**Equity groups: Out of Home Care (OOHC) students**

Literature Review

The literature highlights out-of-home-care (OOHC) students as one of the most underrepresented groups in higher education (HE) (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2017; Cotton et al., 2014; 2017). This is evident in the extremely low participation rates of OOHC students in HE (McNamara et al., 2019), their significantly low educational outcomes (Harrison, 2019) and the higher retention rates observed among care leavers in HE (Cotton et al., 2014). Research shows that there are many factors that contribute towards the marginalisation of OOHC students in HE. There is a strong consensus in the literature on the paucity of research regarding care leavers in HE, including their transition and educational experiences (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2017; Harvey et al., 2016). In addition, at the federal level, OOHC students are not recognised as an equity group under the Australian government’s national equity framework (Harvey et al., 2016). At the institutional level, findings from McNamara et al.’s (2016) study suggest that there is no collection of institutional data regarding the access, participation and retention of OOHC students in HE. These factors have therefore resulted in the lack of targeted policies and interventions at the federal, state and institutional levels to address the impact of the educational disadvantages experienced by OOHC students in HE. Moreover, Harvey et al. (2015) highlight the pervasive culture of low expectations towards OOHC students, both at the secondary and tertiary levels, which impede their access to HE and their achievement of successful educational outcomes.

To address the educational disadvantages experienced by OOHC students and consequently facilitate their access to and participation in HE, Mendes et al. (2014) highlight the importance of identifying the risk and protective factors which impede or enable care leavers’ participation in universities. Some of the factors identified from Mendes et al.’s (2014) review include students’ pre care experiences (abuse & neglect, highly disadvantaged family backgrounds), in-care factors (which hinders access), including instability in placements and schools, low expectations from social workers, teachers and carers, social problems at school, including discrimination and bullying from students and teachers, and transition from care factors, including abrupt transitions involving withdrawals of government support at a fixed chronological age of 18 years, when young people are finishing or about to finish school (Mendes et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the study also identified in-care factors (which promotes access), including strong personal motivation and resilience, having a close supportive adult, stability in care and school placements that facilitate continuity in school attendance, encouragement and advocacy from carers, teachers, family members and social workers, and integrated child welfare and education case management (Mendes et al., 2014).

Two Australian contributions that relate to OOHC students have emerged from an NCSEHE-funded project. These publications – Harvey, Andrewartha & McNamara (2015) and Harvey et al. (2015) – both point to the difficulties that OOHC students face, but without the recognition afforded to other groups. In order to push their proposal for major reform forward, Harvey et al. (2015) offer a set of 26 recommendations, based on three fundamental ideas:

1. The development of a system to collect nationally consistent data on OOHC students;

2a. Policy reform to facilitate greater recognition of OOHC students by universities – the inclusion of an additional category to be added to the 6 identified equity groups because “the extent and nature of their disadvantage requires tailored policies and specific data collection” (p.6). Universities could collect data on enrolments/admissions;

2b. In the Community/ Care sector, legislative reform is needed to better support children to adulthood; and

3. The need for cultural change: shift culture of ‘soft bigotry’ (low expectations) towards OOHC students (Harvey et al., 2015, p. 6).

The final idea—pushing for cultural change—could easily be applied to all of the equity groups, and is a key theme in the literature that examines the intersections of social justice, social inclusion, equity and teaching and learning in higher education.

Summary written by Anna Xavier and Sally Baker

**References**:

Andrewartha, L. & Harvey, A. (2017). Overcoming adversity: The strength of care leavers in

Australian higher education, *International Studies in Widening Participation, 4*(2), 52–64.

Cotton, D.R.; Nash, P. & Kneale, P. E. (2014). The experience of care leavers in UK higher education, *Widening participation and lifelong learning,* 16(3), 5–21.

Cotton, D.R., Nash, T. & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Research Education Journal,* 16(1), 62-79. DOI: 10.1177/1474904116652629

Harrison, N. (2019). Patterns of participation in higher education for care-experienced

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Harvey, A.; Andrewartha, A.; McNamara, P. (2015). A forgotten cohort? Including people from out-of-home care in Australian higher education policy, *Australian Journal of Education,* 59(2), 182–195.

Harvey, A., McNamara, P., Andrewartha, L. and Luckman, M. (2015). *Out of care, into university: Raising higher education access and achievement of care leavers*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.

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care and access to higher education: a critical review of literature. *Children Australia,* 39(4), 243–252. DOI:10.1017/cha.2014.25

