

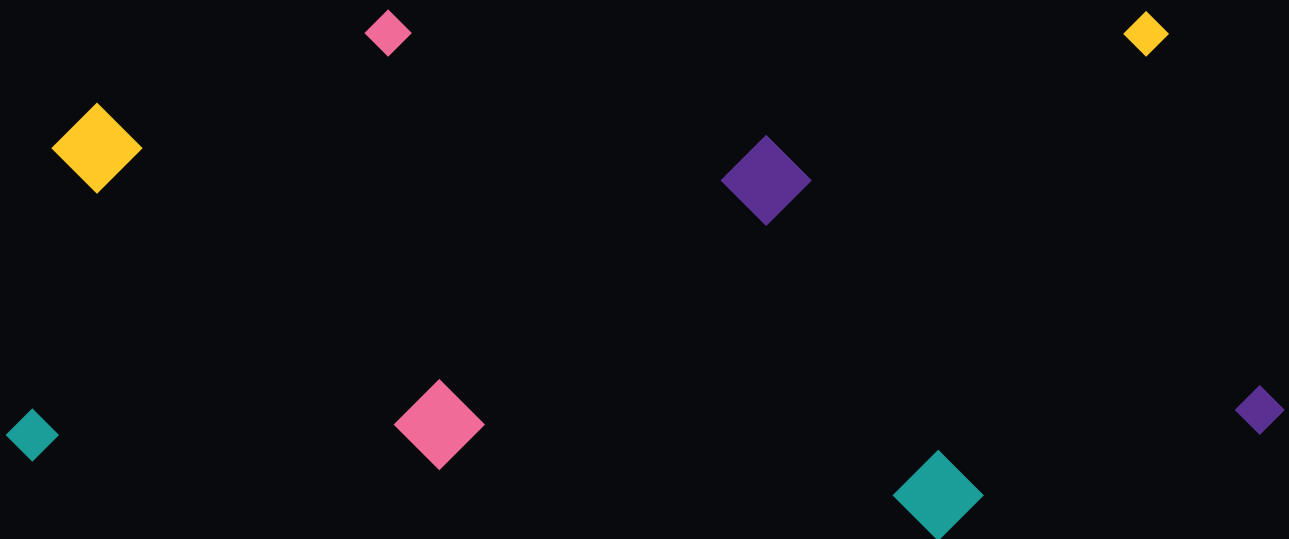
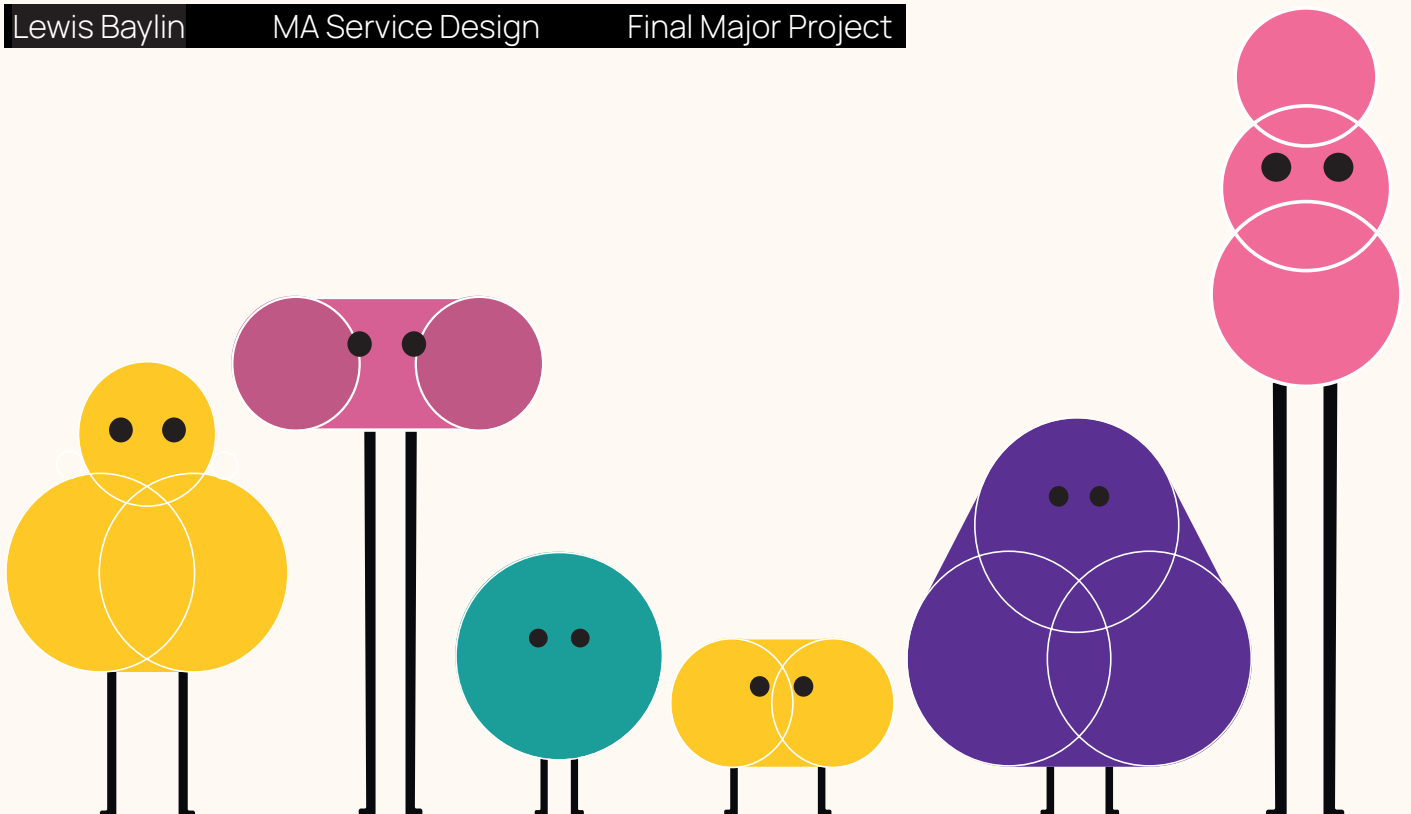
Returning The Favour.

Creating A Caring Service For Carers In
Higher Education.

Lewis Baylin

MA Service Design

Final Major Project







Acknowledgment

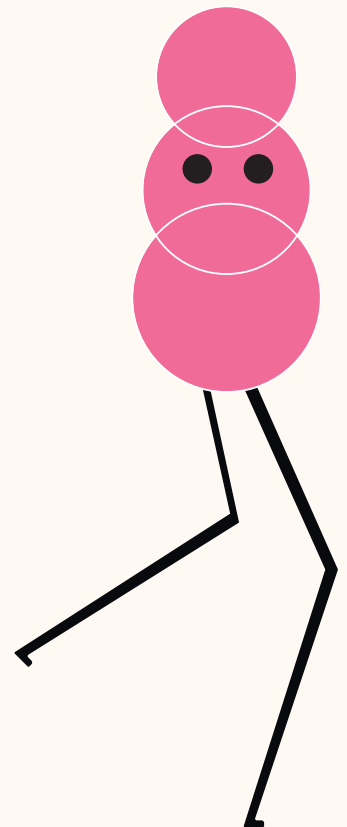
I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Alison Prendiville for her guidance and brilliant mind. I also extend my thanks to the Learning & Working Institute and the Carers Trust for giving me the opportunity to advocate for the needs of student carers.



My positioning

As a young adult carer myself, I feel like I have experienced slipping through various access gaps while in education and have had to navigate the multitude of responsibilities which come with being a caregiver in isolation. Throughout my education, I had little support offered and I only reached out for support when reaching a breaking point, which for many student-carers is too late. Despite my responsibilities, I made the difficult decision to go to university, however I wasn't aware of the financial, emotional and educational challenges that I was to encounter. Moreover, I wasn't even conscious of how much my caring roles impacted my life, as they had just become normality.

My responsibilities ranged from ordering my mother online food shops whilst in lectures through to calling my mum several times a day when she felt down. In the back of my mind, I felt guilty about leaving my home in Leeds and spent time worrying about mine and my mothers financial situation. I knew students around me wouldn't understand, and I was embarrassed when people would ask "why are you always on the phone to your mum". I had to learn alone and I had to learn quickly. I hope that by creating this report, it will shine light on the importance of returning the favour, and creating a caring university experience for carers while they attempt to support their loved one while in higher education.





Abstract

This service design project explores two key opportunities to improve support for students with care responsibilities. First, it outlines a proposed service transformation at my current institution, the University of the Arts London. Second, it presents a framework of interventions that can be applied across universities throughout the UK.

This past year has been significant for young adult and student carers, with UCAS introducing the option for students to self-identify as having care responsibilities. While not all carers recognize themselves in this role, this change is a positive step, offering universities a chance to establish targeted support systems for self-identifying carers. However, many universities are not yet leveraging this data effectively to create meaningful outcomes for carers. Students have taken the step of notifying their universities—now it's time for universities to step up, and create a caring service for carers in Higher Education.

Getting the terms right

Unpaid Carer: This is defined as “A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support” (Carers Trust, 2021).

Young Adult Carer: This is defined as “young people aged 16–25” Carers Trust (n.d.).

Young Carer: This is defined as “A young carer is someone aged 18” Carers Trust (n.d.).

Student Carer: This includes students of all ages who have caring responsibilities, the term young adult carer excludes mature students and a term which I have decided to use throughout this report

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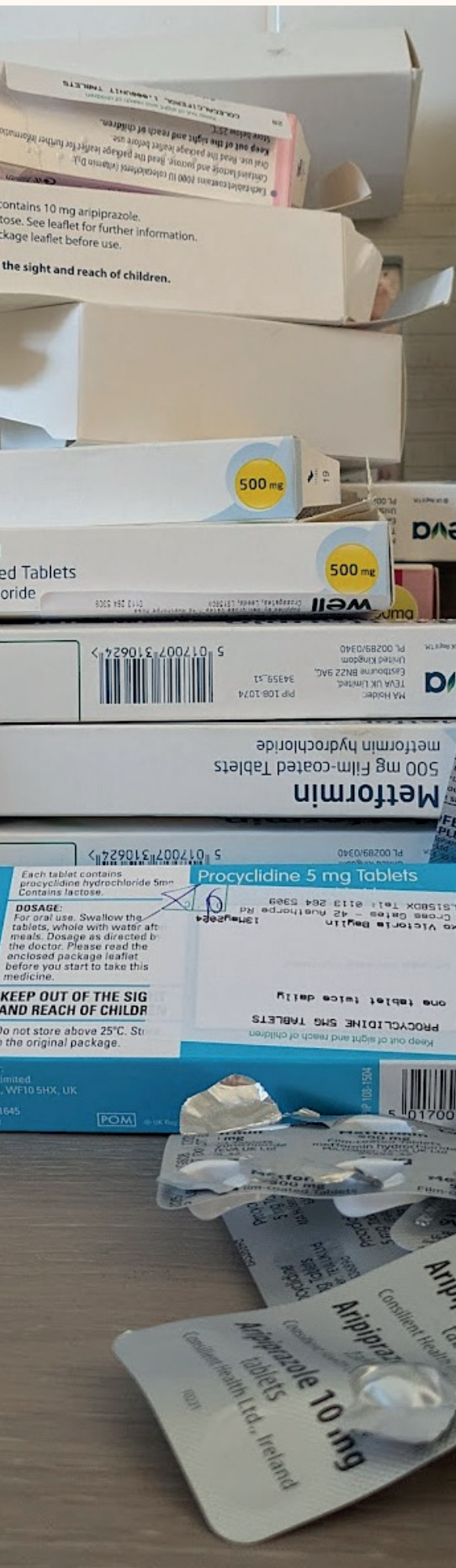
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Introduction

Field of Study

Despite national progress in supporting young carers and adult carers, young adult carers often fall into a transitional gap, receiving limited targeted support. This project addresses the complex challenges faced by student carers, employing Service Design Thinking to explore key issues across touchpoints and scales. A holistic, co-creative approach is central, as Brown highlights “Design thinking is a human-centred approach to innovation that integrates the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for success.” (Brown, 2009).

