve their outcomes. We will work within existing college support systems to complement and add value to these. Some of the issues/challenges we are supporting students within a 1-1 support model with include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wellbeing/Health support ➤ Family issues ➤ Relationships ➤ Help with accommodation. ➤ Travel ➤ Early mental Health issues ➤ Help to balance learning, work and family/social life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Life Coaching ➤ Study skills ➤ Lifestyle issues, ➤ Help to find part time work ➤ Financial pressures/budgeting ➤ Other learning opportunities ➤ Employability support ➤ Signposting to other services
---	--

3. **Support into Positive Destinations** – we will link with college staff to identify students at risk of leaving college into a negative destination and becoming unemployed. Our Key Workers will accelerate support for these students at the point of disengagement and before they leave college so they can agree appropriate ‘next steps’. Key Workers are knowledgeable about local provision and aware of community support structures.

A Summary of the Proposed Model:



The STAY values : Understanding and helping Care-Experienced Students

Safe space with an open approach: STAY will ensure the right support for care-experienced students at the right time. STAY is open to any care-experienced student who may feel that they need that extra level of support. We will provide a safe space for students to be open and honest about their situation so we can better understand their needs and circumstances.

• **Flexible:** STAY will ensure that students have access the service at the point of need. We know that young people's lives are not linear, and issues and problems can emerge and re-emerge at any point in their college life. As such our flexible service includes out of hours provision, we will offer individualised support for each care-experienced student in line with their unique needs, issues and circumstances.

• **Partnership:** STAY will sit alongside the current provision and support provided by Student Services within the college structure. We will build on these foundations to offer an enhanced student support package. It will give students an inside and outside campus support structure.

• **Co-design:** STAY will evolve as we encourage students to co-design and reshape the service. We want students to take ownership of their service for them to highlight the future support needs, the gaps in current structure or provision. This service is for the students and therefore should be guided by student's needs and wants.

How and what we are doing

STAY commenced this term, on 12th September (Ideally, we would have preferred to start earlier). Next year we will be active throughout the Summer, working with partners to prepare YP for college or to access a place within FE/HE. It will also enable preparation work with the college experienced staff and voluntary sector organisations/schools to promote the service and arrange "Warm Handover" for care-experienced young people.

To date we have

- Supported 94 young people with early help/light touch support (classified as students who have engaged with us for 2 or less interventions/advice or support.
- Supported 22 student with more intensive support services, either due to the nature of need or students who have engaged with STAY on 2 or more less occasions.
- Supported 5 students to access alternative learning, training, job opportunities.
- Assisted the colleges with 2 critical issues faced by 2 care-experienced students.

College participation

Currently we are working within 4 colleges:

- Glasgow Kelvin College – working across 3 college campuses.
- Glasgow Clyde College – working across 3 college campuses.
- City of Glasgow College – working across 2 college campuses.
- West College Scotland – targeting our support at the Greenock campus.

Future discussions and potential developments/ inclusions

Glasgow Caledonian University – Discussions at advance stage on how we can provide a continuum of support throughout the learner journey college ➔ university.

Edinburgh College – Advanced discussions to expand the service to Edinburgh College from January 2020.

STAY launch – On 13th January, hosted by the First Minister at Glasgow Kelvin College. It will include a Q+A session between Nicola Sturgeon MSP and care-experienced students.

Partnership – Numerous discussions (existing and planned) with partners re linking up programmes/services, i.e. Who Cares Scotland, MCR pathways and Glasgow City Council educations services, seamless pathway/additional services/resources for CE students.

Feedback – To date the STAY project has received positive responses and feedback from students, college staff and local partners in fulfilling a gap in current service provision.

Action for Children STAY project paper for Scottish Funding Council's Care-Experienced Governance Group.

Completed by Tony Scally Assistant Director of Business Development. Tony.scally@actionforchildren.org.uk