**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Equity groups: Out of Home Care (OOHC) students**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| Andrewartha, L. & Harvey, A. (2017). [Overcoming adversity: The strength of care leavers in Australian higher education](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Overcoming-adversity%3A-The-strengths-of-care-leavers-Andrewartha-Harvey/abc2cf5e322128a89cdbbc4f48bca3e6e3e203bf), *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 4(2), 52–64.  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Higher education; care leavers; out-of-home care; student equity; widening participation* | **Context:** In Australia, there is a dearth of research on the experiences of care leavers in education. While some studies provide significant insights, they focus on a relatively small sample of care leavers. “We know strikingly little about the experiences of care leavers who enter higher education in Australia” (Mendes et al., 2014, p. 249). In addition, current research has documented the challenges and barriers of care leaves in HE, but limited emphasis is given to care leavers who access HE successfully, and their ability to overcome significant challenges.  **Aim:** To explore and understand the self-identified strengths of care leaver students in Australian HE through an analysis of firsthand accounts of care leavers.  **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted across four partner universities, and in three states in Australia. n=35 (6 male, 29 female). An interpretative phenomenological approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) was utilised to analyse data for content and themes.  **Findings:** Range of strengths identified by care leavers in HE include the following:  1)High levels of resilience and adaptability: Major theme in study (1/3 of participants), time in care developed adaptability & resourcefulness 2)Independence and maturity: History of adversity developed maturity levels, greater levels of maturity than similar-aged peers 3)Determination and self-motivation: ¼ of participants  4)Social awareness and emotional intelligence: 1/5 of participants, exposure to negative behaviours and situations developed greater awareness on day-day difficulties individuals face, and a greater understanding of emotions, increased level of empathy 5)Experiences and insight relevant to specific areas of study: 1/5 of participants, care backgrounds provided skills, experiences & mindsets useful to specific areas of study (Nursing, Social Work, Behavioural Science Human Services and Psychology)  **Core argument:** Exploring and understanding the specific strengths of care leaver students in Australian HE enables the reframing of their identities and experiences, consequently creating a more accurate and positive profile of care leaver students as an asset in higher education. This will help in addressing broader stereotypes and institutional cultures in Australian HE. |
| Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2018). [The life course perspective: an integrative research paradigm for examining the educational experiences of adult care leavers?](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091731023X), *Children and Youth Services Review,* 87*,* 69–77.  IRE  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Life course; education; care leaver* | **Context:** ‘The educational progress, experiences and attainment of children in out-of-home care and care leavers continue to be an issue of concern internationally’ (abstract). A range of individual and contextual factors appear to influence the low educational attainment among children and young people who have experienced care. This suggests the need to understand and address these factors to ensure that individuals with care experience are provided with equal opportunities as their peers to achieve successful educational outcomes.  **Aim:** To advocate for the use of the life course perspective as a valuable guiding research paradigm to examine the educational experiences of adult care leavers by illuminating new ways of understanding key issues relating to the education of this group.  **Theoretical Framework:** The life course perspective research paradigm.  **Methodology:** A composite-worked case example is referred to throughout the discussion to demonstrate the potential value of the life course perspective as a guiding research paradigm. The case is derived from the ‘educational life histories’ of several participants in an ongoing PhD research project to form a composite case sample. The PhD study employed is a qualitative investigation of the lifetime educational experiences of adults between the age of 25-35 with a minimum of 5 years spent in care in Ireland. Participants were recruited via care leaver networks and organisations in Ireland, social media, word of mouth and snowball sampling.  **Findings:** 6 interrelated themes in the life course perspective: 1)interplay of human lives and historical time: both individual and family development must be understood within the relevant historical context 2)timing of lives: age at which specific life events and transitions take place (Hutchinson, 2005) 3)linked lives: refers to the interdependence of human lives and the ways that relationships with others can both “support and control an individual’s behaviour” (Hutchinson, 2005, p. 24) 4)human agency: people play an active role in shaping their lives 5)diversity in life course trajectories: a person’s relationships and their social, cultural and historical context influence their life’s trajectory 6)developmental risk and protection: proposes that an individual’s experience of a transition/event will either sustain the individual’s life trajectories or disrupt it (Hutchinson, 2011). Key concepts in the life course perspective: 1) trajectories 2)pathways 3)transitions 4)turning points. The life course perspective provides a framework within which to conceptualise and explore the intricacies and nuances of these individual pathways and how they interact and shape various areas of individual lives. The life course perspective allows for the exploration of research questions as:  1)What is the nature of the educational experiences that adult care leavers have had over the course of their lives, and expect to have in the future? 2)What are the critical experiences in the life course that have influenced the educational experiences of adult care leavers and how have these interacted?  Composite case example: Ben  1) Interplay of human lives and historical context: The value of the life course perspective for interpreting Ben's return to education is seen here as it highlights the interaction of Ben's own agency, the support he received from his sister and aunt, and the impact of relevant national policy in facilitating his return to education. 2)Timing of lives: Ben's case there were a number of key events that took place over his life so far and the timing of these is noteworthy. Ben came into care at the relatively young age of six and as a result of this began school but did so one year behind his peers. Ben also had two subsequent placement moves – one when he was age 7 and one aged 15. 3)Linked lives: The role of linked lives over time can be seen in Ben's life via the supportive roles that his foster parents, teachers, aunt and sister played in his educational journey across his life course. The value of these relationships over time can be viewed as one of a number of key influences on Ben's educational experience. In particular, the connection with Ben's aunt and sister that had been ‘intermittent’ over the years appears to have acted as the catalyst for a turning point with regard to Ben's education as it provided him with emotional, practical, and financial supports he needed to pursue third level education. 4)Individual agency: Ben's expression of agency can be seen in a number of ways including his wish to pursue further education upon leaving school and his reconnecting with his aunt and sister; the life course view on agency as being tied to structural context also appears relevant given that he had to drop out of his post-Leaving Certificate course after a few months due to his financial and housing situation. 5)Diversity in trajectories: While Ben's individual experience is unique to him, his overall educational experiences are perhaps not atypical of other care leavers but represent one of a number of potential educational trajectories that may occur in light of the range of experiences people with care experience may have. 6)Developmental risk & protection: Ben has experienced a number of transitions and turning points throughout his life to date, each directing his life path in a new or continued direction. For example, when Ben came into care and started school this could be considered a developmentally ‘protective’ experience. Similarly, Ben's reconnecting with his sister and aunt served to act as a positive ‘turning point’ in his life. Conversely, Ben's experience of leaving care and ultimately becoming homeless lead him down a developmentally ‘risky’ path, if only for a short period.  **Core Argument:** The life course perspective is an invaluable research paradigm to examine the educational experiences of adult care leavers as it provides a ‘distinctive and integrative *long term,* interdisciplinary, multifaceted, and multidimensional perspective’ (p. 72) and has the potential to capture the ‘fluidity, complexity and nuance of various elements that may influence education’ (eg: human agency, historical context, timing of various life events, critical turning points). |
| Cotton, D.R.; Nash, P. & Kneale, P. E. (2014). [The experience of care leavers in UK higher education](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1474904116652629), *Widening participation and lifelong learning,* 16(3), 5–21.  UK  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Care leavers; non-traditional students; widening participation, student support, resilience* | **Context:** Young people leaving authority care are one of the most under-represented groups in higher education (HE) (p. 5). Children in care have generally poor attainment of education at all levels, and the proportion of care leavers progressing to HE (7%) is tiny compared to non-care leaver entrants (43%) (Driscoll, 2011). Studies of care leavers with successful academic outcomes have identified aspects of resilience which help students overcome ‘risk factors’ (difficulties) by having access to ‘protective factors’ (Stein, 2006, 2008; Driscoll, 2011, 2013; Munson, 2013). Research which identifies types of support provided by the university is therefore urgently needed to ensure that risk factors are minimised and protective factors are increased to ensure successful academic outcomes of care leavers in university (p. 7).  **Aim:** The study aimed to investigate the whole university experience of final year care leavers to identify the following: 1) Perceived impacts of their care leaver status on their experience 2)Difficulties encountered 3)Sources of support and factors that were perceived to have contributed to successful outcomes (completion and attainment)  **Theoretical Framework:** None identified  **Methodology:** A qualitative, interpretive approach was selected (p. 8). Narrative interviews were employed as a specific method of data collection. Narrative accounts of academic and personal experiences were gathered using the critical incident approach (Brookfield, 1987; Trip, 1993). Eight care leavers (females aged between early 20s and early 40s) participated in the study.  **Findings:** Findings show that there is a range of risk and protective factors which impact on the success of care leavers at university, and each individual had a ‘specific set of factors’ (p. 9). (Example of protective and risk factors can be observed in Table 1, p. 10). Key factors which emerge as important in ensuring success of care leavers at university include the following: motivation for participation, preparation for university, academic, personal and financial support for difficulties at university, and the importance of a safety net such as the care leavers’ service (pp. 10 – 18)  **Core Argument:** The actions of universities and their academic and support staff can have significant impacts on care leavers’ success in HE and it is crucial for HE institutions to provide specialized support for care leavers, to ensure that the ‘social status quo’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) is not simply reproduced (p. 19). |