The project follows an evidence-based design approach, utilising lived experiences to inform strategies for enhancing the higher education journey of student carers. Engagement with the unpaid carer community has occurred on various levels, from connecting with other carers to speaking with political figures and advocates such as Princess Anne. Partnerships with organisations like the Carers Trust and the Young Carers Alliance have been integral, alongside contributions the Learning and Working Institute, through the Creating Change in HE Programme. Key advocacy efforts included speaking at the reformation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers and participating in a planned meeting with the Government Minister to push for policy changes, such as exempting student carers from the Carer’s Allowance restriction.

As Stickdorn and Schneider argues, “Service design thinking connects stakeholders to co-create value.” This project exemplifies how these principles can drive systemic change, tackling barriers and empowering student carers through collaborative, evidence-based solutions. (Brown, 2009; Stickdorn and Schneider, 2010).



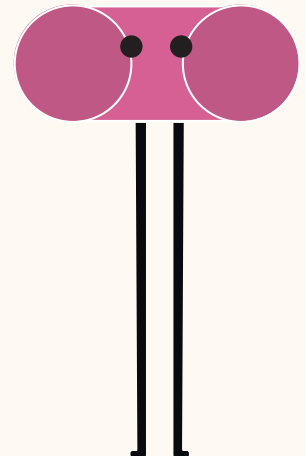
Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by several academic frameworks central to service design and user-centred design. The Double Diamond model (Design Council, 2005) provides a structured and iterative approach to problem-solving, which is essential when addressing the complex challenges faced by student carers. By following the stages of Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver, this model ensures a comprehensive understanding of the problem space, allowing for a thorough exploration and refinement of prototypes and solutions.

Design Thinking is another key framework, focusing on human-centred design that emphasizes empathy, user involvement, and iteration (Brown, 2009). This approach aligns with the project's commitment to ensuring that student carers are actively involved in the design process, allowing their lived experiences to directly inform the development of project. The principles of Design Thinking ensure that solutions are practical and true to the constraints of the higher education system.

Additionally, co-design and co-discovery methodologies emphasize collaboration between stakeholders- student carers, educational institutions, and policymakers (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). These approaches help connect complex ecosystems where all participants contribute to shaping the service.

Autoethnography is a method for capturing the personal experiences of my life as a student carer. It provides a deeper understanding of my challenges by combining personal narratives with broader contextual insights (Ellis, 2004). This qualitative approach offers a valuable perspective that directly informs the service design process, ensuring that the solutions developed are grounded in real-world experiences (Adams et al., 2015). Through reflection and storytelling, it creates empathy and helps create more user-centred services.



Methodology

Autoethnography & Reflective Practice

Autoethnography has allowed me to reflect on how my caring responsibilities have shaped my life. By examining the impacts of care-giving across different time frames, creating a reflective journal, and mapping my experiences through discovery exercises, I gained a more comprehensive understanding of my journey into higher education. This reflective practice is a core element of autoethnography, and allows researchers to question internal conditions such as feelings and emotions, external conditions such as the environment and the temporal dimensions of past, present and future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Research Through Design

Research through design is recognised as “design activities that play a formative role in the generation of knowledge” (Stappers et al. 2014). This method involves developing and testing practical solutions collaboratively with student carers in higher education. By adopting this approach, the outcomes align closely with the needs of the intended users. These outcomes are grounded in the lived experiences and real-world challenges encountered within the context of university life. Such a participatory strategy ensures that the solutions are relevant and address complex issues through iterative design cycles.

Ethical Design

Ethical design helps to ensure that the research process and designed outcomes are solutions that are inclusive and respectful of lived experience, particularly for vulnerable groups like student carers. It emphasises social responsibility by involving carers in the design process, ensuring their voices shape the services they need (Govers & van Halen, 2014). This approach counters systemic barriers in higher education and promotes transparency and fairness. (Buchanan, 2001). Ethical design not only addresses immediate needs but also advocates for systemic change that supports the well-being of student carers in higher education.



Double Diamond



The Double Diamond framework is employed to tackle complex service design problems (Design Council, 2005). It divides the design process into four stages: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver, ensuring a holistic approach to problem-solving. The first diamond focuses on broadening understanding, while the second narrows down to actionable solutions (Mager & Thoring, 2012). It encourages collaborative design and social innovation, ensuring that outcomes are both user-centred and impactful. This framework is reflected in the structure of the report and works through the phases as seen bellow.

DISCOVER

- Desk research into existing support at universities for student carers.
- Interview with UAL support team to understand existing support
- Interview with the Learning & Working institute
- Start autoethnography, create reflective journal and day in the life

DEFINE

- Process research data and find specific service opportunities
- Define the problem space and refine project objectives
- Continue to connect with stakeholders and speak with carers and experts
- Begin brainstorming ideas and potential service solutions

DEVELOP

- Explore possible solutions with stakeholders and student carer
- Co-design with stakeholders and student carers
- Identify focus point of the service concept
- Start synthesising data and setting up report.
- Identify key interventions working at different scales.

DELIVER

- Conclusion of service concept
- Finalise report and visuals
- Stakeholder map, Service blueprint and finalised service outcome
- Share finding back to appropriate stakeholders
- Collaborate with the UAL, presenting them with a service which can be implemented in house.

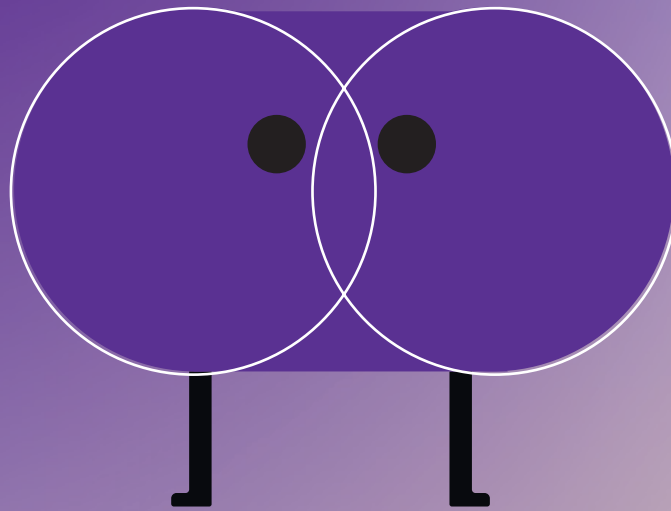
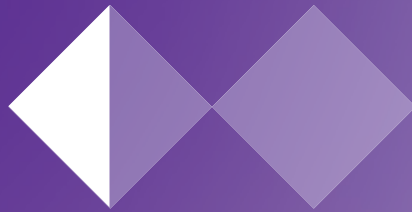
JUNE

JULY

AUGUST SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER



DISCOVER

This section examines the need for change by conducting both primary and secondary discovery research. It presents data that uncovers key insights, highlighting areas requiring intervention and opportunities for improvement.

A need for change

Young Adult Carers & Barriers to Higher Education:

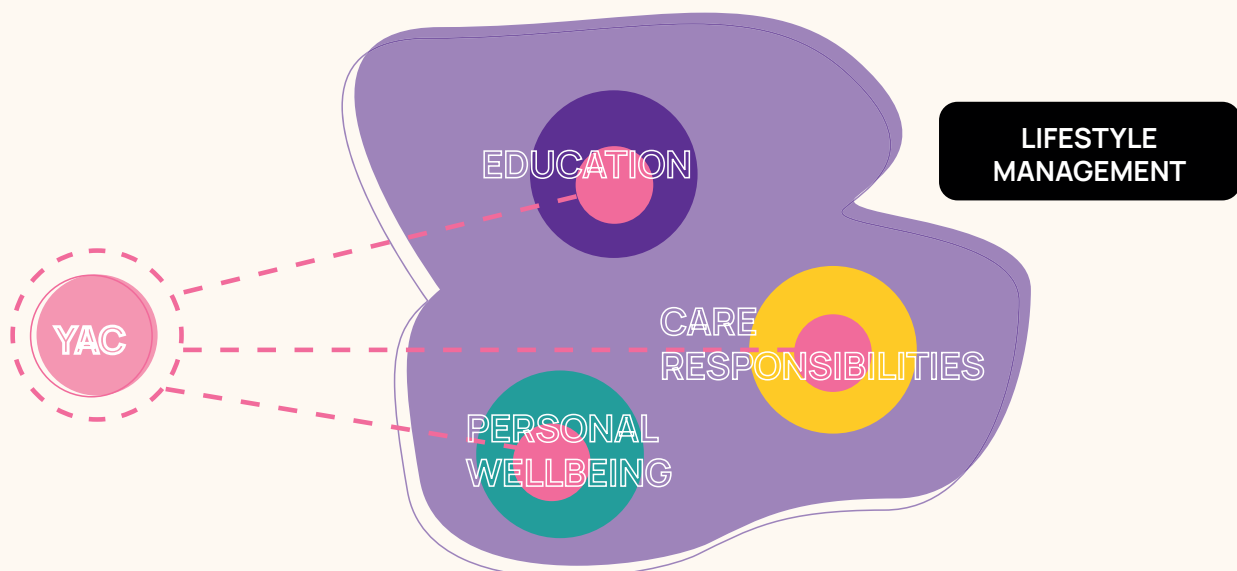
Young adult carers (YACs), aged 16-25, provide an estimated £3.5 billion worth of unpaid care annually in the UK (Aylward, 2024). These individuals often struggle to balance care-giving with educational responsibilities and personal well-being. There are approximately 275,000 YACs in the UK, but the actual number is likely closer to 600,000 (Working & Learning Institute, 2024). Trying to gain an education while caring for someone else can put a great deal of strain on YAC and therefore the pressures of caring have resulted in a large education gap for this minority group.

As a result, YAC are at a greater risk of not being in education, employment, or training (NEET) with 23.1% of registered carers and 9.8% of unregistered carers were NEET, compared to 5.3% who were not carers. (Youth Employment UK, 2023). YAC's take on a lot of responsibility yet often get very little support in return. This has huge implications upon a caregivers life and the opportunities in which they have, being 38% less likely to obtain a degree level qualifica-

tion than compared to their peers, and very often grow up in low-income households (Aylward, 2024).

Beyond this, those individuals who do make it to higher education are often faced with the emotional and financial challenges, from the feelings of guilt for moving away from home through to the high costs of unexpected trips home. Ultimately this can lead to an increase in likelihood of drop-out and poor attendance, with 39% of young carers in 2022-23 were persistent absentees (Department for Education, 2023).

So what can, and are universities doing to better support students with care responsibilities? How can the University of Arts London work towards becoming a proactive and caring university for carers?



Getting the numbers right

What the data tells us.

