



Norfolk Virtual School for
Children in Care and
Previously in Care

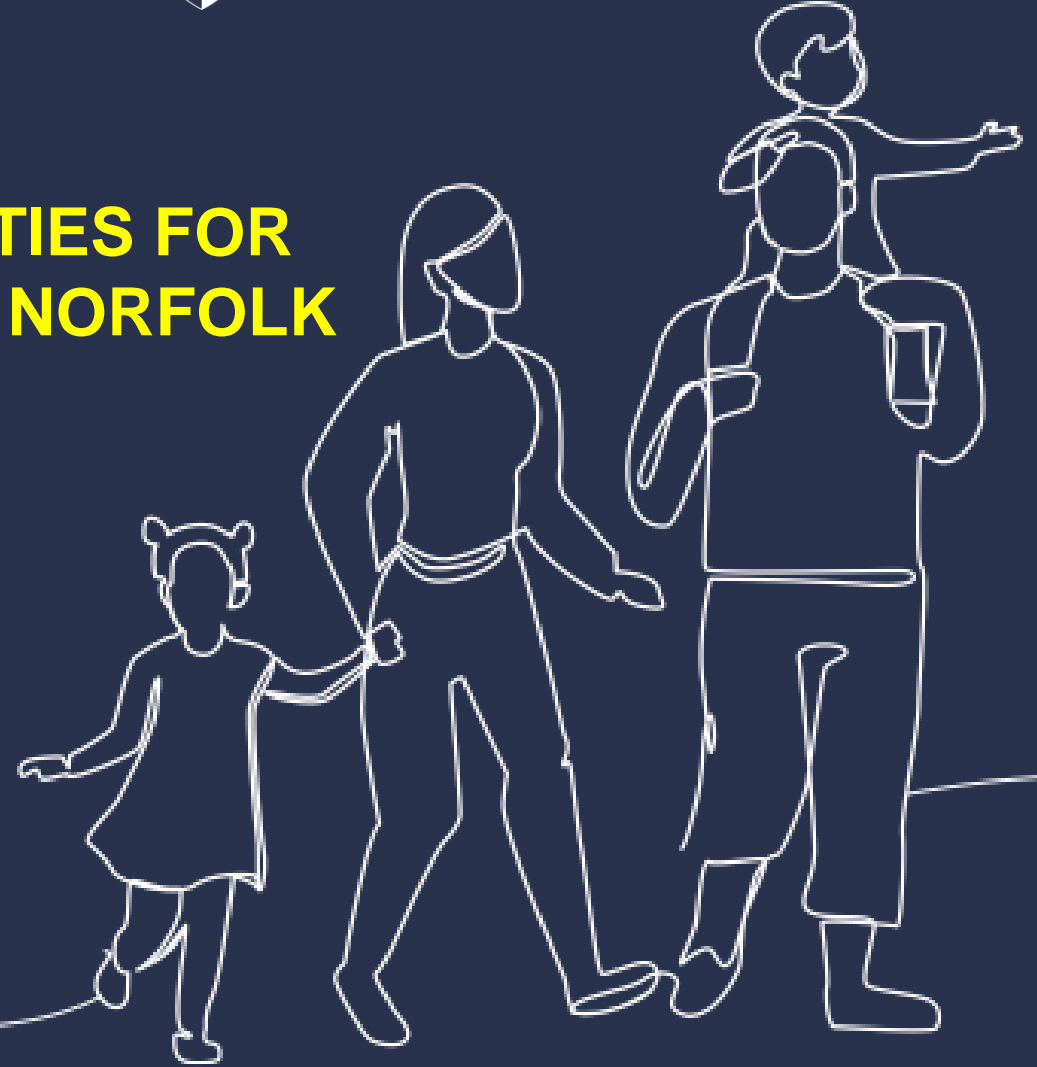


Norfolk County Council

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORFOLK

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Welcome!



We want people to participate but please use the 'raise hand' facility to ask questions and contribute when others are talking.

Please be considerate to others - together we want to create a safe, open and reflective space to learn.

You can turn on live captions on by clicking on the 3 dots at the top of your screen if you need this.

The link to the feedback form will be put in the chat.