| Cotton, D.R., Nash, T. & Kneale, P. (2017). [Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1474904116652629), *European Research Education Journal,* 16(1), 62–79. DOI: 10.1177/1474904116652629  UK  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Higher education, retention, widening participation, non-traditional students, resilience* | **Context:** Non-traditional students are often underrepresented in HE and whose participation might be limited by structural factors. (Definition of non-traditional students: p. 63). Increased evidence shows that non-traditional students are at particular risk of withdrawal from HE (p. 63). Research with non-traditional students on two distinct but related projects at a UK university led to the consideration of the concept of resilience in helping understand student retention and success.  **Aim:** To explore the potential for using the concept of ‘resilience’ to help understand non-traditional students’ retention and withdrawal.  **Research Questions:** 1) In what ways and to what extent can the concept of resilience be used to help understand individual students’ experiences of HE? 2) In what ways and to what extent can the concept of resilience be used to help universities put in appropriate support for non-traditional students? 3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of resilience as a theoretical approach to understanding retention in HE?  **Theoretical Framework:** ‘Resilience framework’ is used to understand the experiences of non-traditional students.. Other theories used in the study include Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986); Tinto’s model of student drop-out (Tinto, 1975) and Honneth’s (1995) theory of recognition to understand how retention and success of students can be dependent upon a process of authentic recognition by significant others.  **Methodology:** Researchers draw on findings from two related research projects on non-traditional students, with a focus primarily on interview data & critical incident analysis to determine variables which enabled students to overcome issues encountered at university.  Project 1: Exploring the experiences of students on the National Scholarship Programme  a) longitudinal, mixed-methods approach (online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and data tracking through the students’ record system)  b) 20 semi-structured interviews with non-traditional students: Accounts of positive and negative experiences were gathered using the critical incident approach (Brookfield, 1987; trip, 1993).  Project 2: Exploring the experiences of care leavers in higher education  a)qualitative, interpretive approach  b)Narrative accounts of academic and personal experiences were gathered through semi-structured interviews, using the critical incident approach  Findings: There are a number of protective and risk factors for non-traditional students within the control of HE institutions. Key factors include the following: Significant adult relationship/ supportive, approachable tutor, financial support and management, good network of friends and family, awareness and access of student support, engagement in extra-curricular activities and good attendance.  **Core Argument:** The resilience framework can play a substantial role in helping tutors understand the range of factors which impact students’ retention and success rate in HE, by:  1)providing an additional layer of analysis to studies of non-traditional students  2)providing theoretical benefits: focuses attention on both individual and structural factors & facilitates understanding of different student outcomes in seemingly similar situations  3)providing practical benefits: focuses on aspects of institutional culture and environment which can help students develop resilience. Many factors which have potential impact on retention of all students are within the control of individual institutions. Support which individual institutions can provide to non-traditional students include: support through personal tutoring, targeted study support, and assistance with social and academic integration. |
| Day, C. (2019). [An empirical case study of young adult carers’ engagement and success in higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603116.2019.1624843). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 0  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Young adult carers; student experience; student engagement; inclusive education; higher education* | **Context:** Despite the recognition of carers in existing Australian and international equal opportunity and antidiscrimination legislation, limited research has explored the educational implications of caregiving on carers participation, engagement and success in higher education. Moreover, even fewer studies have specifically targeted the educational experiences and related life opportunities of young adults who provide care.  **Aim:** To examine the educational experiences of a sample of thirteen Young Adult Carers (YAC) and provide rich, empirical insights into the interactional effects of caregiving on YACs’ academic engagement with their studies, social engagement with their peers, teachers and advisors, and progressive outcomes of success in higher education.  **Theoretical framework:** Young Adult Carers at University-Student Experience Framework (YACU-SEF). YACU-SEF draws upon ten student development themes designed to target the quality and quantity of effort YACs’ invest in (a) academically challenging activities, (b) within- and beyond-class activities, (c) learning and teaching-based interactions with staff, (d) broadening educational activities, (e) relationships with peers, teachers and support services, and (f) work-integrated learning experiences.  **Methodology:** An empirical case study, guided by the newly developed YACU-SEF theoretical model was conducted to examine the educational experiences of 18-25 year old YACs. Twelve women and one man (N = 13) from ten universities across eight Australian states and territories voluntarily participated in this study (Mdn = 21 yrs.).The primary methods of data collection and analysis involved in the examination of YACs’ ‘Action(s)’ and ‘Outcome(s)’ consisted of semi-structured individual interviews and thematic analysis (Creswell 2012) using NVivo qualitative data analysis software (QSR International 2012).  **Findings:** a)Academic challenges: 1)Very few YACs managed to cope with prescribed readings and preparatory exercises, and even fewer managed to successfully complete given tasks before scheduled classes; 2)several YACs experienced challenges with complying to a prescribed study routine due to the ‘unpredictable and fluid nature of caregiving’ (p. 9); 3)the lack of available time and energy often led to difficulties in being able to regularly complete drafts of assignments prior to submission; 4) A majority of YACs reported challenges in attending all scheduled classes; 5)*all* YACs stated that their caring roles significantly impacted their ability to study effectively and maintain focus. 3 main reasons cited by YACs: Tiredness and fatigue; unexpected and persistent disruptions; time spent maintaining household functioning and providing assistance with daily living. b)Active learning: Only a minority of YACs invested time on-campus outside of scheduled class hours due to the possibility of being needed at home and the distance between their homes and universities. Nevertheless, all YACs reported regular interactions with their respective universities’ online learning systems. c)Student-staff interactions: 1)The amount of contact between YACs and their teachers varied based on academic and personal concerns. 2)Most YACs reported ‘infrequent and irregular contact with teaching staff’ outside their classes. d)Enriching educational experiences: Two-thirds of the YACs reported minimal involvement in on-campus activities, citing insufficient resources including time and finances as the primary reasons for their lack of involvement. e)Supportive learning environment: Only a minority of YACs pursued peer-relationships that extended beyond in-class or course-specific interactions; Many YACs felt separated from peers due to their caregiving roles; Most felt like they were missing out on the normative student experiences which support integration into the university community. f)Teacher support network: Two-thirds of YACs were reluctant to seek assistance from lecturers; several described staff as being ‘unavailable and unapproachable’ regarding the caring circumstances. Nevertheless, there were some positive relationships with the teaching staff mentioned; More than one quarter of YACs described their lecturers as being ‘helpful’ and ‘understanding’ upon receiving approval for academic consideration. g)Support networks with student services: Very few described stable, positive and supportive relationships with liaison officers. h)Work-integrated learning: Majority of YACs reported past challenges/future fears about fulfilling requirements of integrating employment-focused learning activities into their degree programmes, due to their caregiving roles, despite recognising its importance. i)Overall satisfaction: A majority reported satisfactory evaluations of their learning experiences in universities; The remaining minority cited the inflexibility of their universities and their experiences of being ‘stressful’ (p. 14). j)Career readiness: YACs’ voiced concerns about being underprepared to enter the workforce, due to limited participation in WIL experiences, while also describing apprehension about the possibility of their caring responsibilities delaying their entrance into the workforce or postgraduate study. k)Average grade: YACs performance, progress and grades were significantly influenced by their caring roles. l)Departure intentions: most YACs’ reported that the challenges associated with studying and caregiving negatively affected their motivation to pursue their studies. Nevertheless, some suggested that their experiences had positively motivated them to persist in the face of adversity.  **Core argument:** The outcomes derived from the application of the YACU-SEF point to ongoing challenges experienced by YACs’ as well as potential support service gaps in higher education institutions. As the educational implications of unsupported young adult caregiving are manifold and complex, these potential gaps pose serious concerns for YACs’ engagement and success in higher education. |