Financially:

Current UK policy creates the conditions for Young Carers (YC) and YAC to make the difficult decision between education and caring. Policy states that a carer cannot be in education for over 21 hours per week and still access the carers allowance of £76.75 per week (Government Digital Service, 2014). This makes a clear parallel to the previously mentioned statistics of YAC's 38% less likely to obtain a degree (Aylward, 2023). Alongside the fact that caregivers are often from low-income households as the parent is unable to work (Aylward, 2023), it begs the question as to why the UK government would create more difficult conditions to access Higher Education (HE). Contrastingly, this law is not followed in Scotland with student-care being an exception to this policy.

38%

“less likely to obtain a university degree than their peers, with those caring for over 35 hours per week a shocking 86% less likely to gain a degree.”

Statistically:

Under-representation is a big major issue when trying to understand the scale of students with care responsibilities across the UK. As previously mentioned, there are approximately 275,000 YACs in the UK, but the actual number is likely closer to 600,000 (Working & Learning Institute, 2024). There are many reasons for this but ultimately this roots back to lack of data collection. Young Adult Carers are not officially recognised by the not UK government (like care leavers for example) and no strategy or policy is currently in place to support them (Carers Trust, 2023). Likewise these issues continue into HE. Without clear data it becomes more difficult to create a case to integrate a policy lead strategy in place to better support and identify young adult carers in HE. With greater clarity on statistical data, there is greater leverage to bring in a policy which is backed by the UK government and help create the conditions for a caring environment for carers in HE.



Under-representation

Key Project Stakeholders



The key stakeholders engaged throughout this project include the Carers Trust, the Young Carers Alliance, and the Learning & Working Institute. Through these partnerships, I have connected directly with student carers, engaged with delegates from key higher education organizations such as UCAS, and participated in policy discussions, including the reformation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers (APPG).

Additionally, I collaborated with care charities from both England and Scotland to explore how caregiving challenges are experienced across the UK and how various organisations are supporting student carers.

The project outcomes are framed through the context of the University of Arts London but offer potential for service interventions to be implemented at universities across the UK.

**CARERS
TRUST**

L&W LEARNING AND
WORK INSTITUTE

ual university
of the arts
london

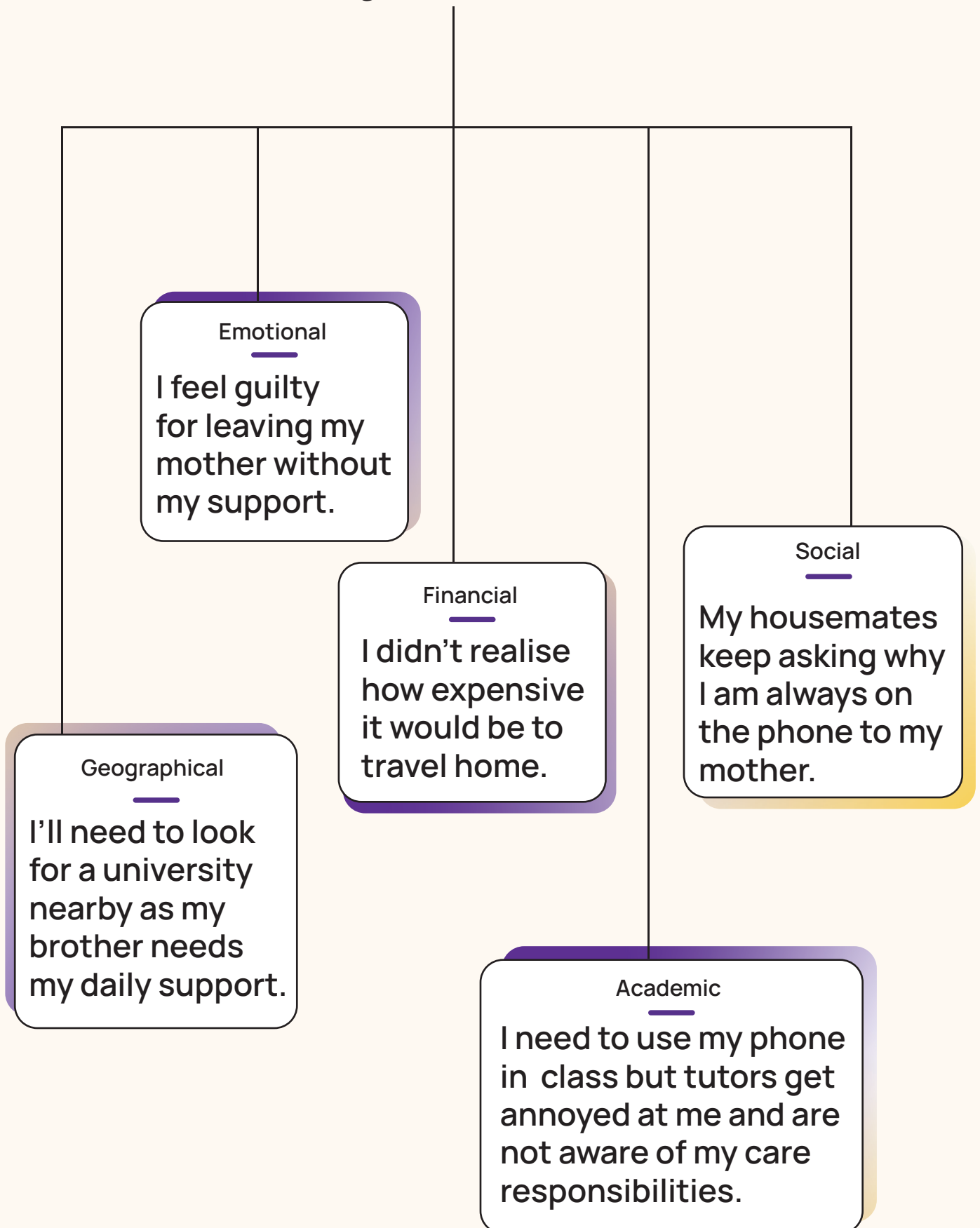
appg
All-Party
Parliamentary
Group for
Young Carers &
Young Adult
Carers

Young Carers
Alliance

falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

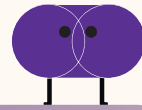
**York
Carers
Centre**

The challenges of being a carer in higher education



The problem space

Geographical



"I decided to stay at home while studying. This means I could only go to a university nearby. I have to cycle to university everyday. I am often late, and teachers still give me a hard time instead of asking why."

A carers geography can be an indicator of the opportunities that they may have. The physical responsibilities for student carers mean that they often either need to stay at home and travel to the nearest university or find a university within a short commutable distance to home. Data suggests that **young adult carers are 39% more likely to choose to live at home while they study and 41% choose to study within a 30 minute drive from home** (Carers Trust, 2024). This is 25% more likely than those without caring responsibilities and put young adult carers. (Carers Trust, 2024) This draws the term 'postcode lottery' and creates a situation where young adult carers don't have a fair level of choice when deciding upon a university. This limits a carer's choice, particularly if they have high academic aspirations yet lack access to suitable local universities. For students who stay at home this may put strain on the pressures of academic life and caring while limiting opportunities to meet with new students and create new friendship groups and career networks.

39%

"more likely to choose to live at home while they study and 41% choose to study within a 30 minute drive from home"

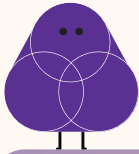


Emotional

"It takes over your future. I can't think about my goals without considering my caring role implications - this makes me feel guilty and trapped".

The implications of caring can have a huge impact on a student carers personal well-being. Starting university is a big enough challenge, having to navigate a new city, workload and peers alongside new unique challenges of caring for someone while they may be in another city proves to be emotionally challenging for YAC. It is understood that student carers are 71% more likely to report mental health conditions (UCAS, 2024), challenges or disorder when compared with their peers. Student carers often face feelings of guilt and conflict when making a choice between Higher Education and their caring responsibilities, and feel high levels of isolation and loneliness when making decisions which can have large implications for a student carer's life.

The problem space



Financial

“I have to balance full time education, caring and paid part time work on my weekends. I have no time for myself and feel like I’m fighting a losing battle everyday”.

As previously mentioned, the current UK policy means that many young adult carers have to make the choice between accessing government financial support or attending full-time higher education (Government Digital Service, 2014). However the challenges don't stop there. Students with caring responsibilities often come from low-income backgrounds (Aylward, 2024) and is reflected through the data which suggests that **70% of young adult carers have concerns about finances and 63% said they considered working part-time alongside their studies**(UCAS, 2024). This means that flexibility in attendance at a university is a key factor when decisioning-making. Student carers also have additional expenses from travelling home regularly or in emergency situations to supporting family members who are unable to work.

70%

“of young adult carers have concerns about finances and 63% said they considered working part-time alongside their studies”

Academic



“Places of education need to be more aware of what young carers have to go through. It can be difficult and draining. We aren't lazy; we are tired and overworked.”

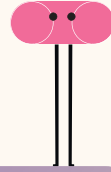
72%

“of young adult carers “never” or “rarely” spoke to teaching staff about their care responsibilities.”

Student carers may face issues around identification and support when joining university. **It is understood that 72% of young adult carers “never” or “rarely” spoke to teaching staff about their care responsibilities**(UCAS, 2024). Universities don't do enough to support YAC nor create the conditions for YAC to be able to speak about their circumstances. Furthermore, the data suggests that the lack of official recognition of a young adult carer's status means that they are sometimes not aware that they are entitled to any additional support alongside the fact that the support is not initially visible to young adult carers. University services are often more reactive than proactive and this leaves a huge risk in the likelihood of the student completing their studies, can indicate why students are 4 times more likely to drop out when compared with their peers (Working & Learning Institute, 2024).

The problem space

Social

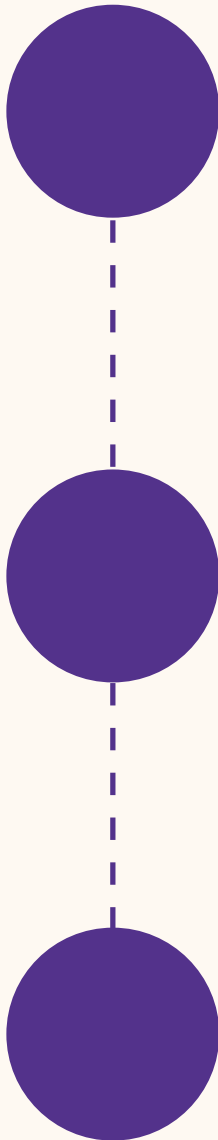


"I wish there were more people that understand the struggles and that sometimes I won't be able to attend because the person I care for may be ill that day."

Loneliness and isolation is a major problem for student carers. They often feel isolated and feel that no one will understand what they are going through on top of the fact that they may perceive their caring responsibilities as embarrassing (Sempik and Becker, 2013). As students are more likely to take on part time work, it means that they may also miss out on forming social connections with peers on weekend events or through missing university classes as a result of needing to access additional finances. This can further develop a separation from the student carers and peers and lead to more challenging university experience.



UAL's current support



Financial

There is no specific financial support for student with care responsibilities, whoever money is available under specific hardship. The process of accessing the finances is quite invasive asking for all bank accounts and statements and even asking for reason for payments over '£100'.

Benefits: There is money available in times of 'hardship'

Painpoints: The support feels 'hidden' for student-carers

Academic

Staff only become aware of a students needs when the student tells them. There is a policy in place which includes student-carers, but the website feels like it concerns students with children instead of student-carers and can lead to a missed opportunity to access support. The policy allows for extensions and academic adjustments.