Please do take the time to complete it after the session.

Thank you!



Content

- The role of the Virtual School Post 16 Team
- Overview of our Norfolk Care Leavers / barriers to employment
- Our success story with John Lewis
- Other case studies / success stories
- Our 'ask' of employers – what this looks like in practice
- Q & A – please add questions to the chat

Who are the Virtual School?

We are not a school....or virtual!

We are a service which offers advice and guidance. We work with early years settings, schools, post-16 settings and other professionals to ensure that children in care, previously in care, children with a social worker and kinship care, get the very best from their education.

The Post 16 Virtual School team support care leavers up to the age of 25 to ensure that they are accessing education, employment and training opportunities that meet their needs and aspirations.

We have a broad offer of support for Post 16 children in care and care leavers including:

- Information, advice, guidance (IAG)
- Signposting for young people and professionals about local opportunities
- Overseeing personal education plans
- Delivering CPD
- Promoting Higher Education Opportunities / Aspirations programmes
- Delivering NEET re-engagement programmes / work experience programmes



The Virtual School Post 16 Team



What do we mean by a 'care leaver'?

Anyone aged 16-25 who has spent 13 weeks or more in the care of local authority since their 14th birthday and were in care on or after their 16th birthday.

Norfolk Education, Employment and Training snapshot

We have 1121 care leavers aged 16-25, approx. 1/3 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

450 in Further Education

159 in employment

46 in Higher Education

11 on apprenticeships

404 are Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET)
(approx. 36%)

Barriers to Employment

Care experienced young people are 4 times more likely to be NEET compared to non-care experienced peers

What do you think are some of the challenges faced by care experienced young people in accessing education, employment and training?

Join [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) / use code 5660 0275



Barriers to Employment

Social Emotional Mental Health:

- trauma / adverse childhood experiences
- higher risk of experiencing mental health difficulties

Education experience:

- disrupted education – unmet needs / placement moves
- not fulfilling educational potential, leaving Year 11 with low / no qualifications
- more likely to have SEN / EHCP

Practical challenges:

- navigating independent living while maintaining a job / attending a course
- managing appointments / other commitments

Societal disadvantage:

- lack of supportive networks / contacts e.g. for work experience, employment etc.
- housing / benefits situation

Our incredible young people



Employers are lucky to have care experienced young people as part of their workforce. Care experienced young people are equipped with skills that other young people of a similar age may not have and bring different perspectives into your business:

Resilience care experienced young people have resilience in abundance, navigating their way through challenges in life.

Problem solving / independence skills care experienced young people have often had to solve their own problems independently and without support.

Adaptability care experienced young people often have experience of adapting to new environments and situations. They may be less daunted by new experiences in a work situation, allowing them to adapt to new work environments quickly and efficiently.

John Lewis Building Happier Futures

- Supportive work experience programme for care experienced young people aged 16+
- Sept 2023 / June 2024 @ John Lewis Norwich branch + Swaffham Waitrose – July 2024
- 22 YP attended open days
- 18 YP went on to complete 3 days of work experience in different roles, combined with interview support + food hygiene certificate
- Cohort #1 had guaranteed interview for the Christmas temp positions. 6 YP were interviewed, and all were offered a job!
- 2 went on to secure roles once their temporary contracts were up
- John Lewis described our YP as ‘phenomenal’, ‘great attitude’, ‘absolutely fantastic’, ‘absolutely smashed it’, ‘exceptional’



JOHN LEWIS | WAITROSE



What worked well



JOHN LEWIS | WAITROSE

- Trauma informed training for staff
- Making our young people feel welcome, valued and supported.
- Having a named person that they can privately raise any issues with.
- Being flexible to individual's needs, e.g., adapting shifts around young people's housing / benefits appointments etc.
- Offering different roles within the company depending on areas of interest.
- Great communication - friendly / positive / welcoming.
- Showing an interest in our young people and a genuine desire to help them in their journey.
- Supportive recruitment process – mock interviews + prep.
- 'After care' - offering an exit interview, extensive feedback and guidance around next steps / future opportunities.
- Giving young people a chance, even if they don't have the right experience or qualifications.