| Gazeley, L. & Hinton-Smith, T. (2018). [The ‘success’ of looked after children in higher education in England: near peer coaching, ‘small steps’ and future thinking](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326167420_The_'success'_of_Looked_After_Children_in_Higher_Education_in_England_near_peer_coaching_'small_steps'_and_future_thinking), *Higher Education Research & Development,* 37(5), 952–965.  UK  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *First-year experience; peer learning; retention; student diversity; university* | **Context:** The paper draws on findings from a study of a near peer, pre-entry coaching programme to address the dearth of studies on the ‘success’ of care-experienced young people in Higher Education (HE) internationally. The HE Champions Coaching Programme grew out of the desire among a small group of Widening Participation (WP) practitioners to improve opportunities for ‘success’ amongst Looked After Children (LAC) in HE, as they are often additionally disadvantaged than other students.  **Aim:**  **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** Data collection took place in two stages, involving multiple methods and perspectives.  31 participants at Stage 1: young people, n = 5; coaches, n = 8; key adults, n = 12; trainers, n = 6.  31 participants at Stage 2 (not necessarily all the same individuals): young people, n = 6; coaches, n = 12; key adults, n = 8; trainers and other adults involved in programme delivery, n = 5.  Stage 1: Questionnaire completed by young people participating in the programme, young people recruited by coaches, trainers who led the programme and Key Adults based in Local Authorities  Stage 2: Telephone interview for trainers and adults involved in development & delivery of programme; focus groups and collaborative mind-mapping for young people and coaches.  Additional data collected via observation of key events.  **Findings:**  Key Adults’ concerns around a lack of success in HE which led to development of intervention:  a)gaps in support & knowledge for LAC at the pre-entry phase, leading to wrong choice of programmes or institutions  b)financial issues  c)difficulties with social integration  d)challenges for those in the role of corporate parent: difficulty establishing & utilizing lines of communication to ensure continuity of care, varying confidence in own capacity to fill knowledge gap, a sense of powerlessness  d)university admission processes do not consider differences in levels of support for students applying to HE  Opportunities for learning created by the HE programme:  a)acquisition of new knowledge in key areas (including how to identify the point of contact for LAC at a university; types of financial support available; social aspects of HE such as the nightlife and music scene)  b)connecting past with futures: repositioning the past led to ‘empowerment of the young people and a rejection of anything deterministic’ (p. 960)  c)involvement of coaches: seemed to promote and mirror future success of LAC; reciprocal benefits for coaches (some who are care-experienced themselves)  **Core argument:** The programme highlights how ‘a collaboration across stakeholder groups that builds on informed understandings of a common challenge can drive the development of innovative solutions to a complex problem’ (p. 962). However, the programme also exemplifies the risk that the necessity of evidencing ‘success’ might foster more reductive approaches, less suited to the particular needs and circumstances of individual LAC. |
| Harrison, N. (2019). [Patterns of participation in higher education for care-experienced students in England: why has there not been more progress?,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2019.1582014) *Studies in Higher Education,*  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Care leavers; care-experience; participation; access; mental health* | **Context:** Children who have experienced care tend to have also experienced educational disruption (resulting also from trauma) and generally have lower educational outcomes (only 17.5% gained level 4 in GCSE English and maths, compared with 58.9% of non-OOHC students). OOHC students = 1% of student body in higher education in England. Author points to heterogeneity of the group: “While care leavers might be assumed to have greater disadvantage than the wider group of care-experienced young people, there is significant diversity within both groups – contrast a care leaver remaining with the same foster carers for ten years with a care-experienced student undergoing five care placements in three years, but returning to their birth family before turning 16” (p.2). Policy context: care leavers can “remain with foster carers up to the age of 25 if they are in education, providing additional stability for the transition into adulthood” (p.3). Care leavers = acknowledged as under-represented group in English WP since 2008. Charity ‘Buttle UK’ = advocated for OOHC and developed ‘quality mark’ for HEIs offering specific form of support for OOHC students  **Aim:** To “provide the first extensive mapping of participation patterns for care leavers and other care-experienced students in England, serving as a baseline for future research and policymaking” (p.2)  **Methodology:** Draws on three sources of data: 1) annual reports on care leavers produced by Department for Education; 2) examines participation rates of care leavers who turned 16 in 2007/8; 3) comparison with OOHC students in higher education in 2016/17. Part 2 = data from the ‘Higher Education: Researching Around Care Leavers’ Entry and Success project’. Part 3 = data from HESA (disclosure of status via UCAS form + self-disclosure in university while applying for support).  **Findings:** OOHC students = more than believed enter higher education; they tend to have lower educational outcomes; they tend to start later than peers; tend to attend less prestigious institutions with less prestigious qualifications.  Part 1 (DFE data)  5.2% of 19-year old care leavers = in higher education (6.1% for 19–21 year olds). Participation rates of 19-year olds appears to have declined slightly since 2006 (see Figure 1), which compares markedly with the increased participation rate of young people from areas with historically-low participation rates.  Part 2: Total of 765 care leavers in higher education = 11.8% of total… significantly more that the DFE data suggest. Young non-care leavers = 4 times more likely to enroll in higher education. Correlations with low GCSE results, high level of special educational needs = likely to explain this.  Part 3: Dataset = 7,120 OOHC students (from total of 899,795 included in analysis):  8.8% (whole cohort) = part time; 11% for OOHC students  OOHC students = more likely to be women (58.8% compared to 54% of total cohort)  More than twice as likely to disclose disability, especially if studying part time  More likely to not be UK nationals (e.g. asylum seeking children – no marker in data collection to distinguish this group)  Full-time students = more likely to be older than non-OOHC students  OOHC students less likely to enter higher education with A-levels (33% compared to 54.3% of total cohort) – more likely to use Level 3 vocational qualifications/ Access course/ lower qualifications + work experience  Over-representation of OOHC students entering with sub-bachelor qualification (e.g. Foundation degree)  Full-time OOHC = “substantially under-represented” in Russell Group universities (p.10)  OOHC students = more likely to be studying in Sociology, social policy, social work and creative arts, but under-represented in medicine, physical sciences, mathematics, engineering, languages, history and philosophy” (p.10).  **Core argument:** Care leavers less likely to attend university than non-care leaver peers. Big distinction between data collected by DFE and HEIs. Non-traditional pathways = important for OOHC; OOHC present with varying mental health concerns |
| Harvey, A., McNamara, P., Andrewartha, L. & Luckman, M. (2015). [*Out of care, into university: Raising higher education access and achievement of care leavers*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Out-of-Care-Into-University). National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords (Sally’s): *Care leavers; higher education; policy* | **Context**: Approximately 40,000 children = in OOHC context. Care leavers rarely move on to HE but at time of report, there was no national agenda to address extremely low rates of participation in HE  **Aim**: To provide the basis for such an agenda by highlighting the nature and extent of the problem, and suggesting practical solutions within both the education and community service sectors  **Methodology**: Literature review, examination of national data sets, online survey of Australian universities, interviews with senior reps from OOHC providers  **Recommendations**:  Offers set of 26 recommendations, based around main three:  1. Need to develop system to collect nationally consistent data  2. Policy reform needed = greater recognition by HEIs (federal government)-needing category to be added to 6 identified equity groups because “the extent and nature of their disadvantage requires tailored policies and specific data collection” (p.6). Universities could collect data on enrolments/admissions.  3. In Community/ Care sector, legislative reform needed to better support children to adulthood  4. Need for cultural change: shift culture of ‘soft bigotry’ (low expectations) |
| Harvey, A.; Andrewartha, A. & McNamara, P. (2015). [A forgotten cohort? Including people from out-of-home care in Australian higher education policy](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0004944115587529), *Australian Journal of Education,* 59(2), 182–195.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Equal education, educational disadvantage, child welfare, foster care, postsecondary education* | **Context:** Lack of participation of OOHC students in Australian higher education, and Australia lags behind other countries like the UK. Need for policy reform – add OOHC as specific equity group to be monitored. In 2013, approximately 40,000 children in care (broad term to describe lots of forms). Students in OOHC = lower school achievement and “Patterns of educational disruption and disengagement at school level are a precursor to inadequate preparation for higher education” (p.183). Also, limited national data available on OOHC children, for example reasons for being in care. However, Australia has little systematic data collection in process to track higher educational outcomes of OOHC students. Equity framework = partly responsible for lack of responsiveness from Australian HEIs. OOHC = overrepresented in existing categories, especially Indigenous (who are 10 times more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous children), regional and low SES categories.  **Aim:** To argue “that policy reform is required to improve the participation of people from out-of-home care backgrounds in Australian higher education” (p.182)  **Methodology:** Essay  **Discussion:** Lack of Australian data collection and legislation/ policy to track OOHC children through to higher education. After substantial research in UK, OFFA now recognises OOHC as distinct university target group and all universities encouraged to add care leavers into access agreements: “Much of this improvement in access to English higher education has arguably resulted from the inclusion of care leavers as a distinct equity category, with student participation being monitored, analysed and supported” (p.190). Similar patterns could be achieved in Australia with amendments to student equity framework: “A revised framework might therefore include other marginalised groups such as people from refugee backgrounds, incarcerated students, and other agreed cohorts” (p.190) **Core argument:** People from OOHC contexts are not formally recognised as an equity group in Australian higher education policy, and this absence “is concerning given the manifest nature of their educational disadvantage, the level of their likely under-representation at university and the historic importance of policy in determining national and institutional resource allocations” (p.192). Reform of the national equity policy is needed. |