Benefits: Policy provides extensions and adjustments

Painpoints: The website wording is very misleading

Emotional

UAL provides free CBT and counselling support for students who may find themselves in times of distress or if they have mental health problem. This is important for carers, but there is a lack of tailored support specific to the needs of a student-carer.

Benefits: Free support for all students in times of distress

Painpoints: Lack of tailored support for student-carers

Who's doing it better

Sheffield University

Financial support

Sheffield university offer carers up to £4,500 per academic year (University of Sheffield, n.d.) which student do not have to pay back. This helps massively tackle financial barriers.

Pre-university support

Proactive approach through actively reaching out to carers in high school, offering Access & Travel bursaries to ensure carers and low-income students are able to attend open days.

University College of London

Pre-entry support

Clear support around self-identifying as a carer through the UCAS application. Helping carers to become visible before joining university.

Outline support

The web page give three important reasons to make yourself aware to the university as a carer, from getting the right support to considerations given the context of your achievements.

Queen Mary University

Clarity

There is a clear differentiation on being a carer and being a parent. This is a major painpoint which is clearly dealt with on their carers landing page.

External support

Provide links to important resources to local carers centres. This allows students who may be new to areas become aware of the external support available to them.

City University

Phased support

City University of London excels in outlining support, prior to joining, while studying and after graduating the university. With ongoing support at each phase.

Post-graduation support

The university provides a graduation package to support students financially and professionally at the difficult stage between graduating and finding professional work.

Primary Research

Key Stakeholders Research

Policy Level

Carers Trust
The Learning & Working Institute
All Parliamentary Party Group for Young Carers & Young Adult Carers

Social Workers

York Carers
Sefton Carers
IMAGO Southwark
Falkirk Carers
Lambeth Council

Students with Care Responsibilities

A-Level
Undergraduate
Masters
Mature

UAL Support Staff

Mental Health Team

UCAS Advisor

Fair Access Team
Application Team



Active Work with Stakeholders



Foreword

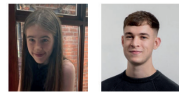
In today's education system, it feels like students who are also carers are left to cope with far too much. We are constantly juggling our education and personal lives with the challenges of caring for someone. It's really hard, but it often feels like schools, colleges and universities don't take into account all the extra things we do as carers. We feel forgotten and are often punished for things outside our control, usually because people either don't understand our situation, or just aren't interested.

We hope that by setting out the facts, this report will help people understand our needs as young carers and help us get the right support when we need it. As carers, all we want are the same opportunities as other students. We shouldn't be disadvantaged because we are carers.

One of the key findings in this report is that almost 1 in 4 young carers say there is no support at all for young carers in their school, college, or university. Another finding is that almost a third of young carers are regularly late for school because of all the things they need to do at home as carers. But instead of getting the support we need to deal with these problems, all too often we are punished. All this does is make our lives as young carers even harder than they already were.

We hope this report means our perspectives, opinions, and experiences as young carers will be listened to and taken on board, so we feel properly represented. We hope the serious findings mean politicians start to take notice of young carers and understand how being a young carer can affect young people in every aspect of their lives. This is what we need if we are to get the support we need to help change our lives.

Eden and Lewis, members of the Young People's Working Group



5 Caring and classes: the education gap for young carers

Carers Trust Report

Since starting this project, I have worked actively with the Carers Trust, part of the Young Carers Alliance. I've participated in focus groups with other young adult carers in education and co-wrote the foreword for the latest Carers Trust report.

All-party Parliamentary Group

I was invited to the all-party parliamentary group for young carers and young adult carers, where I shared my experience as a carer in education, helping to shape the APPG's future focus areas.

Driving Change in Higher Education

I was invited, in collaboration with the Carers Trust, the Learning & Working Institute, and City, to discuss improving support for young adult carers transitioning into higher education. I shared my experiences with key stakeholders, including Princess Anne, who attended the event.

CARERS TRUST

What we do Help for carers Our networks

Home > What we do > Campaigning for change > All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

All-party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers



Chris Vince, Labour and Co-operative MP for Harlow, has been elected as the group's new Chair. Prior to entering Parliament, he was the Young Carers Service Manager for Essex-based charity Action for Family Carers and was also a secondary school teacher for 15 years.

The APPG vice-chairs are:

- Alison Bennett, Liberal Democrat MP and Spokesperson for Carers and Care
- Baroness Keeley, Labour Peer
- Lord Young of Cookham, Conservative peer.

In addition to electing the officers, young and young adult carers shared their experiences at the meeting on topics such as balancing caring and education, support for their families, and the join-up between health and social care services. They also presented findings from Carers Trust's new report into young carers and education, showing young carers miss more than a month of school on average.

The APPG provides a cross-party platform at Westminster for MPs and Peers committed to supporting more than one million young and young adult carers in the UK. Last year, the APPG held the first ever parliamentary inquiry into the effect of caring on young people's life opportunities. It highlighted a devastating impact on the education, wellbeing and future prospects and uncovered evidence showing 15,000 children, including 3,000 aged just five to nine, spend 50 hours or more a week caring.

This parliament, the APPG will focus on three key areas:

- Improving identification, recognition of young carers within school.
- Improving support for young adult carers as they transition to adulthood, including access to higher education, training and employment.
- Improving joined-up working between health and social care services so that young carers and their families get the support they need at the earliest opportunity.

The group also wants to work closely with the APPG for Carers on issues such as a national carers strategy.



Student-Carers

Autoethnography - A day / week / month in the life of me.

When conducting autoethnographic research, I became aware of how much my caring responsibilities have impacted my life. Prior to this, I wasn't fully conscious of the emotional, financial, and academic effects. My case involves supporting my mother with complex mental health issues.

This process helped me break down the key areas of my life impacted by caregiving, focusing on the social, educational, and financial aspects that intersect with the university experience. Additionally, I became more aware of the emotional and geographical challenges of caring for someone, noting how these challenges vary over different time frames.

Lewis Baylin - Day/Week/Month/Year(s) in the Life of a Young Adult Carer

(Work-in-progress)

Background: I have unpaid care responsibilities for my mother who has severe bi-polar, schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, diabetes and has become overweight in recent years. I care for her remotely, helping out daily with finances, emotional support, buying clothes, ordering food, creating healthy meal plans etc. She hears auditory illusions which tell her what to eat, call her names, agitate her and create a strong sense of paranoia, often believing family members or passer-bys on the street think bad of her and call her names. This means she spends most of her time in isolation with her dog Benji, which I decided to bring in as I left for university. My grandma helps out when we are in severe financial trouble or need any household improvements: bathroom, carpets, cooker (this is less frequent now I look after her finances and have an income). My other grandma is paid to clean once per week, and a dog walker also comes weekly. Other than this, I am the primary carer of my mother.

Timeframe (Average Day)

Touchpoints:

- 7:50am: I wake up, have breakfast and head to work to start at 9am.
- 9:27am: (receive text message mum) "Lewis do you think your nana Maureen has a spare inhaler that I could have please x"
- 10:03am: (receive text message mum) "Oh great I'll be able to breath xxx"
- 10:30am: (receive text message mum) "Lewis is there any way I could have my money made up to four pound please x"
- 12:46pm: (receive phone call from mum) During my lunch break, she tells me she has spent all her money on food she doesn't like, her knee is really hurting her so she doesn't want to walk anywhere and wants me to order her a food shop. She is also upset because is sick of eating the same thing everyday and just wants to eat chips. Her auditory illusions, through the voice of a doctor, have suggested that she eats one bag and chips and an orange per day in order to lose weight. I say to her that it may work but a doctor has told me that if you eat three balanced meals then you will have an even better chance of losing weight. This helps her change her thought process. Despite this she has now spent her daily allowance.
 - Note: I have learnt that disagreeing with her makes her more agitated, no matter how ridiculous her statement is, to her it's the truth. So it's important not to tell her she's being ridiculous or that she is wrong.

- 16:37pm (Action) I forgot to send her money so I logged in to her online banking (where I have made all accounts joint) while in a meeting and sent her £2.45. I got distracted from the meeting and feel like people think I'm rude for using my phone.
- 17:00pm: (receive text message from mum) "Lewis please could you give me up to five pound for bread butter and milk x"
- 17:01pm: (receive phone call from mum) "How much have I got please x"
- 18:05pm: I leave work and cycle home, cook my dinner and complete some freelance graphic design work.
- 20:54pm: (receive facetime call from mum) Asking if I will order her make-up, perfume, toilet roll, a new chip-pan, mascara, lip balm and underwear.
- 21:55pm: (I send mum text message) "Are you okay"
- 21:57pm: (receive text message from mum) "Yes I'm ok I just wondered if you could do me a little food shop if you weren't busy please xx...I'm just hungry love"
- 22:55: I say goodnight and go to sleep, and have my phone on incase of emergencies, this can wake me up sometimes.

Timeframe (Bad Day, types of events which can happen on a bad day, 2-5 events may occur on that given day)

- Falls out with family members due to intense auditory illusions, which call her names (through the voice of that family) or diet issues where she has spent all her money on one type of unhealthy food e.g., pot noodles, bags of chips, 5 x the same microwave meal.
- Misses doctors appointments
- Worried that they will take her house away
- Says she doesn't want to cook, wants to eat only takeaways
- Bulk buys pot noodles and cans of soup, then has no money when she changes her mind the next day.
- Takes extra money which I have given her to get the dog's haircut, then spends it on food. She gets upset and stressed that she has made a mistake, this upsets and angers me as I really hate when food and money are wasted.

Timeframe (Week)

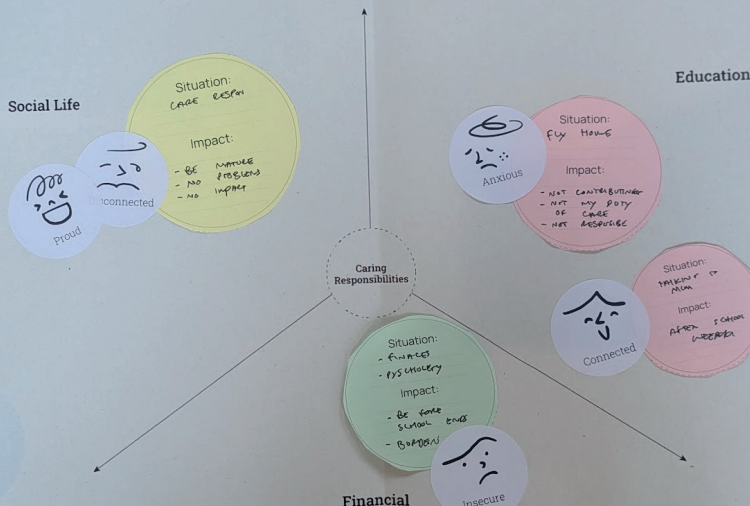
- Message from Grandma
- Organise Dog walker
- Organise Cleaner
- Online food shops
- Other mentally ill neighbours on the estate try take money from her
- Set up a security system; Ring Doorbell etc.
- She will have a weekly meltdown about food, diet, and being overweight.

Timeframe (Month)

- Order dog food / arrange dog haircut / trip to the vet
- Return home to do gardening or arrange gardener (in emergencies)
- Doctors often forget to give her injection, need to speak with nurses
- Make sure she is taking certain medication
- Purchase technology to help me assist with reminders, Alexa, Apple watch
- Purchases clothes for her once per month

There is a lot of guilt, shame and frustration. I feel angry and frustrated because I want to help and I want my mum to be happy and healthy but she makes the wrong decisions. Then she comes to me upset. So I am always taking on the burden of her issues. It makes me upset, angry and helpless.

