



University
of Exeter

Graduate transitions for care-experienced students: what we know and what we don't know

Dr Neil Harrison
University of Exeter and NNECL Trustee
n.harrison2@exeter.ac.uk | @DrNeilHarrison

Context: where are we now?

- Increasing knowledge about how to support access and participation for care-experienced learners (e.g. Ellis and Johnston, 2019)
- Strong improvements in support offered by most universities – increasing take-up of NNECL Quality Mark
- Evidence that completion rates are improving rapidly, but still below average (Office for Students, 2022)
- Participation for young care leavers static at 13% (Department for Education, 2021) – likely growth in older care-experienced learners

So, where do we go next?

- Emerging focus on what happens at the end of degree – access to postgraduate study or graduate employment
- Not sufficient to provide support during undergraduate study – care-experienced students also need help with their next transition
- Going to focus on two studies: one quantitative and complete, the other qualitative and on-going
- Also briefly explore some gaps in our knowledge



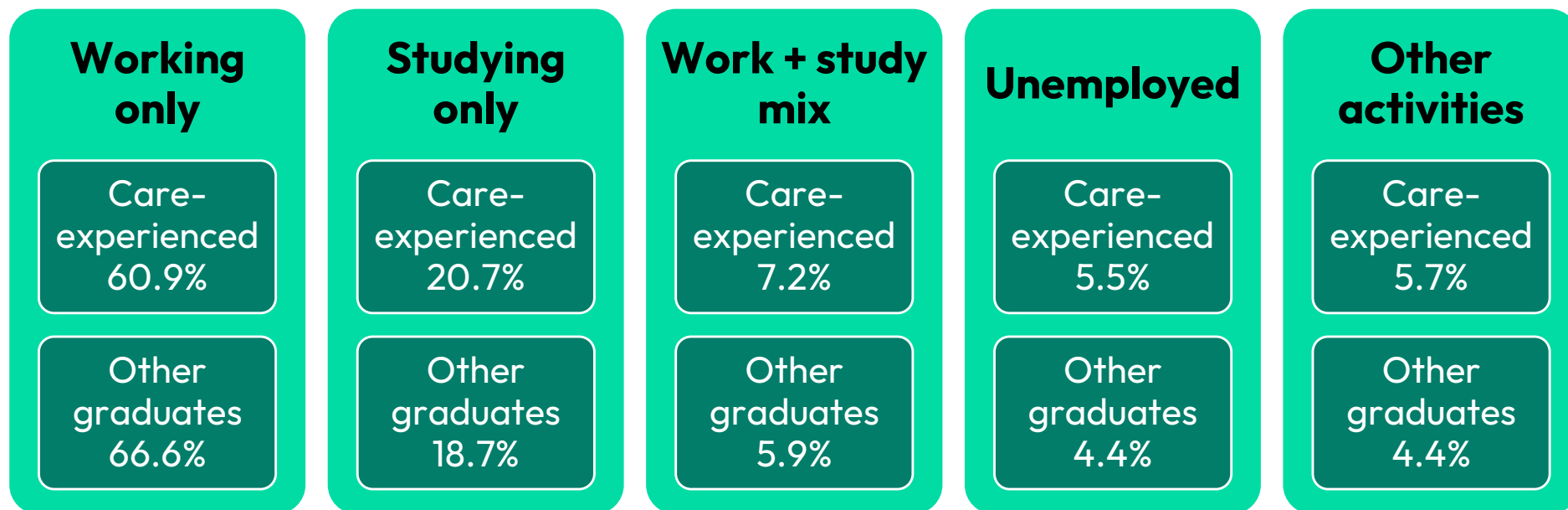
Study 1: national graduate data



- Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey
- Data on those graduating in 2016/17 – snapshot around six months after graduation
- Focus here on 171,680 graduates, including 1,010 (0.6%) self-declared care-experienced graduates:
 - UK ‘home’ only – no EU or international students
 - Full-time only – no part-time students
 - Degree level – no sub-degree or postgraduate

Stephenson *et al.*, (2020); Harrison *et al.* (2022); Baker *et al.* (2022)

Graduate outcomes



Harrison *et al.* (2022)

Similarities and differences

- Patterns quite similar between care-experienced and other graduates – no significant difference in ‘positive graduate outcomes’ (Harrison *et al.*, 2022)
- Slightly less likely to be working six months after graduation:
 - Less likely to be in ‘professional’ work – but same overall income profile
 - Non-UK nationals, those with lower degree classes and those from universities outside the Russell Group more likely to be unemployed
- Significantly more likely to be in postgraduate study after six months (Baker *et al.*, 2022) – 25.3% compared to 21.4%