Given the right support and opportunities our YP can flourish!

Case Study - Martin (aged 20)



JOHN LEWIS | WAITROSE

- Had long spells of being not in education, employment or training (NEET) since leaving school, lots of placement moves and struggled to find / sustain work.
- Attended the initial open day at the Norwich branch, liked the sound of the programme and was made to feel very welcome.
- Made a great impression on John Lewis managers during his 3 days of work experience - worked hard and got on well with colleagues and customers.
- Successful in applying for a temporary Christmas role (given support to prepare for the interview)
- Did such a great job he was asked to stay on beyond the temporary period and sustained his employment for 9 months. Has built his CV to support with applying for future roles.

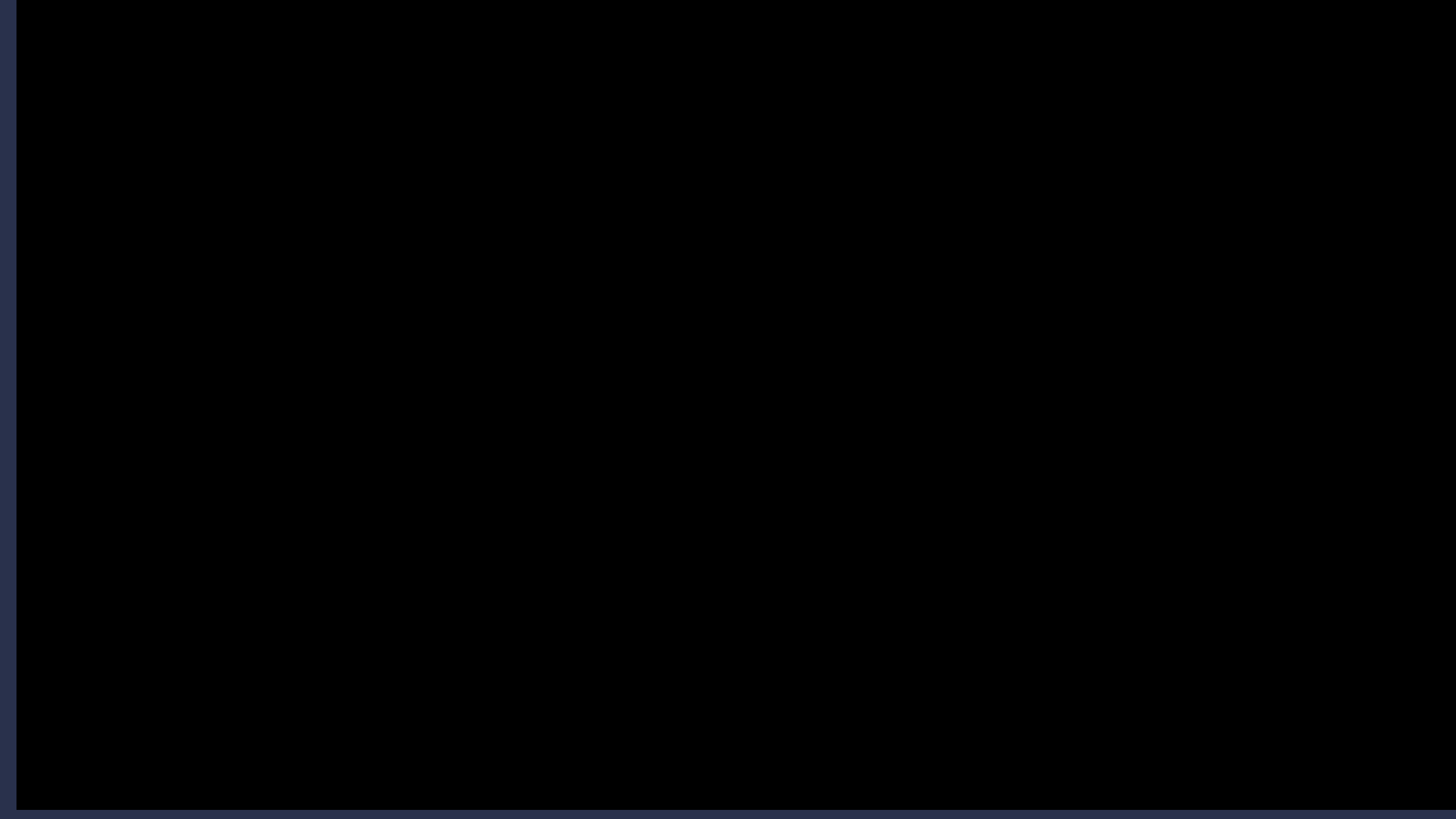
What our young people have told us



“my anxiety levels were zero”

“it has given me an opportunity to get work experience and a job out of it”.