| Harvey, A., Andrewartha, L. and Luckman, M. (2016). [Care leavers in Australian higher education: Towards evidence-based practice](https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=005508117527890;res=IELHSS). *Developing Practice,* 46, 6–18.  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords (Anna’s): *Care leavers; higher education; evidence-based practice* | **Context:** The educational disadvantage of care leaver students is extreme and well-documented. Among the few care leavers who actually transition to Australian universities, many encounter significant and specific challenges that require dedicated academic, financial and broader resources. Despite being committed to supporting care leaver students, university equity practitioners still struggle in meeting the needs of students due to the absence of a strong evidence base. Specifically, the inability to identify individual care leaver students restricts the ability of universities to develop ‘appropriately targeted resources’ (p. 16) and to effectively allocate them.  **Aim:** Highlight the specific needs of care leaver students and suggest three ways that evidence can be gathered to inform and improve higher education practice.  **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** Mixed-methods approach – 11 semi-structured interviews with representatives from major-out-of-home care service providers across Australia; a survey of senior equity representatives from the 37 public universities in Australia (response rate: 76%); a desktop review of available data on care leaver higher education outcomes; a review of national & international literature on the educational outcomes of care leavers (from 2000-2014)  **Findings:** A number of barriers that can limit care leavers’ access to and experience of higher education include: disrupted school-level education due to placement instability; emotional trauma; homelessness; financial issues; a sudden transition to independence at around 18 years of age; low educational expectations & aspirations; poor birth parent & carer educational attainment; lack of on-campus mentorship and support. The findings also reveal a ‘paucity in institutional data’ that impedes practitioners’ ability to implement effective care leaver strategies. Only one respondent in the equity practitioners survey confirmed the collection of individual care leaver data and outlined a program specifically designed to support this group.  **Recommendations:** Three methods for Australian universities to identify care leaver students: 1)Collecting data at a national level through a revised national higher education student equity framework, which specifically designates students of care leaver status. 2)Identifying care leavers through the state-based tertiary admissions centres (TACs): Clearing houses for university applications 3)Universities could develop processes for care leavers wishing to disclose their status via revised enrolment forms, student service use & other voluntary methods. Types of support that can be offered with confidentiality maintained: tuition fee waivers, residential scholarships, and online delivered social and academic support.  **Core argument:** Reforms to strengthen the evidence base for care leavers in Australia is an essential precondition to improve Australian higher education practices. New mechanisms to identify individual care leaver students, identify their experiences and needs and monitor their academic progress are necessary to achieve progress in the number of care leavers transitioning to higher education and receiving individual support regularly. |
| Harvey, A., McNamara, P. & Andrewartha, L. (2016). [Towards a national policy framework for care leavers in higher education.](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/978-1-137-55639-4_5) In P. Mendes, P. Snow (Eds.), *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care* (pp. 93 -113). London: Springer Nature. DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55639-4\_5  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Care leavers; higher education; policy* | **Context:** Approximately 40,000 children live in OOHC in Australia, with the number increasing every year over the past decade (AIHW, 2015). Individuals who spent time in OOHC prior to the age of 18 are referred to as care leavers when they transition out of the system. However, the post-transition outcomes of care leavers are often not well-documented. In Australia, there is a particular paucity in research related to the transition of care leavers to tertiary education. Nevertheless, the limited evidence suggests that care leavers are particularly under-represented in HE (Mendes et al., 2014; Murray and Goddard, 2014). HE is linked to lifetime advantages, included improved employment opportunities, earning potential (Lomax-Smith et al., 2011; Norton, 2012). This highlights the importance to examine the progression of care leavers into HE, nationally, and the possible factors that might increase aspirations, access and success at university.  **Aim:** To develop a strategy for raising university access among care leavers by: i) exploring the nature, causes and extent of under-representation ii)by recommending policy reform within both the education and community service sectors.  **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** The project involved four key stages. Stage One: Review of international & national research on the educational needs and outcomes of care leavers. Stage Two: Analysis of National and State Data Sources. Stage Three: A survey of universities about institutional policies and strategies for supporting care leavers – designed using Qualtrics online survey; senior equity staff at all 37 Australian public universities were invited for participation; 28 universities responded (76% response rate). Stage Four: Semi-structured interviews with 11 senior representatives from community service organizations across Australia. A mix of national, multi-state and single-state agencies was selected to ensure national coverage. An interpretative phenomenological approach was applied to data analysis (Smith et al., 2009).  **Findings:** Stage One: [Review of the Literature] 1)UK: First major research project: *By Degrees* (Jackson et al., 20050) – followed 50 university care leavers/ year for three years. Recommendation: ‘All higher education institutions should have a comprehensive policy for recruitment, retention and support of students from a care background’ (p. xiv); Additions to legislation on care leavers’ education in England & Wales: *Children* (*Leaving Care*) *Act 2000* introduced the first statutory requirement for local authorities to support young people aged 16–24 years in education. The *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* brought forward a statutory £2,000 local authority bursary for young care leavers at university. From April 2011, the *Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3*: *Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers* implemented a suite of regulations and guidance around strengthening the planning of educational transitions (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2012). Impact: Increase in proportion of care leavers continuing HE in England: from approximately 1 per cent of 19-year-old care leavers in 2003 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2014) to 6–7 per cent of 19–21-year- old care leavers in 2014 (Department of Education 2014). 2)Continental Europe: Main research project: The YiPPEE research project (*Young people from a public care background: pathways to education in Europe*) examined the education pathways of care leavers across England, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary and Spain. Findings: Individuals in public care had similar experiences of severe educational disadvantage across all five countries; ‘reliable statistical information is an essential basis for improving the educational opportunities for young people who have been in care’ (Jackson & Cameron, 2012, p. 10). 3)USA: Two large-scale projects by Pecora et al. (2003; 2005): highlighted low college completion rates for people from foster care; Wolanin (2005): Of the 50% of young people in foster care who complete high school, and are therefore potentially college qualified, only about 20 per cent enrol in higher education compared to 60 per cent of their peers. 3 significant federal laws to increase access to HE for individuals from foster care (in 2008): *Fostering Connections Act; College Cost Reduction Act; and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Legal Center for Foster Care and Education 2008).*  4)Australia: No national-level data collection of school outcomes of people in care. Nevertheless, two large-scale studies by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) matched educational achievement data and community service data across multiple jurisdictions (AIHW 2007, 2011). Findings: Children on guardian- ship or custody orders, many of whom were in OHC, had poorer reading and numeracy test scores compared with their peers. In addition, care leavers do not constitute a distinct equity group in the Australian HE equity group framework, resulting in no data collected to monitor HE access, participation or retention rates. Several small, qualitative studies: Jurczyszyn and Tilbury (2012) interviewed 13 young people who were in care or leaving care in Queensland; Mendis et al. (2014) interviewed 18 university-educated women who had spent time in OHC; Michell et al. (2015) also published the stories of 14 care leavers who had transitioned to higher education. Stage Two: [Analysis of National and State Data Sources] 1) Australia: National data on the education of Australians in OOHC is limited. The Australian Bureau of Statistics collects a limited amount of national data on the educational outcomes of children in OHC through the National Census. Two major limitations of data collected: i) data are only collected on foster care and not the other types of OHC. ii) individuals under the age of 15 are regarded as foster children in the Census, while individuals over the age of 15 are only counted as foster children if they are living with a foster parent at the time of the Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). 2)UK: Reliable data on the educational outcomes of care leavers are publicly available in the UK, in contrast to Australia. a) Buttle UK Quality Mark programme: Collect data on care leavers enrolled within a HE institution b) Department of Education England: Releases an annual publicly available pack detailing the outcomes of *all* care leavers at 19-21 years of age. c) From 2014, all care leavers’ data are collected from all HE institutions by the HE Statistics Agency using a care leaver identifier, allowing for ‘improved analysis, research & evaluation’ (p. 103) (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2014). Stage Three: [Survey of University Policies and Practices] Most frequent types of initiatives for care leavers: Specific admission policies ( five universities), relationships with OHC service providers ( five universities) and outreach programmes (four universities);Two universities had recruitment policies or guidelines for care leavers; Only one university offered scholarships targeted at care leavers; one university collected data about care leaver status; and one university tracked the progress of care leavers; None of the surveyed universities reported providing accommodation support for care leavers; Two universities had also taken recent steps to better support care leavers—one had advertised for a care coordinator, and another had established a working group to explore the needs of care leavers. Stage Four: [Interviews with Key Representatives from the Community Service Sector] Findings: i) community service organizations do not systematically track individual educational progress and do not collect aggregated data on the educational outcomes of young people in care. ii) higher education opportunities for care leavers were created by long-term, stable placements, which lead to continuity of primary and secondary schooling, committed advocates and caseworkers, financial support, housing support and being able to remain in a long-term foster home iii) barriers to HE transition: lack of confidence of care leavers, premature expectations of adult responsibility, mental health issues, early pregnancy, drug and alcohol misuse and family conflict.  **Core argument: ‘**There is an urgent need for a greater recognition of care leavers as an under-represented group within the HE sector’ (p. 108). Although care leavers are often subsumed within and across 6 groups in the national student equity framework, the extent and nature of the disadvantage of care leavers in HE require tailored policies and targeted data collection. |