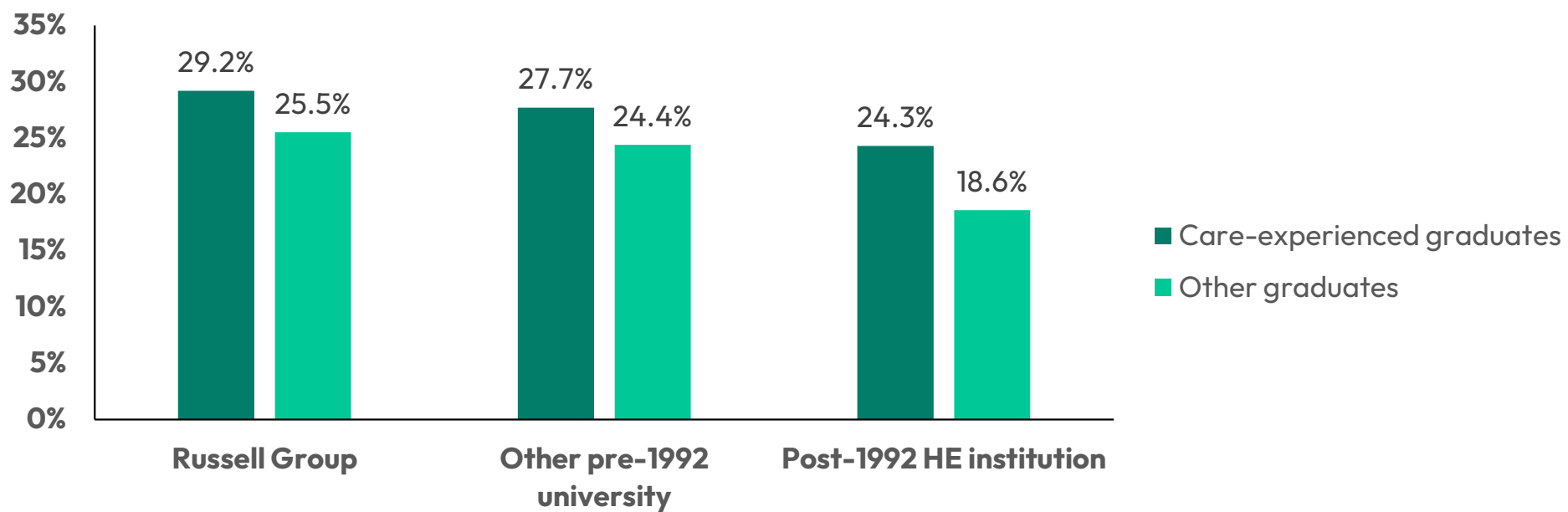
Patterns of postgraduate study



- No clear differences in profile in who moves into postgraduate study between care-experienced and other graduates
- Some indications of higher propensity among:
 - Disabled care-experienced graduates, especially those who did not receive the DSA
 - Care-experienced graduates from Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi communities and those with Other/Unknown ethnicity
 - Older care-experienced graduates (esp. 21 to 24 group)

Baker *et al.* (2022)

Progression by university type



Baker *et al.* (2022)

Changing institution for PG study

| | | Russell Group for PG | Other Pre-1992 for PG | Post-1992 for PG | Other for PG |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Russell Group for UG | CE graduate | 71.0% | 12.9% | 16.1% | - |
| | Other graduate | 70.4% | 9.0% | 7.9% | 12.7% |
| Other Pre-1992 for UG | CE graduate | 15.9% | 63.6% | 13.6% | 6.8% |
| | Other graduate | 22.6% | 56.0% | 10.6% | 10.8% |
| Post-1992 for UG | CE graduate | 10.5% | 11.0% | 69.6% | 8.8% |
| | Other graduate | 14.0% | 8.3% | 67.2% | 10.4% |

Baker *et al.* (2022)

Study 2: longitudinal tracking



- Following 23 care-experienced graduates in England and Scotland from final year to 12 months post-graduation
- Explores what constrains and enables graduates as they transition into employment or further study
- Phase One completed and Phase Two underway:
 - Phase one report due to be released shortly at www.drzoebaker.co.uk/currentoutputs
 - Sign up for updates: www.drzoebaker.co.uk/current-projects

Early recommendations

- Improving careers preparation for soon-to-be graduates within higher education institutions and local authorities
- Addressing the graduate 'care cliff edge' by enhancing financial and housing support for care-experienced graduates
- Creating inclusive and trauma-informed workplace cultures
- Providing more relevant employment opportunities for care-experienced graduates via the Care Leaver Covenant
- Extending financial, accommodation, academic and disability support to the postgraduate level



What we don't know (yet)...

1. What happens to care-experienced graduates beyond six months after graduation – e.g. outcomes from postgraduate study or progression in work
2. Whether care-experienced graduates are more/less likely to return to postgraduate study after a period out of learning
3. What postgraduate courses care-experienced learners are pursuing
4. Whether different types of care (e.g. foster vs. residential) and the Staying Put and Staying Close schemes influence graduate outcomes
5. Whether student records data show the same picture as self-declarations
6. What the outcomes are for part-time care-experienced graduates

References

- Baker, Z., N. Harrison, J. Stevenson and P. Wakeling (2022) Patterns of postgraduate transitions amongst care-experienced graduates in the United Kingdom, *Cambridge Journal of Education* 52(3), 349-368.
- Department for Education (2021) *Widening participation in higher education* [online], available at <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education>.
- Ellis, K. and C. Johnston (2019) *Pathways to university from care: findings report one*, Sheffield: University of Sheffield.
- Harrison, N., Z. Baker and J. Stevenson (2022) Employment and further study outcomes for care-experienced graduates in the UK, *Higher Education* 83(2), 357-378.
- Office for Students (2022) *Student characteristic data: student outcomes* [online], <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-characteristics-data-student-outcomes>, Bristol: Office for Students.
- Stevenson, J., Z. Baker, N. Harrison, B. Bland, S. Jones-Devitt, A. Donnelly, N. Pickering and L. Austen (2020) *Positive impact? What factors affect access, retention and graduate outcomes for university students with a background of care or family estrangement?* Bristol: Unite Foundation.



University
of Exeter

Graduate transitions for care-experienced students: what we know and what we don't know

Dr Neil Harrison
University of Exeter and NNECL Trustee
n.harrison2@exeter.ac.uk | @DrNeilHarrison