How does caring impact the different areas of your life?



Co-discovery

I designed a co-discovery mapping exercise which acts to make student carers aware of how their responsibilities impact their life across the different dimensions of life.

It provided an opportunity to discover the situation, understand the perceived impact and emotional impact attached to the event.

Findings from co-discovery

Identification

When completing a co-discovery session with student carers, it revealed that carers are often not fully conscious of how much their responsibilities impact their life. When completing the discovery, one participant who didn't even recognise the concept of being a carer, until I spoke about my project in my class. The exercise helped her map her experience and speak for the first time about the areas which she had been impacted.

“I didn't realise until I talked with you and you mentioned the concept of carer and unpaid carer.”



Academic

When trying to return home to support the person she cared for, she didn't receive 'proper' permission to return home. In her group project, she explained how returning home made her feel like she was letting her team down.

“I need to be on the laptop whilst in the hospital, feeling anxious.”

Well-being

One carer mentions how she feels that her caring responsibilities impact her life a lot. She recognises herself as the mature one in the family and if she has a problem she has to figure it out herself. This is empowering for the carer however can leave her feeling disconnected.

“I feel proud as I am self-sufficient but disconnected because I don't share things with my family.”

Financial

She feels there is a lot of financial pressures of living in London and that she doesn't feel she is able to ask her family for support.

“I don't feel that I can ask for support or be a burden on the family.”

Student-Carerer Interviews

Mixed Age Student-carers

Findings

When reflecting on my own experience and that of other carers, it is clear to see that no two carers are the same. Each carer may have similar responsibilities on paper but very different challenges and lived experiences. This means that there is a need for tailored support.

Students feel that support is often provided by the university, but it feels 'hidden' under different names or support services. They usually find support 'by chance' or when reaching a breaking point. But again support appears varied from one university to another but it seems that getting the basics right is key. Clear information and terminology is understood to be important in accessing support early. Again highlighting the need for universities to be proactive instead of reactive.



***“I didn’t think I did
enough to call myself a
carer”***

Mature student with secondary care responsibilities

Emerging Insights

1.

Student carers don't always recognise their caring responsibilities and therefore miss out on support.

2.

Financial struggles can be a huge barrier, especially when carers may need to return home in the event of an emergency.

3.

Carers often feel like they can't talk about their own problems as the person they care for is primary concern within a family.

4.

Student carers struggle to find the right moment to speak with academic staff about their caring roles.

Identification. Hidden.

Lack of awareness.

The student-carer was so accustomed to their caring role that they didn't realise how much it impacted their life.



What if there was:

increased visibility at key touch-points?

This could include website visibility, student coms and care organisation presence intermittently throughout the academic year.


Expert Interview

Young Adult Social Care Workers

Findings

When speaking with social workers there seems to be a clear resistance from universities to work with care organisations. Often the universities with the best support in place have strong communication and dialogue with local care organisations. When universities work with care organisations, this can also reduce the load of emotional support which is needed to be provided by the university.

Referrals to local care organisations can provide student carers with tailored support if the university does not have the capacity. Additionally, it also put carers in touch with other cares, again, if this is something the university is not doing already. Care organisations can also provide training for universities and bring clarity to what a student carer is and how to best identify and support them.



“I want universities to have better relationships with carer networks”

Young Adult Carer Support Worker

Emerging Insights

1.

Care organisations often try reach out to universities to make a connection but there is often resistance to external bodies.

2.

Some universities lack an understanding of what a student carer or young adult carer is. It is often mixed with 'care-leave' or 'parent carer'.

3.

Student carers often feel isolated, so being connected with other carers can break the isolation and create a supportive network.

4.

There is a need for tailored support for carers, including an dedicated student carer lead within universities.

Networks. Carers.

Universities don't utilise free support from carer networks.

Care networks are actively attempting to engage with universities however communication often falls flat.



What if:

universities worked with care organisations?

This would help reduce the load of students using the in-house support service and provide students with tailored support.

Expert Interviews

Policy Level

Findings

It is recognised that having a clear university policy in place for student carers is essential to gaining formal recognition and creating a framework of support that aims to provide an inclusive environment for carers' needs. This allows the university to tailor support around the key areas outlined in this report, including the academic, financial, and emotional dimensions affected by caring.

A second key area is data. Universities now have access to UCAS data, which provides information about 'self-identifying' carers who will be attending. Despite this, universities are not utilizing this information effectively. It is crucial to create value from this data-sharing, as it offers an opportunity to provide recognition and support to student carers when it matters the most, at the start of their academic journey.

“not enough student carers are being supported at university, so they drop out”

Emerging Insights

1.

Universities need a clear policy in-place to support student carers.

2.

Student carers need support which is in line with their specific circumstances, there is no one size fits all.

3.

Access to financial support shouldn't be invasive or demanding on the student carer.

4.

Universities have access to UCAS data that identifies student carers. They need to use this data to reach out and provide appropriate support.

Support. Drop-out.

Lack of support leads to drop-out.

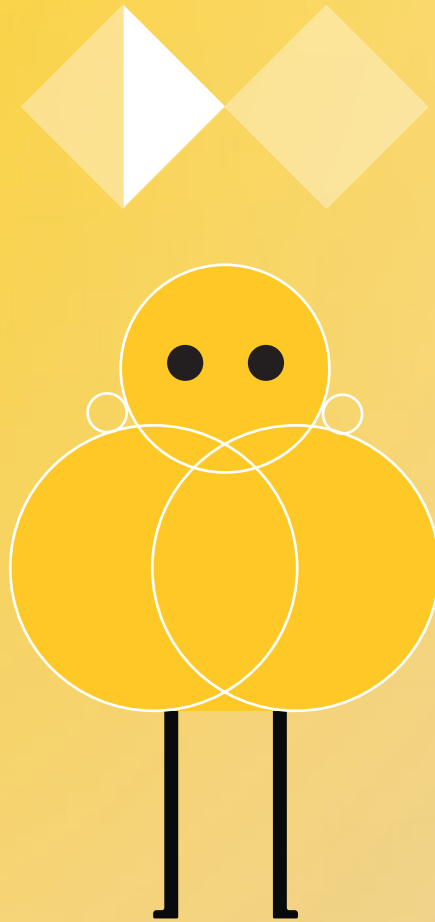
Student-carers often only access support when they reach a breaking point, and for many this is too late, leading to drop-out.



What if:

we were proactive instead of reactive

If we created a proactive service which created the conditions to provide support, backed by policy, could help reduce drop-out rates.

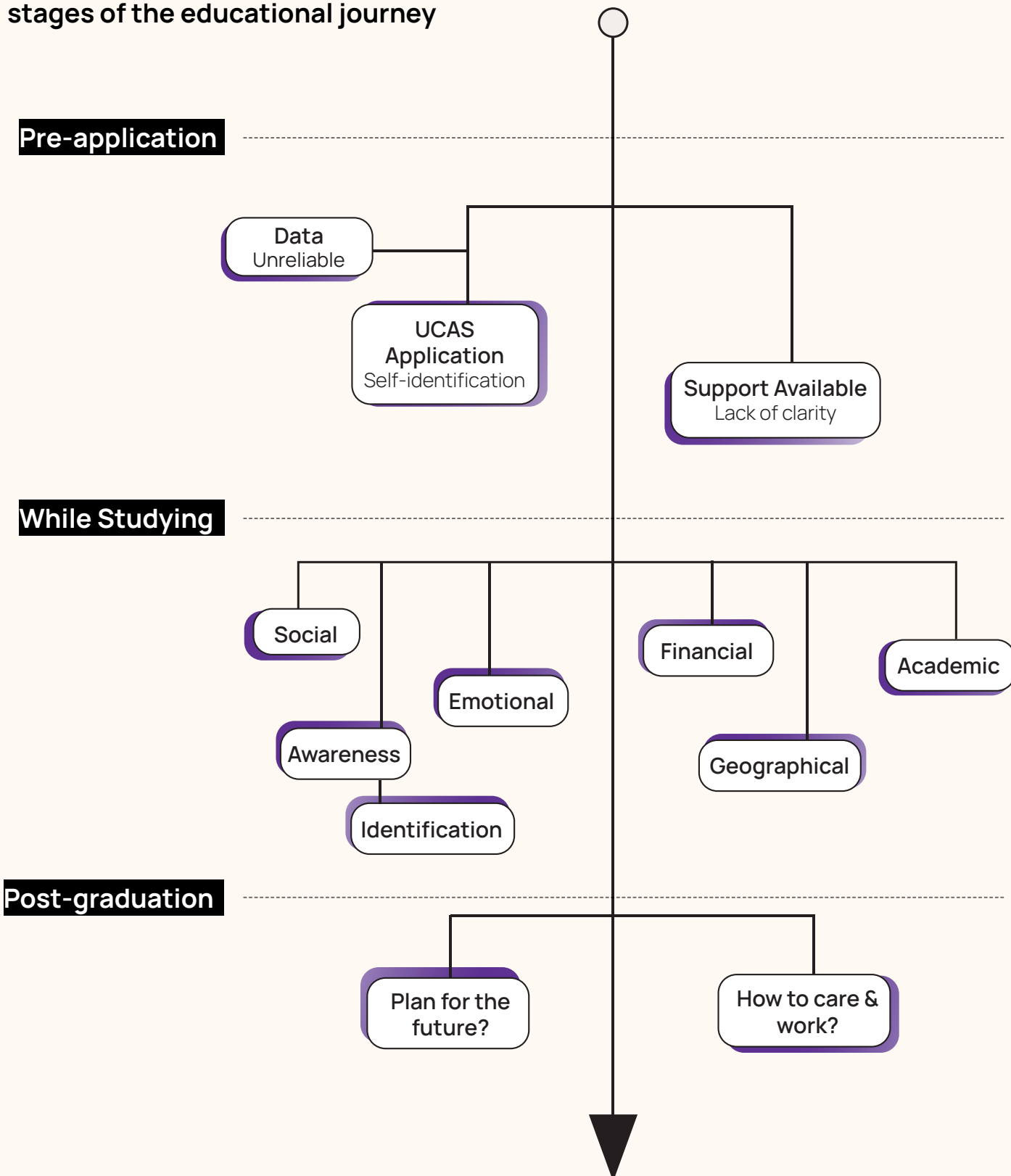


DEFINE

This section focuses on defining the problem space, understanding the ecosystem of support, and identifying key areas for intervention.