| Lewis, M., Williams, E., Lewis, P. & Allison, D. (2015). [Success4Life: An aspirational programme for looked after children.](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David_Allison3/publication/287506115_Success4Life_An_aspirational_programme_for_looked_after_children/links/5b1908a7aca272021ceed295/Success4Life-An-aspirational-programme-for-looked-after-children.pdf) *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 17(4), 116–127.  UK  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords (Anna’s): *Widening participation; looked after children; access to Higher Education; aspirational programme* | **Context:** Looked after children are a grossly under-represented group in Higher Education, with only 7% of care leavers entering HE. However, widening access initiatives to increase applications from and subsequent retention in care leavers has had mixed success due to their fairly generic nature and lack of focus on the specific needs of a looked after child. ‘Success4Life’ is a high-intensity widening participation project delivered by the University of Manchester for high school pupils in local authority care, with a particular focus on the transferable lifelong skills attendees develop and the way in which these will help the young learners throughout their education and careers more broadly. The programme seeks to develop positive self-image, confidence, presentation and teamwork skills, through a range of group work activities and themed sessions. Pupils work alongside positive role models (current University students, some of whom are care experienced) and University staff.  **Aim:** To describe the involvement and experiences of looked after children on the Success4Life programme and reflect on how the information gained may be used to positively enhance perceptions, to raise pupil aspiration, to provide reassurances that targeted support will be available during their time at university and most importantly to ensure that attendees can imagine themselves at University in the future.  **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** 2 phases of programme evaluation: Phase 1: Short feedback questionnaires (pre- and post): Pre-programme questionnaires (70/70 participants); Post-programme questionnaires -completed at programme graduation ceremony (63/70 participants). Both sets of questionnaires included a mixture of Likert-scale ratings (1-5) and qualitative (free-text) responses. Phase 2: Focus group interviews with six participants (after one month the project had ended).  **Findings:** Phase 1: Attendees reported an increased desire to stay in education after the age of 16 following the State- run General Certificate of Secondary Education exams (76% pre-project, 93% post-project), an increased intention to apply to university (85% pre- project, 97% post-project) as well as a greater awareness of university courses and options available to them (44% pre-project, 63% post-project). Phase 2: All cited extremely positive experiences from their participation: an increase in self-belief, discipline and confidence, having an open mind, developing communication and presenting skills and learning to be more considerate to others. Significant issue cited by participants: Lack of trust towards other participants.  **Discussion:** The extremely positive feedback suggests that the space and time provided by Success4Life is a chance for these vulnerable young learners to change their ways of thinking around behaviour, restructure modes of expression and carry realisations over into their behaviour in other contexts. Key aspects to programme success: one-to-one interaction with facilitators; intensity of the workshops in an emotionally secure and safe environment; encouragement of emotional awareness and self-regulation, impulse control, optimism, empathy and self-efficacy in the young learners.  **Core argument:** Success4Life is a successful WP intervention into the lives of the young people who are care leavers, making a positive and hopefully, lifelong difference to individual behaviours. |
| McNamara, P., Harvey, A. and Andrewartha, L. (2019). [Passports out of poverty: raising access to higher education for care leavers in Australia.](https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/cysrev/v97y2019icp85-93.html) *Children and Youth Services Review, 97*, 85-93.  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Care leaver; foster care; kinship care; poverty; higher education; university* | **Context:**. The potential of higher education to protect graduates, including care leavers, from poverty is well established. However, the extremely low university participation rates of Australian care leavers have not been coherently addressed, with no public national agenda for improvement. In the higher education system, care leavers do not constitute one of the six identified equity groups that the Australian Government monitors (Department of Education, Employment and Training, 1990). Consequently, institutional data is not collected to monitor their access, participation and retention rates. In stark contrast to the UK and the US, Australia has given little research or policy attention to care leavers in higher education. There is a pressing need to fill Australian knowledge gaps around education outcomes during and post OOHC, to challenge low academic expectations for this cohort, and to better support transition to higher education.  **Aim:** The study aimed to capture the perspectives of senior representatives within the HE & community service sectors and answer the following RQs:  1. What higher education policies, support structures, and procedures are currently in place for care leavers, and what could be improved? 2. What are the major barriers to higher education access and success  for care leavers, and what additional support is required?  **Theoretical Framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** The study employed a mixed methods approach, which included: A literature review; examination of national data sets; an online survey of Australian public universities; interviews with OOHC providers. Online survey: Out of 37 universities, a total of 28 universities responded to the survey, representing a 76% response rate. The survey was designed to determine: types of policies, support structures and procedures which specifically target care leavers at universities , and how universities can increase higher education access and support for care leavers. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 senior representatives from major OOHC service providers across Australia. The interviews covered: data collection in relation to educational progress and outcomes; expectations for university study; significant higher education facilitators and barriers; case studies of successful and unsuccessful transitions to university. Data analysis: An interpretative phenomenological approach was employed in the analysis of interview data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).  **Findings:** [RQ1: What higher education policies, support structures, and procedures are currently in place for care leavers, and what could be improved?] Results from the survey: Only few universities had specific policies, support structures, or procedures in place for care leavers. Only a minority of universities employed the following types of support targeted to care leavers: recruitment policies or guidelines (only two universities); admission policies (five universities); outreach programs (four universities); scholarships (one university); accommodation support (zero universities); data collection procedures (one university); progress tracking procedures (one university); relationships with out-of-home care services providers (five universities). Nevertheless, there is evidence of recent steps to better support care leavers at two universities.. Recommendations to increase access for care leavers (from 23 respondents): offer targeted scholarships and financial support (nine respondents); build partnerships with OOHC service providers (nine respondents); work closely with secondary schools to support students in out-of-home care (five respondents). Recommendations for HE institutions to better support care leavers (from 21 respondents): provide scholarships and financial support (10 respondents); provide accommodation support (seven respondents); ensure care leavers are linked to student support services (six respondents); and create institutional awareness and recognition of the group in equity policies and initiatives (five respondents). [RQ2: What are the major barriers to HE access and success for care leavers, and what additional support is required?] Results from the interviews with the community service sector revealed a few major barriers: Lack of systematic monitoring of educational progress occurring within community service organisations; lack of self-confidence among care-leavers – highlights importance of aspirations and expectations on likelihood to participate in HE; absenteeism and exclusion from school & below average performance on literacy & numeracy; substantial decrease in formal support that occurs for people in care at 18 years of age, resulting in accelerated transition to independence; Indigenous experience: Indigenous young people in care experience some unique barriers to successful secondary education completion and higher education transition: intergenerational trauma, including Stolen Generation experience in the family; cultural and family responsibilities; especially those from remote communities. Suggested interventions to support transition to HE: mental health responses; behaviour management strategies; mentoring; carer training; enhancement of birth parent engagement and aspirations; and academic tutoring. A team approach to welfare and educational case management was also stressed, along with the importance of building trust through continuity of supportive relationships. Suggestions for university & government policy & program improvements: waiving university and TAFE fees for care leavers; offering financial, housing and social support on campus; and delivering transitional programs to develop academic skills. Financial support & housing support were considered particularly important. Case studies: 1) Sarah: An example of successful transition to university. Key issues demonstrated from her experience: the importance of providing financial and accommodation assistance to allow care leavers to attend university; the additional emotional and social pressures that care leavers may experience at university; and the benefit of continuity of care beyond 18 years of age. 2)Kara: An example of an unsuccessful transition to university. Kara had high levels of aspiration and persistence but, like many care leavers, had experienced early educational challenges and disrupted schooling and was academically unprepared for university study. 3) Alex: Highlights the choice that Indigenous care leavers often have to make between studying at university and returning home, often to remote locations, to address cultural and family responsibilities.  **Discussion:** Survey and interview findings confirm that care leavers are a group whose academic potential and educational needs are consistently underestimated and overlooked. The extremely low levels of access for care leavers highlight the need for direct and explicit support for this group. Recommendations: 1) Increased financial and academic support in Australian HE institutions: introduce HE tuition fee waivers; cost-of-living scholarships & residential scholarships; ‘wrap around’ supports (eg: personal advisors, mentors, tutoring, counselling) 2) Incorporate OOHC group in outreach & in-reach activities by collaborating with educational stakeholders & community service organisations. 3)Providing support for community service organisations to better monitor academic progress & introduce centralised data collection 4) Promoting the aspirations & expectations of carers, case workers, para-professional staff, and others who support children in care 5)Specific strategies to support the accommodation, cultural and societal needs of Indigenous children in care  **Core argument:** Current education outcomes at all levels for Australian young people growing up in OOHC are clearly unacceptable. For Indigenous young people in care the situation is critical. Creative interventions aimed at cultural and policy change along with programmatic development is required; and these need to be rigorously evaluated. |
