



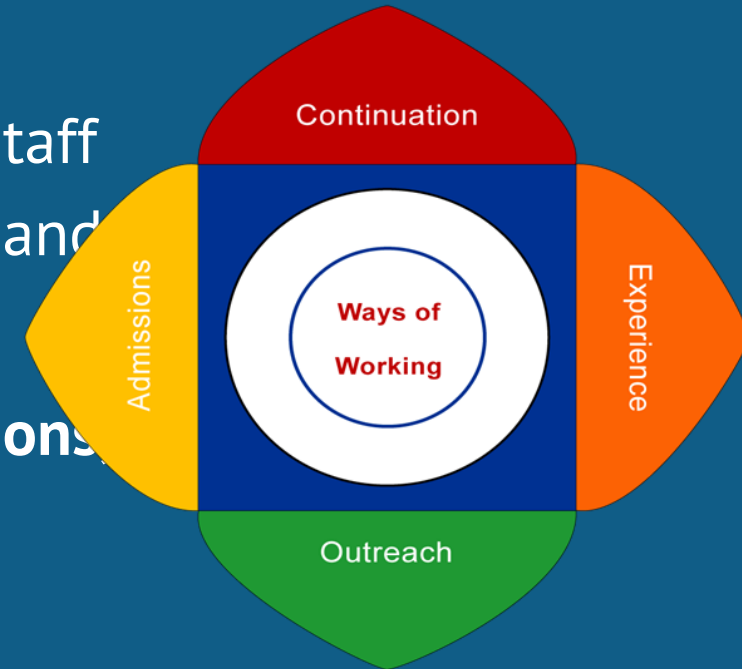
**Bournemouth
University**

Young People in Care: Aspirations and Experiences of Progressing to Further or Higher Education

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BU Fair Access Research Project

- BUs pioneering Fair Access Research project (FAR) - brings together students, the Students' Union (SUBU) and staff from across the University to develop and expand expertise and reflexive practice in the field of fair access to HE;
- Research covers five core areas of work - **Outreach, Admissions, Continuation, Experience and Ways of Working;**
- Feeds into over-arching strategy of Learning Together to promote equality, opportunity and achievement.



The Care Leavers' Strand

- BU currently has 0.7% intake of Care Leavers
- BU applications from Care Leavers 2010-2014 = 812
 - Faculty of Health & Social Sciences (n=503), Faculty of Science & Technology (n=124), Faculty of Management & Tourism (n=100), Faculty of Media & Communications (n=85).
- *Enrolments* - of the total 812 applications only 130 enrolled
 - due to poorly completed application forms? poor presentation of the candidate during the selection process? candidates choosing another HEI over BU?
 - Do they know how best to apply and be interviewed for a university place?

What we set out to explore...

The National Strategy for Access and Student Success in HE (BIS 2014:50) identified that Care Leavers remain significantly disadvantaged and underrepresented in HE, an issue which is compounded by a 'lack of information and advice at the point of application to university'.

Aim:

- to understand how best to reach out to these young people at the right time and through the most appropriate media and develop and implement suitable communications.

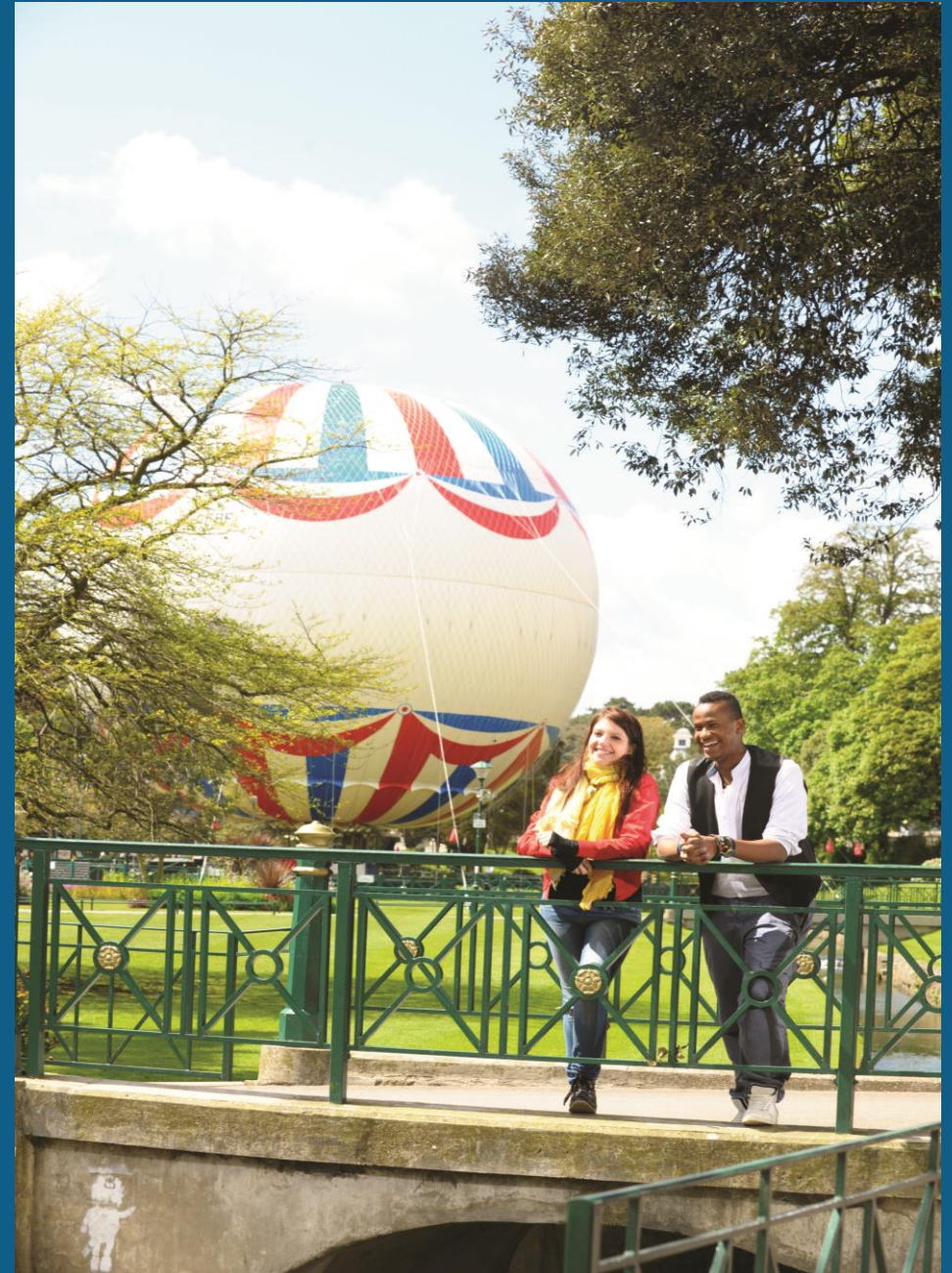
Interviews and Focus Groups with:

- Young people in care (14-18 years)
- Care Leavers now studying at university
- Foster Carers
- Key Workers, Social Workers and Virtual School Teams
- Semi-structured to allow some consistency of approach
- Ethical issues – CRB, responsible adults



Findings

- Labels and assumptions
- Private versus public
- Sources of information
- Money, money, money...
- Influencers and Detractors



The Importance of Relationships

- LACYP with positive relationships ‘do better’ (MacLeod, 2010)
- The ‘visibility’ of meetings (Mannay et al., 2017)
 - Intervention setting, delivery agent, timing and duration (Evans et al.; 2017)
 - “*There’s too much corporate and not enough parenting*” (MacLeod, 2010; p.772)
- Complexities of
 - ‘managing’ multiple relationships (with peers, birth family, foster family, a range of professionals)
 - processes and paperwork (Parker, 2017)

What they say...

Janine: 22 years old, final year BA Social Work

“I think it helps if you got, like, a positive role model. And if you haven’t got that, it’s going to make it a lot harder because it’s quite...I don’t know [pause] When you’re in care and stuff, you don’t have that consistency. So if you’ve got that one person that’s a positive influence, you’re going to do better, aren’t you? Even that one person makes a huge difference. Even though you’ve got like 10,15 staff working there [at the residential home] but if you didn’t get on with them, you are like distracted and got in trouble. When that one person was on shift, she was an angel, do you know, if that makes sense?”

And

“I want to do the graduation thing. That’s like...because I haven’t really achieved much. Like, you know, I didn’t do GCSEs or do the A Levels day, or go to the school prom or anything like that. I know it sounds stupid but I really can’t wait to get my vlye degree and be like, a graduate...do you know? And that’s like the proudest achievement ever“

What they say...

Charlie: 17 years old, FE student aspiring to go to HE

He has lots of 'worries' about his present and future. His main source of advice is from a college tutor because:

*“Trying to explain to my Social Worker when you’ve got to sit down and be like “I don’t know what I want to do”. And I...I need help. It’s hard to do that ‘cause it’s someone that...you’re not that close to. But you’re **supposed** to be close... I mean, I...I can say, I haven’t heard from my Social Worker since before Christmas. I haven’t **seen** her since August. And she’s supposed to check in with me every week. She’s got no idea what I’m doing, if I’m even still on my medication, if I’m even still coming to college. So...”*

Confronting Relationship Challenges

(Duck & Wood, 1995; p10)

Underlying feelings towards the other person are **good**

**Positive
Regard**

Prototypical

Difficulty

Obligation
Binds
Duties

Atypical

Impairing

Teasing
Silent Treatment
Conflict

Underlying feelings towards the other person are **bad**

**Negative
Regard**

**Inherently Negative
Relations**

Bullies-Victims
Enemies

Spoiling

Betrayal
Revenge

I, mine and others – internal and external dialogues

- Dialogical Self Theory (DST) – Hubert Hermans

“As far as *others* have their own independent lives apart from myself (the “actual” others), they are able to agree or disagree with me and have the potential to develop a point of view that I may or may not be able to change. However, as “external positions” in the self, they are placed in a field of tension between the voices of the actual others as independent realities and the voices of the others as constructed or reconstructed on the basis of my imagination of the other and, moreover, under the influence of the needs of the internal positions in the self. In other words, the other has an existence as an outside reality but is also as part of my extended self in which I make something of him. **In this field of tension, internal and external dialogues meet with the potential to correct, influence, and develop each other.**” (2013; p.84, emphasis added)

Concluding thoughts...

- How do we (in HE) work with young people in care and Care Leavers to develop and support their aspirations to progress to FE or HE?
- How to we address some of the conflicts and tensions that are present in some of their interactions with others?
- How can we support and influence some of the mandatory procedures?
- How can we ‘join this all up’?



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