Defining The Problem Space

Issues that arise at different stages of the educational journey

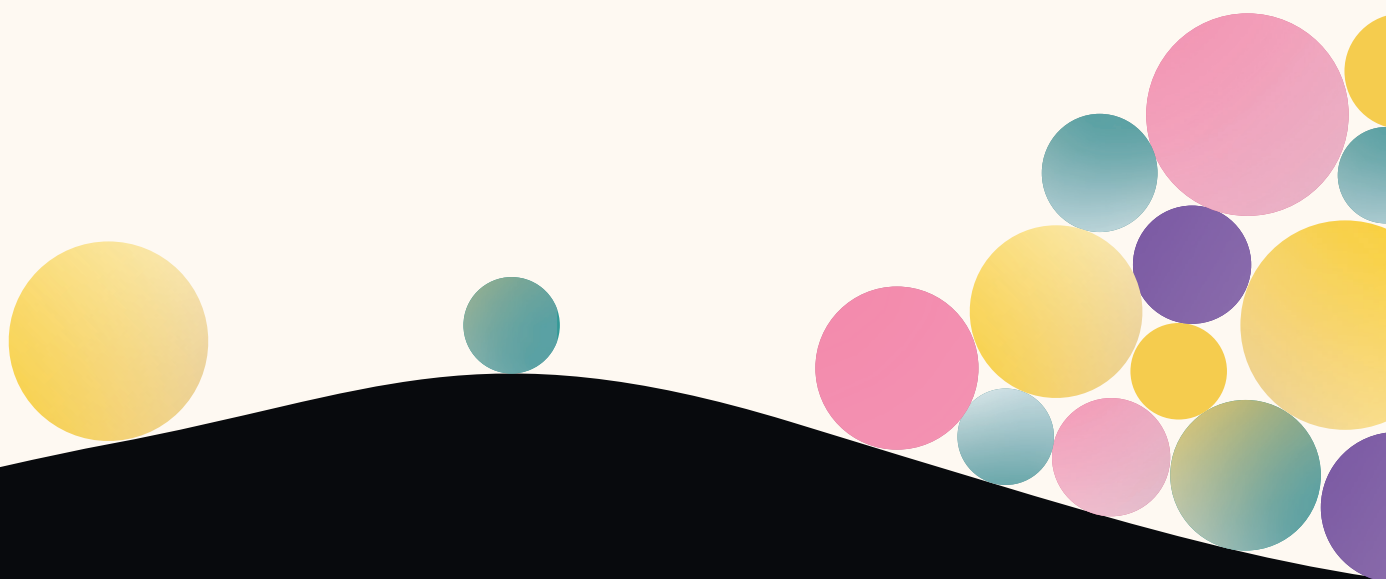


Project Focus

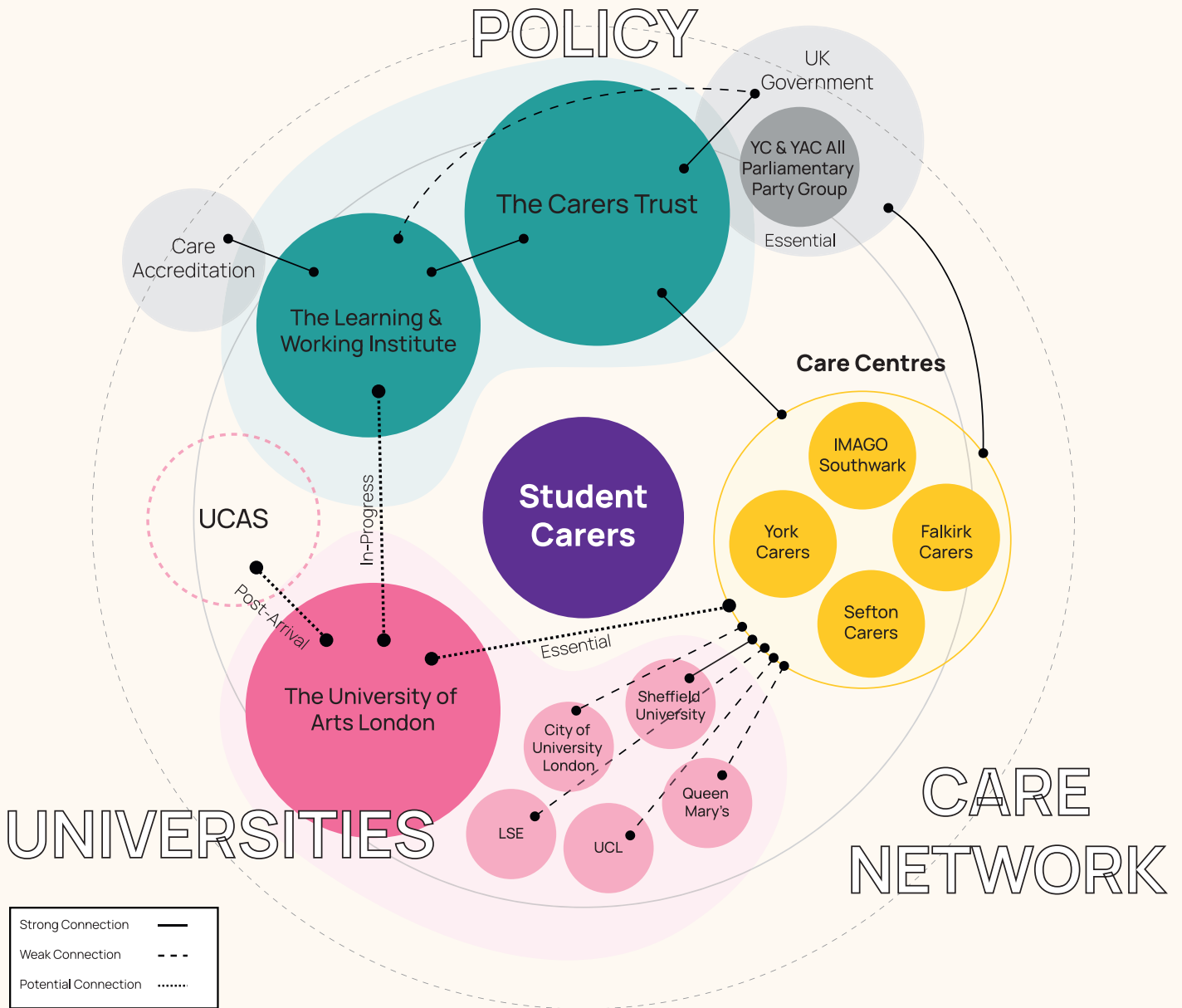
1. Universities need to create the conditions for student carers to be able to talk about their care responsibilities.
2. Value in having a student carer lead within universities.
3. Universities need a clear policy in-place to support student carers.
4. How can universities create an active dialogue with care organisations.
5. Universities need to be proactive in their attempt to support student carers instead of reactive.



6. Tailored support is key as no two carers are the same .
7. How can universities support student carers through the whole journey from pre-application to graduation?
8. How can universities make support visible?
9. Universities need to be able to build trust with student carers in order to support them fully.
10. Emphasis on financial assistance which the government has taken away from student carers.



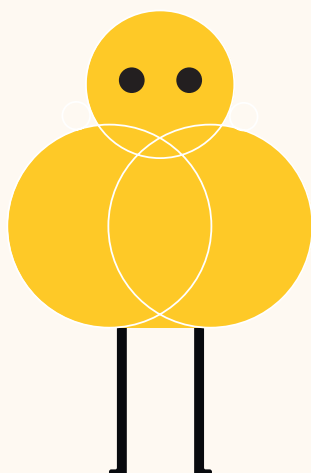
Ecosystem Mapping



Key Stakeholders

This ecosystem map highlights the key actors involved in improving the experience of student carers both nationally and within the University of the Arts London. It showcases the organisations I engaged with during this project, spanning care networks, universities, and policy-level stakeholders.

Persona's



Name: Ben **Caring Role:** Provides over 20 hours of care per week for his younger sibling who has a disability.
Age: 23

Background: Ben has been a carer for most of his life. He is studying engineering at Newcastle University and has to work part time jobs on his weekends in order to support himself and contribute to his family. He lives at home and commutes each day to university.

Challenges:

- Balancing a demanding caring role with the pressures of university life.
- Managing a part-time job to support himself and his family.
- Understanding complex and hidden benefit systems and financial aid options at his university.
- Limited time for socialising and engaging in extracurricular activities.

Needs:

- Financial assistance through scholarships, bursaries, or flexible access to Carer's Allowance.
- Flexibility in attendance policies and deadlines to accommodate his caring responsibilities.
- Support with time management and accessing respite care options.
- University staff who recognise the challenges of juggling multiple roles.

Name: Yaseem **Caring Role:** Provides around 30 hours of remote care per week for her mother who has a chronic mental health illness.
Age: 19

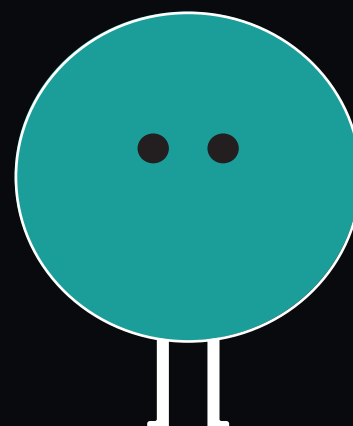
Background: Yaseem has been caring for her mother since she was in secondary school, gradually taking on more responsibilities as her mother's health deteriorated. She excelled academically but often felt isolated and struggled to balance her studies with her caring duties. She wasn't aware of any support available for young adult carers and didn't consider herself one until recently.

Challenges:

- Reluctant to disclose her caring role due to fear of stigma.
- Worries and guilt about her mother's well-being while she's at university.
- Concerned about the financial implications of university, especially given the 21-hour rule that limits access to Carer's Allowance.

Needs:

- A welcoming and supportive environment where she feels comfortable disclosing her caring role.
- Clear information and guidance on available support services, including financial aid, flexible study options, and mental health resources.
- Opportunities to connect with other young adult carers for peer support.



Name: Anna **Caring Role:** Provides emotional support for her mother who experienced a stroke alongside other complex mental health problems.
Age: 26

Background:

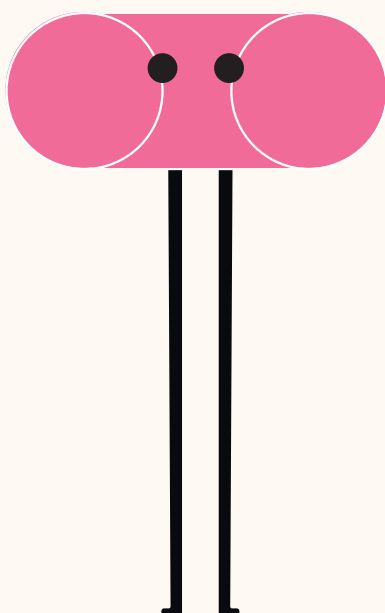
Anna became a carer whilst at university and didn't realise she was a carer until she spoke with another student carer. She is now actively involved in raising awareness about young adult carers and advocating for better support systems within the university.

Needs:

- A university environment that actively seeks to identify and support young adult carers.
- Access to peer support groups that cater to the needs of young adult carers.
- Greater involvement in promoting awareness and advocating for the rights of young adult carers.