| Mendes, P., Michell, D. and Wilson, J. (2014). [Young people transitioning from out-of-home-care and access to higher education: a critical review of literature.](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285888148_Young_People_Transitioning_from_Out-of-home_Care_and_Access_to_Higher_Education_A_Critical_Review_of_the_Literature) *Children Australia,* 39(4), 243–252.  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Care leavers; higher education; disadvantage; policy and practice reform* | **Context:** There are currently over 40,000 children and young people living in out-of-home care in Australia. Young people transitioning from out-of-home care are known to have poor educational outcomes compared to their non-care peers. However, little is known about the experiences or needs of the small numbers of Australian care leavers who enter higher education**.**  **Aim:** To critically examine current research on the participation and completion of HE among care leavers, and highlight the significant knowledge gap about care leavers in Australia.  **Methodology:** The literature review targeted key local and international literature on care leavers’ access to HE, and was guided by the lead author’s involvement in the *Transitions to Adulthood for Young People Leaving Public Care International Research Group (INTRAC)*, and the participation of all three authors in a recent Australian Research Council grant application on a similar topic.  **Findings:** The literature review: 1) established that poor educational outcomes are common for care leavers in Australia and internationally 2) highlighted factors that promote or hinder HE access for care leavers: Pre care experiences – abuse & neglect, highly disadvantaged family backgrounds; in-care factors (which hinders access) - instability in placements and schools; low expectations from social workers, teachers and carers; limited assistance with homework; a lack of supportive relationships with caring adults; inadequate personal and financial support; lack of collaboration between child protection agencies and education, and attitudinal and social problems at school, including discrimination and bullying from students and teachers, lack of interest in study and general unhappiness; in-care factors (which promotes access) - strong personal motivation and resilience, having a close supportive adult, stability in care and school placements that facilitate continuity in school attendance, satisfactory accommodation and financial help; ongoing emotional support, encouragement and advocacy from carers, teachers, family members and social workers, and integrated child welfare and education case management; transition from care factors - abrupt transitions that involve withdrawals of government support at a fixed chronological age of 18 years, when young people are finishing or about to finish school. 3) identified international research about the participation of care leavers in HE: England – by 2009, an estimated 7% of all 19-year-old identified care leavers entered HE (from 1% in 2003); 2012: most recent Department for Education figures suggest a slight decline from 430 young people in higher education in 2012 to 400 in 2013, or 6 per cent of all former care leavers aged 19 years (Department for Education, 2013); Sweden, Spain & Hungary – an estimated 6% of all care leavers have entered HE; Denmark: much lower figures at age 20, but 7% have completed HE by the age of 30; US – an estimated 10% enter and complete HE compared to their non-care experienced peers; Israel – largest percentage of care leavers transitioning to HE; Australia – no precise figures available  5) provided an overview of programmes designed to improve access: USA: The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programme, introduced in 2001, provides care leavers with financial assistance of up to US$5000 until the age of 21 years, for both college and training programmes; The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 extended eligibility for the ETV to young people who enter kinship care or adoption after 16 years; College Cost Reduction Act of 2009 provides care leavers with increased opportunity to apply for financial aid (Day et al., 2011).  **Discussion:** This review of the literature highlights the lack of policy making in Australia in relation to supporting care leavers’ access and participation in HE, and suggests that a range of targeted personal and structural supports are needed to improve the participation of Australian care leavers in HE (Jackson & Cameron, 2012).  **Recommendations:** 1) Extend state care obligations beyond 18 years 2) ensure that every care leaver had a post-18 educational support plan, based on a partnership between child protection and education (McDowall, 2009). 3) establish a post-18 national database similar to that maintained by the English Department of Education 4) all universities should have a formal policy for enrolling and supporting students from an out-of-home care back- ground, including a specific student services officer who has specialist knowledge of the impact of state care experience 5) generous and reliable financial support to assist care leavers entering higher education: removal or reduction of fees and/or deferral of Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) repayments, the provision of a small number of quarantined places for care leavers, and the availability of scholarships to meet educational and living costs. Australia should follow the lead of the UK government in offering a major bursary for each care leaver undertaking higher education, and associated support including: living and maintenance allowance for term time and vacations, an accommodation grant and assistance with the cost of stationery, books and a computer (Department for Education, 2014; National Care Advisory Service, 2012). \* assistance should not be limited only to care leavers aged up to 25 years, but should also be available for those older care leavers who elect to return to education later in life.  **Core argument:** Specific policy and practice reforms are required to enhance opportunities for Australian care leavers to participate in and complete HE. |
| Michell, D. & Scalzi, C. (2016). [I want to be someone, I want to make a difference: Young care leavers preparing for the future in South Australia](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=qxolDQAAQBAJ&pg=PA114&lpg=PA114&dq=Michell,+D.+and+Scalzi,+C.+(2016).+I+want+to+be+someone,+I+want+to+make+a+difference:+Young+care+leavers+preparing+for+the+future+in+South+Australia.+In+P.+Mendes,+P.+Snow+(eds.),+Young+People+Transitioning+from+Out-of-Home+Care,+DOI+10.1057/978-1-137-55639-4_6.&source=bl&ots=ixZYkq_ehH&sig=ACfU3U3abkdjfapQhYhQZW1p3jfYPIoSdg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwikjIrI1sPoAhXg6XMBHQAbDOUQ6AEwAHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=Michell%2C%20D.%20and%20Scalzi%2C%20C.%20(2016).%20I%20want%20to%20be%20someone%2C%20I%20want%20to%20make%20a%20difference%3A%20Young%20care%20leavers%20preparing%20for%20the%20future%20in%20South%20Australia.%20In%20P.%20Mendes%2C%20P.%20Snow%20(eds.)%2C%20Young%20People%20Transitioning%20from%20Out-of-Home%20Care%2C%20DOI%2010.1057%2F978-1-137-55639-4_6.&f=false). In P. Mendes & P. Snow (Eds.), *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care*,  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords (Anna’s): *Care leavers; higher education; aspirations* | **Context:** Two fold problem of access to HE for care leavers in Australia: The under-representation of care leavers with university qualifications & ‘…the omnipresent soft bigotry of low expectations’ (Harvey et al., 2015, p. 6). In terms of access, care leavers are not viewed as a specific equity group. As a result, care leaver’ access and participation in HE is not tracked, and targeted programmes have not been developed to improve access, participation & retention (Harvey et al., 2015).  **Aim:** To contribute towards addressing the ‘widespread low valuation of CYP with a care background and their under-representation at university’ by exploring the encouragement towards HE goals for young people during their time in South Australian State care.  **Theoretical concept:** Strengths Perspective (Saleeby, 1996, 2006): Assumes that people are intelligent, capable and experts in their own lives; identifies and values resistance and survival strategies; focused on hope and possibilities rather than problems and offsets the socio-cultural devaluation of marginalized groups (Guo and Tsui 2010; Roche 1999; Whitehouse and Colvin 2001); an apposite perspective for a cohort often seen as ‘damaged goods’ but who ‘...deserve to be approached as strong, capable survivors who should not be defined by the deficits of their pasts’ (Watt et al. 2013, p. 1410).  **Methodology:** A qualitative methodological approach using focus groups was employed. Two focus groups were convened: December 2013 & late January 2014. Participants: Five young women between the age of 18 – 24 were present in each focus group (n=10). Three participants – from residential care placements; Seven participants– from foster care; Two participants – identified as Aboriginal. Topics covered in focus groups: earliest memories of school, how/if school was different after entering State care, changes hoped for in the school system, teacher responses to in-care status, education plans, knowledge of tertiary education, hopes and dreams for the future and experiences of university.  **Findings:** Main findings: Only two participants received encouragement or guidance in considering HE, one from a teacher and one from a case worker. Other participants found alternative sources of inspiration: eg- wanting to do things different to their birth parents. Only two participants were at university, although neither perceived university to be the only measure of success. Participants: 1) Jane: Foster mother did not encourage pursuit of HE; Year 12 teacher encouraged her to do a Bacheor of Science; Second degree: Influenced by desire to provide better service than social workers she had personally encountered. 2) Sally: Only other person in focus group encouraged to pursue a career (by the case worker in her residential care); combines working in an aged care facility with studying at TAFE; aims to qualify as a nurse; most important goal: ‘to be a good parent’ (p. 124) due to experiences of inadequate parenting in her birth family. 3) Terri: Illustrates how the birth family could influence care leavers to go in a different direction; demonstrated ‘considerable agency in the face of adversity’ (p. 124); recently completed first year in Bachelor of Nursing; focus on career instead of family/parenting; decision shaped by lack of career in birth family. 4) Ashlie: Reflects disruption caused to education by instability in placement; no encouragement to pursue HE; completed Year 12 at a mature-age; inspired by a youth worker at CREATE and applied to TAFE to do a Certificate 4 in Youth Work. 5) Christy: A young Aboriginal woman, quiet but ambitious.; experienced multiple placements and multiple schools; enjoyed social aspects of school; focus was on her career and plans to be social worker. All participants were highly aware of State children stereotypes: eg: ‘‘damaged’ and ‘different’ in a way that suggests ‘deficient’, rather than ‘diverse’’ (p. 126). All participants also felt the negative impact of the stigma of being a care leaver on their educational experience: low expectations from teachers; disinterest from carers and caseworkers.  **Core argument:** Carers, workers and teachers need to be more encouraging to help care leavers achieve in education; their differing family situations should be respected as further evidence of the diversity in the Australian community, not of deficiency. Given the impact of the ongoing stigma, the broader Australian community needs to both ‘understand the impact of care on children and young people while not limiting them to being defined by this experience’ (p. 129). |