“It’s good for your CV when you go out into the big wide world”.



OUR ASK OF NORFOLK EMPLOYERS

“COME TOGETHER, TO OFFER EXPERIENCES OF THE WORKPLACE TO NORFOLK CARE LEAVERS”

Light touch interactions: *general info session / tour giving an overview of the company / industry, info /alerts about job opportunities, recorded info about careers options / progression within the company, CV / Interview skills, mock interviews, mentorship, employer conversations, 1 day workplace experience / shadowing session.*

Work Experience Programme: 1-3 days a week replicated throughout a month(s), longer term / more in-depth, on-site workplace interactions, advice and guidance, opportunity to get to know care leavers and signpost to further job / training opportunities at the end of the programme including apprentices (with support from the employer).

What employers will get

- An opportunity to build your recruitment pipeline / free recruitment
- An opportunity to actively support your company's corporate social responsibility goals
- Guidance, support and collaboration from the Virtual School Post 16 Team during the design stage of the programme
- Support with identifying suitable young people, promotion and recruitment to the programme
- An opportunity to help some incredible young people access the workplace, develop new skills and add to their CV
- An opportunity to develop / share best practice and generate case studies
- Increase diversity in your workplace and bring in fresh perspectives

Maximising potential, what we know works well

Considerations	What works well
Change in routine	Preparing a written / visual plan of the day 1:1 conversation & drop in / tour before placement starts
Forming & maintaining relationships	Buddy / mentor (same person if possible) Meet and greet with open body language Modelling appropriate workplace behaviour
Forming a positive self-image	Praise and rewards (know how the YP likes to receive feedback) Little and often Ending the day with recognition of successes / achievement (however small)
Triggers	Being mindful of staffroom conversations about family, news events, social media, community events
Managing stress	Safe space, report any worries, restorative conversation
Information retention and problem solving	Now / Next – subtly support instructions

Tarmac project



**SO
MUCH
MORE**

From the moment you join you work, earn, learn and grow.



Careers information session for care-experienced young people

Thurs 3rd October, 09:30 - 13:00

Kestrel House, Whitelodge Business Park, Hall Road,
Norwich NR4 6DG

Tarmac are the UK's leading sustainable construction materials, road contracting and building product business. Come along to their info session to find out about the huge range of roles they offer including:

- Engineering
- Quantity Surveying
- Road Surfacing, Highways and Traffic Management
 - Commercial
 - Logistics

Attendees will be able to find out about work experience and apprenticeship programmes on offer.

To sign up for a place, please email:
jamie.robson@norfolk.gov.uk



What next?



JOHN LEWIS | WAITROSE



What next?

- Developing further employability programmes with other employers, including Octavius, Coop, NHS, East Anglian Chambers
- Skills Academy – launching Oct 2025
- NCC Care Leaver policy – guidance for NCC managers on how best to support care leavers within the organisation
- Working with procurement to ensure offers for care experienced young people are built into any contracts with NCC

We would love to add more Norfolk businesses to our network of employers who support care experience young people

Contacts:

Clare Cloves (Post 16 Strategic Lead)

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Jamie Robson (Learning & Employment Adviser)

jamie.robson@norfolk.gov.uk

Contact us if you want to get involved. We are always looking for inclusive employers and will arrange to meet with you to understand how we can work together

We will work with you to design a bespoke programme. This could be a light touch offer or a longer programme

The result will be more success stories across Norfolk with employers offering care experienced opportunities to access experiences of work

Any Questions

Please let us know what you think



<https://forms.office.com/e/PqVNki3HUA>