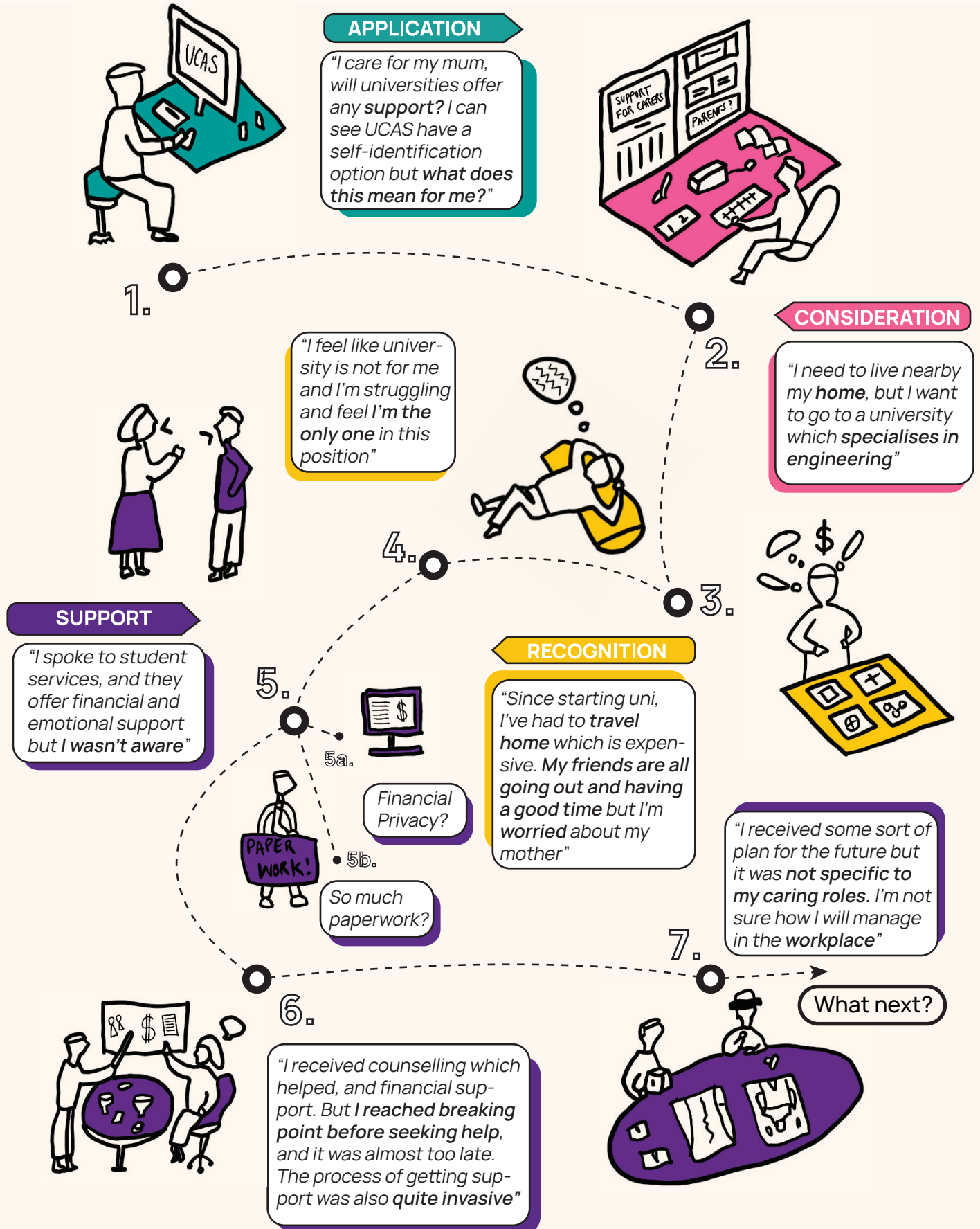
Challenges:

- The emotional toll of providing long-distance care and coordinating support for her mother from a different country.
- A system that lacks understanding of the unique challenges faced by young adult carers.
- Lack of tailored support services and resources specifically for young adult carers.



MAPPING RISK & UNCERTAINTY

For Student Carer's



Understanding The Issues of a Reactive Service

1.

When applying to university, it's important for universities to make their support for student carers visible and clear. Clear support can ease the anxiety of starting university. The latest UCAS process lets students self-identify as carers and share this with universities, creating an expectation that support will follow—though this often isn't the case.

2.

Student carers often face tough choices when applying to university, such as staying close to home or moving away to attend their preferred institution, often leading to feelings of guilt. Clear support strategies can help them balance caring responsibilities while achieving their goals, creating fairer opportunities.

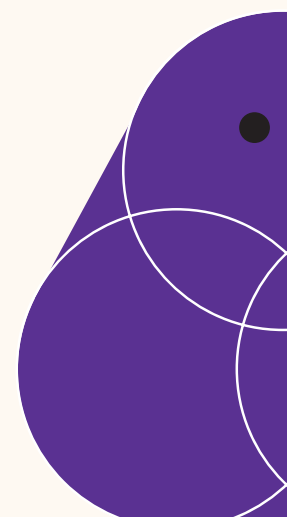
3.

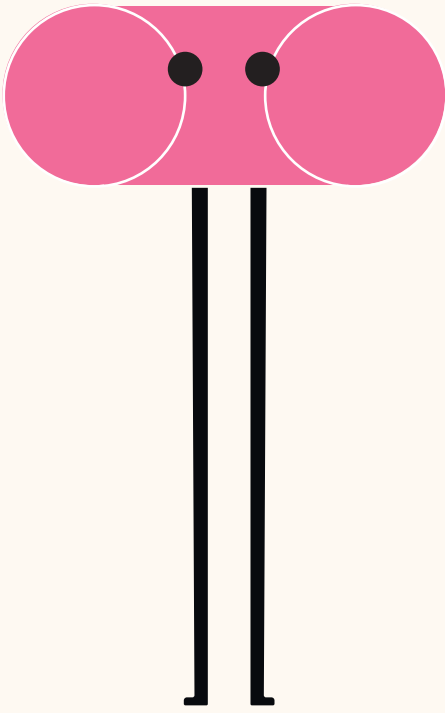
Starting university presents many unexpected challenges for student carers—financial, social, and academic—that can push them to a breaking point. Without clear support from the start, carers may feel isolated, with fewer opportunities to share their responsibilities with staff or peers and a lack of awareness of available support.

4.

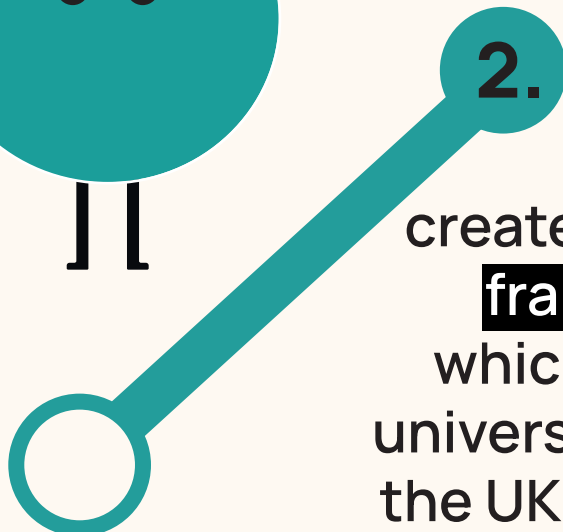
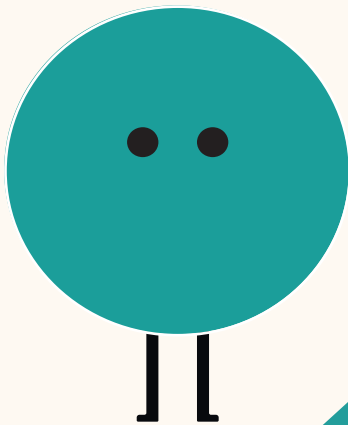
University support for student carers often exists but is hidden under titles like 'hardship fund' or 'mental health support.' The process of accessing support is often "invasive", requiring detailed personal information.

Like many, this reactive approach waits for problems to arise before offering support—but what if support was visible from the start?





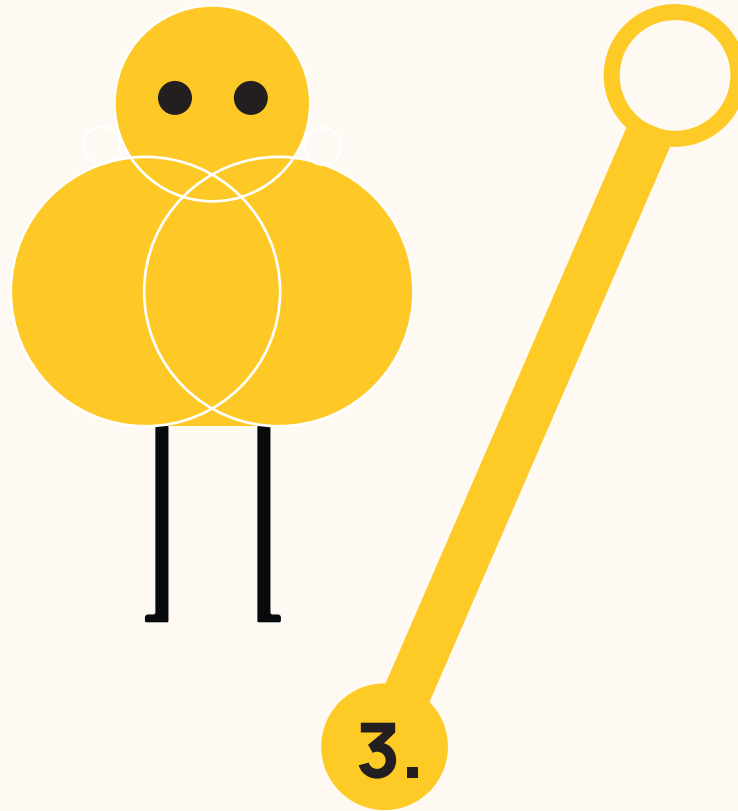
improve **identification** of student-carers as they enter / attend university?



create a **support framework** which UAL and universities across the UK can follow?

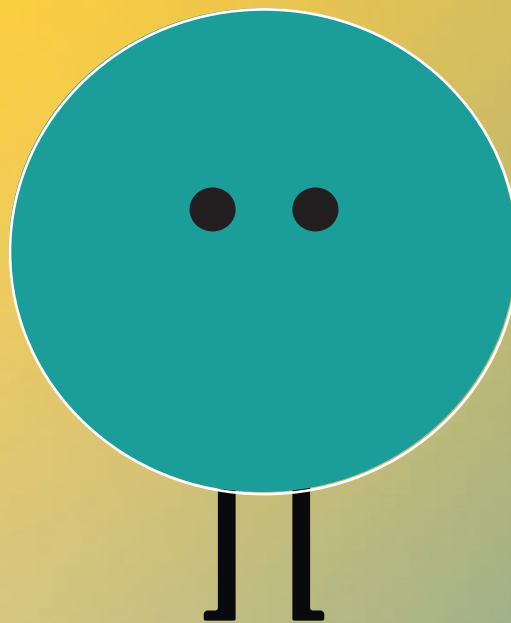
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3.

better support
student-carers
**emotionally,
financially &
academically**
throughout their
studies?



DEVELOP

The develop chapter details the development and testing of service interventions at different scales, including micro, meso, and macro levels.

Change at different scales

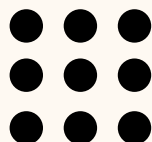
Micro Interventions



Individual

At the micro level, interventions provide personalised, direct support to student carers, addressing their immediate needs. This helps them feel recognised, offers clear pathways to support, and enables better management of both their studies and well-being. These interventions aim to improve support and create opportunities to identify student carers.

Meso Interventions



Collection

The meso scale focuses on creating a supportive environment within the university through accessible systems. This includes introducing a student carer lead who can advocate for students across financial, academic, and emotional dimensions. Initiatives such as the breakfast morning drop-in create conditions that encourage student carers to meet one another, helping to reduce isolation.

Macro Interventions



Institution

At the macro level, interventions advocate for systemic, long-term changes that ensure consistent, fair support for student carers across institutions. Policies such as a student carer policy and Care Accredited University programme set standards and frameworks for university support. This level drives equality, promoting wider institutional and societal recognition of student carers' needs.

Developing Micro Interventions

Website Analysis

How might we provide student carers with simple and concise information about what support the Universities or UAL offers?

Target Group:

1. All student carers

The current university website at the University of the Arts London, blurs the terminology of student carers and parent carers. This distinction is pivotal in ensuring students are able to access the support that they need. One carer mentions how the lack of clarity on this web page meant that they did not access academic support that was available for them. This requires a simple and low cost solution which can enable student carers to access the support that they are entitled to.