| Refaeli, T. & Strahl, B. (2014). [Turning point processes to higher education among care leavers](https://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/388/729), *Social Work and Society,* 12(1), 1–13.  ISR/GER  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords (Anna’s): *Care leavers; higher education; turning point; aspirations* | **Context:** Care leavers are identified as one of the most disadvantaged groups among young adults, who face significant challenges after leaving care, including acquiring higher education (Jackson & Cameron, 2010; Schiff & Benbenishty, 2006). In Germany, however, few studies exist which provide specific evidence about the educational situation of children in care and after care (Bürger, 1990; Pothmann, 2007; Esser 2011).  Similarly, in Israel, few studies have examined the educational situation of children in care and after care. Hence, an international collaborative project between researchers from Germany and Israel was designed. A central dimension of the project is the analyses of the life stories of care leavers who achieved higher education.  **Aim:** Using a social-pedagogic perspective, the aim of this study is to investigate the life stories of care leavers and look for moments or events of change, known as *turning points* (Gilligan, 2009).  **Theoretical concept:** According to Gilligan (2009), four conditions are necessary for a potential turning point: *Opportunity, readiness, agency* and a *sustaining context* (ORASC). In this paper, turning point processes are understood as representing positive change in the life course of young people. They are typically manifested within transitions that do not necessarily correspond to normatively expected life transitions. Turning point processes need to be measurable through objective criteria, but their sustainability also depends on the person`s ability to recognize the chance to change and take advantage of it.  **Methodology:** The study is based on biographical analyses of care leavers in higher education. 28 biographical interviews were conducted with young care leavers (17 from Germany and 11 from Israel). Two interviews were analysed in depth, as they represent different circumstances for turning point processes in the life of care leavers. Interviews were analysed according to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), with as few prior assumptions about turning points as possible.  **Findings:** 1) Germany: Case analysed – Paul. Significant event in life: Move into the group home, which ended the instability experienced in his family home. . …“the move into residential care has been the best decision in my life up to the present day...”. This sequence highlights the importance of this event as a significant moment in Pauls' life. At first, he was not able to change the not so simple circumstances even for himself. But the experience of beginning something new leads him to taking family matters into his own hand, and he eventually moved his younger brother and sister into out of home care facilities within 1 ½ years. However, according to his narrative, Paul’s move to residential care was possible due to supportive people in his surroundings, including his 1st and 2nd grade teacher. The move into the group home had a major impact in Paul’s life, both positively and negatively, and can therefore be called a turning point process. This includes the objective dimension of moving from one institutional setting (the family) to another (the group home), and also the subjective dimension of recognizing in himself the capacity to change his life by taking action. 2) Israel: Case analysed – Michael. Significant event: Participating in a swimming course outside the residential facility. There, Michael met with 'regular' children, and realized that they were able to read and write, so he decided to learn to read and write at a very late age. The experience of meeting other children outside of the care facility gave him the opportunity to relate to a new social environment. He reveals his own agency when he decided to learn how to read and write in order to be like the other children in the swimming course. Michael became active in his efforts to become literate, which shows his own agency in taking control over his life and making the transition from an illiterate child to a literate one. Michael’s narrative also highlights that the change was related to others, and must therefore be seen as a process. His transformation from an illiterate child to a literate one was supported and accompanied by others before and after the encounters with children out of care. Michael’s consequent transition to HE was also influenced by the close relationship developed with one staff member of the residential care, who became a “significant other” and a “role model” for him.  **Core argument:** As observed in the study’s findings, residentialcare plays a crucial role in generating turning point processes, which lead to positive changes in the lives of care leavers, as observed in the two cases analysed. Care facilities and single caregivers should make an effort to create opportunities which may eventually generate turning point processes: positive experiences, significant others, extra-curricular activities. |
| Wilson, J.Z., Harvey, A. & Mendes, P. (2019). [Changing lives: improving care leaver access to higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03054985.2019.1596074), *Oxford Review of Education,* 45(4), 573–586.  AUS  Annotation by Anna Xavier  Keywords: *Care leavers; higher education policy; transitioning from out-of-home care; access to higher education* | **Context:** In 2015, in an effort to improve the educational outcomes of care leavers, the first two authors collaborated to initiate the Raising Expectations project at two Australian universities, Federation University Australia (FUA) and La Trobe University (LTU) with an ‘industry partner’, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre). The project was supported by a Myer Foundation large triennial grant, and subsequent support was received through the Victorian Department of Education. LTU is located across five Victorian campuses, with its base in a major city (Melbourne), and FUA is based in a large regional centre (the city of Ballarat), 100 km from Melbourne, with a number of other rural and urban campuses. This project aimed to develop university outreach and recruitment strategies to raise the number of care leavers accessing HE; and to identify and support those care leavers already enrolled within both universities. Raising Expectations was itself informed by previous research conducted by the first two authors of this paper, funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. Recruiting and Supporting Care Leavers was a collaborative project involving LTU, FUA, Western Sydney University (WSU), and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).  **Aim:** To ‘examine the processes, outcomes and key findings of the Raising Expectations project, a collaborative university and industry approach to promote higher education among care leavers’ at FUA and LTU’ (abstract).  **Theoretical Framework:** Not specified in study.  **Methodology:** Phase 1: Conducted within the *Recruiting and Supporting Care Leavers* project: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with care leavers across four universities (FUA, LTU, WSU, UQ), particularly within FUA & LTU (n=25). Issues covered: application and enrolment processes; transitions into HE; support services at university. Data analysis: Interpretative phenomenological approach (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2016). Phase 2: To identify and recruit care leavers, the two universities (FUA & LTU) followed different but complementary methodologies, reflecting differences in the respective backgrounds and areas of expertise of the project leaders, and disparate student demographics associated with the institutions’ widely different geographical locations. FUA Project: led by a care-leaver research academic who gathered data directly by arranging for the university’s admissions department to include a specific tick-box question on enrolment forms encouraging prospective students to identify as care leavers. To facilitate this approach, FUA employed a social-work graduate with strong personal insight into the care-leaver experience to act as care-leaver coordinator and liaise directly with care-leaver students. LTU Project: LTU partners were unable to secure modification of the university enrolment form, but were instead able to secure funding from the university’s allocation of HE participation and partnerships programme (HEPPP) funding to provide bursaries for enrolled care- leaver students, which then enabled their subsequent identification within the student system. Responsibility to support the care-leaver students was allocated across a range of student development advisers, while the central university outreach programme was also expanded to include new schools in which students in OOHC were known to be studying.  **Findings:** 1)Significant challenges that needed to be addressed by the *Raising Expectations* Project: ‘oppressive level of judgmental scrutiny’ (p. 578); culture of low expectations towards care-leavers; financial need. 2) Impact of the implementation of the project: a very substantial increase in care-leaver enrolments at FUA over the project’s (so far) three-year run, from 20 to 160 under- graduates, plus 20 postgraduates; policy advocacy has resulted in the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC)2 taking the major step of formally recognising care leavers as an equity group and including a question on VTAC application forms inviting care leavers to identify as such for special consideration.  **Discussion:** The success of the project, specifically in raising enrolment rates, reflects the importance of developing a strong evidence base and including the voices of care leavers in project design and implementation. The project findings could be used to guide further universities to develop formal policies for enrolling and supporting students from an OOHC background, including a specific student services officer who has a specialist knowledge of the impact of state care experience.  **Recommendations:** Steps to improve access to HE for care leavers: 1) extend state care obligations beyond 18 years and ensure that every care leaver had a post-18 educational support plan based on a partnership between child protection and education (McDowall, 2010). 2) establish a post-18 national database similar to that maintained by the British government’s Department of Education, to monitor the progress of care leavers in a range of areas, and specifically determine the number of care-leavers who had entered and/or completed HE. 3) provision of a generous and reliable financial support (eg: offer a major bursary for each care leaver undertaking HE, like the British government) 4)Governments could ensure that the voices and views of care leavers are highlighted in policy design 5)Empowerment of care-experience leaders to redress culture of low-expectations towards care leavers  **Core argument:** The importance of policy and practice reforms informed by rigorous research, particularly involving the voices and agency of care leavers. |