Insight

“I thought this was for students who were parents, not young adult carers”

Feedback

“give some real world examples around caring such as ‘caring could look like supporting your mum with schizophrenia’”

ual:

Subjects | Courses | Colleges and Institutes | Accessibility tools | Search | Menu

UAL > Students > Student diversity > Student parent and carer support

Student parent and carer support

We seek to create an inclusive environment that is welcoming to parents, carers and their children.

UAL's definition of parenthood includes:

- Expectant parents
- Pregnancy
- Fertility treatment
- Fostering
- Baby loss
- Adoption
- Abortion of a pregnancy
- Parents and carers of children

UAL's definition of caring responsibilities adopts the definition from The Carers Trust UK, which defines a carer as "anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem, or an addiction cannot cope without their support."

1. Examples of being a parent carer only

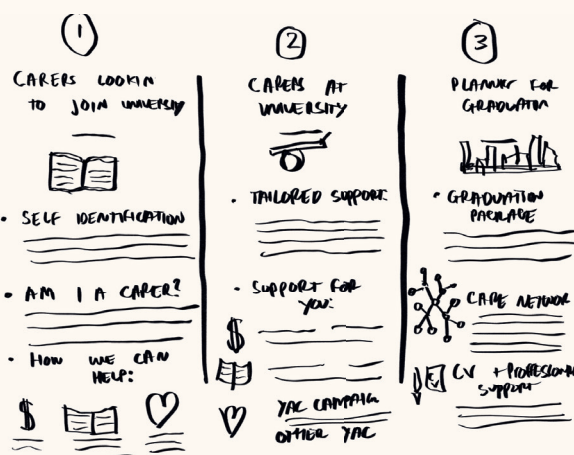
2. Unclear link with the above examples

3. Same page for very different support

'Best in class' University Support

When looking at how other universities across the UK present information, it's clear there is not standard set of information which is provided. I conducted a benchmarking exercise, which enabled me to create a framework which looks at providing clear support for the most useful information a student carer needs.

- This is broken down into phased support, so are they applying to university or currently studying?
- Are they able to self-identify, and given examples of what a carer is and give examples of what their responsibilities may look like.
- Clear academic, financial and emotional support. Bursaries available? Access to counselling CBT or even a referral to nearby care organisations?



One pain point that even the 'best in class' examples fell short of was the ability to provide information in a digestible way. By providing a diagram or simple user journey to show the carer key touch points as they move through their academic journey. When testing with carers it is understood that lots of text can be 'overwhelming' and issues around filling out 'large forms'. Displaying this information in a digestible and concise manner has the opportunity to increase direct access to support and ultimately reduce drop-out rates and the reaching of support in points of crisis.

Application Support

The UCAS application - Three reasons to 'tick the box'

For 2023 entry UCAS has introduced a new section in the application so you can share more information about your circumstances with the university or college that you are applying to - including whether you are a young carer.

When completing your UCAS application, you will notice that there is a question asking if you have any caring responsibilities. Here are three reasons why it's a good idea to answer "yes" and disclose your caring responsibilities in your UCAS application.

1. **Your chosen universities can connect you to the support you're entitled to.** If you have caring responsibilities, you may be eligible to a range of practical support in higher education, if you want it. Ticking the "yes" box in the UCAS application is a quick and easy way to let your chosen universities know that you would like to know more about any additional support they can offer, and they may get in touch with the details.
2. **Admissions staff can consider your achievements and potential in context.** Universities are aware that people with caring responsibilities may have had an adverse impact on their life and their education. Disclosing your experience of caring for someone else will help admissions staff consider your achievements 'in context'.
3. **The information you share about your caring responsibilities is confidential.** It is treated confidentially and will only be shared with those who would be involved in supporting you.

Cookies settings

Clear Terminology

• Contact us

What do we mean by students who are carers?

Students who are carers

You should be responsible for providing unpaid care to someone who has, for example:

- A long-term illness
- A physical or learning disability
- A mental health condition
- An addiction; or
- Temporary care needs following, for example, an accident or operation

Do you support a young carer?

If you support a young person with caring responsibilities in Year 7 to Year 10, contact the Higher Education Progression Partnership (Hepp).

Hepp works across the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, to encourage more young people to consider higher education opportunities by providing targeted activities in children in care.

Our commitment to you

We're committed to ensuring that you get the support you need at each stage of your

Phased Support

Who is a young adult carer?

Young adult carers are young people aged 16-25 who care, unpaid, for a family member, dependant or friend with a long-term illness or disability, mental health condition, or who misuses drugs or alcohol.

Pre-entry support

City offers pre-entry advice and guidance through the [Widening Participation Outreach team](#). There are a range of events and activities on offer for students thinking about university as well as for those who would like more support in preparing them for university.

As a young adult carer you are guaranteed access to pre-entry support such as application advice, 1:1 bespoke visit days, pre-induction events and taster weeks.

- [Widening Participation Outreach activities for schools and colleges \[PDF\]](#)
- [Widening Participation Outreach taster weeks \[PDF\]](#)

Financial support

- [City Cares Bursary](#) – undergraduate young adult carers who meet the eligibility criteria will be awarded up to £3,500 each year of their studies for up to three years.
- [Hardship Fund](#) – students who find themselves in financial hardship can apply for the Hardship Fund. Young adult carers are eligible for support of up to £2,500.
- [Graduation package](#) – young adult carers who complete their final year of undergraduate studies are eligible for a financial package to aid with graduation costs and life after City.

On-course support

City Cares helps students transition to university life, provides advice and guidance whilst studying with us and supports students to prepare for life after graduation.

- A Designated Member of Staff to support you throughout your time at City by being your first point of contact.
- As a young adult carer you are prioritised for City's partner [student accommodation](#) throughout your undergraduate degree provided you have City as your firm choice by the UCAS deadline. We work

External Support

External Support

The Carers Trust offers support to those who give unpaid care to a family member or friend - find out more at [carers.org](#).

Students who are carers may benefit from respite support, and there is a Carers Centre in Tower Hamlets. Their services are explained [on their website](#). They have a [specific project for young carers](#) (up to age 25) who are caring for someone in Tower Hamlets, even if you don't live in the borough. They are providing [weekly events and ongoing support](#), organised by Ben.

In Hackney, there is also [ongoing support](#).

If someone in your family has a life-threatening illness, [Hope Support Services](#) can help. [Visit their website](#) for more information or [watch their video](#). You might also be interested in [watching Ben's story](#).

To help you know what you are entitled to, you can read the latest [Looking after someone guide](#) from [Carers UK](#), which gives carers the full picture of the practical and financial support available to them.

If you are caring for someone outside Tower Hamlets, you can [contact your Local Authority](#) or [the Carers Trust](#) to find out about available support. Both should also be able to help make sure you are getting all the help you are entitled to and how to evidence your caring role.

[Carers Allowance](#) You cannot claim Carers Allowance you are in full time education. Part time postgraduate students can apply for Carer's Allowance if:

Financial Support

University of Sheffield

Study >

Undergraduate study

Courses > Visit > Apply > Fees and funding > Accommodation > Studying at She

Home > Undergraduate study > Visit > Access+ Travel Bursary

Access+ Travel Bursary

The Access+ Travel Bursary is available to eligible students for undergraduate events such as open days, on-campus subject taster days, offer holder days and interviews.

Who is the Access+ Travel Bursary for?

This bursary is available to support students who meet the following criteria:

- You should live in a postcode area with a low level of participation in higher education (POLAR4 quintile 1) or a neighbourhood that is assessed as being in a lower quintile in the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD quintile 1 or 2). You can check your area by searching for your postcode on our [2025 entry postcode checker](#).

Developing Micro Interventions

How might UAL be proactive in their process of identifying students who are not aware that they are student carers?

Target Group:

1. Students who became carers while studying at university
2. Students who became aware they were a carer whilst studying at university

An increase in communication and awareness from a university can help identify students who are not aware that they are a carer. Opportunities to create awareness for students can occur through different mediums:

- Care organisations present in freshers week.
- Social media posts designed to allow potential carers to reflect on their current situation.
- Visual awareness around university, celebrating young carers action day and presence in university newsletters.

Insight

“I didn’t understand the concept of an unpaid carer or young adult carer until I heard about your project”

Social Media Awareness



Care Organisation at Freshers Week



Identification Opportunity



Celebrate Young Carers Action Day

Could This Be You?

Do you spend time providing **unpaid care** for a family member with a disability, illness, or mental health condition?

You might be a **young adult carer**.

#UAL
#YoungAdultCarersAwareness

Care Looks Like...

Providing care can involve **emotional** support, medication management, **financial** support, communication and much more.

#UAL
#YoungAdultCarersAwareness

Student Carer Voices

I didn't realise I was a carer. I didn't think I did enough to call myself that. But in reality, my responsibilities impact my life in so many ways. You just accept the things you do day to day as **normal**.

#UAL
#YoungAdultCarersAwareness

Share Your Experiences & Help Shape Support for Young Adult Carers at UAL



#UAL
#YoungAdultCarersAwareness

Developing Micro Interventions

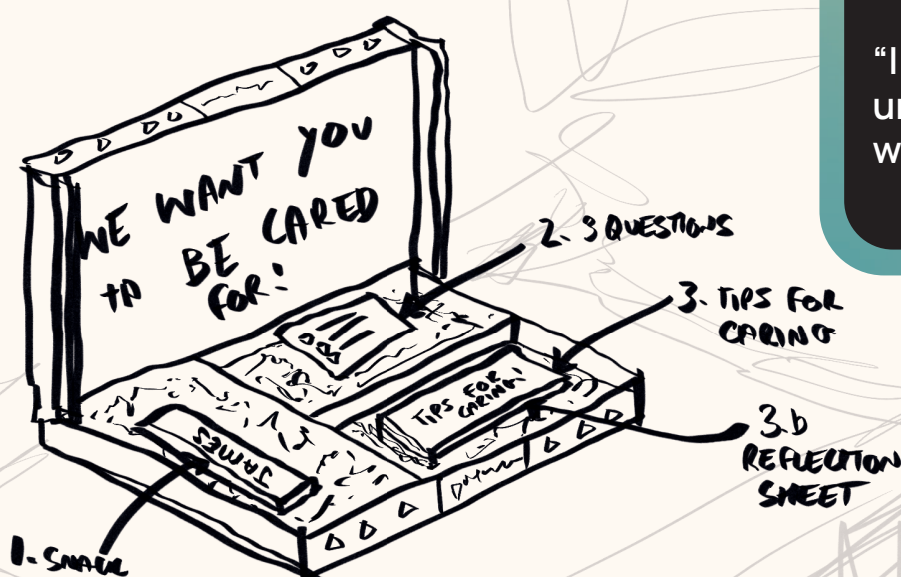
How might we make student carers feel recognised and provide them with access to clear support offered to them by the university?

Target Group:

1. Self-identifying carers applying to university
2. Self-identifying carers currently at university

Given that UCAS provides universities with data on self-identifying student carers started at the given university, then what if universities and UAL provided student carers with a welcome box which physically lets the carer know that they have been recognised. The recognition welcome box could include several functions:

- Provide a small token of comfort, for example a chocolate bar.
- A short form with three simplified key questions.
- Small booklet with concise information on support available and how to access it.
- A reflective diary to help the carer become aware of how they are affected by their caring responsibilities.



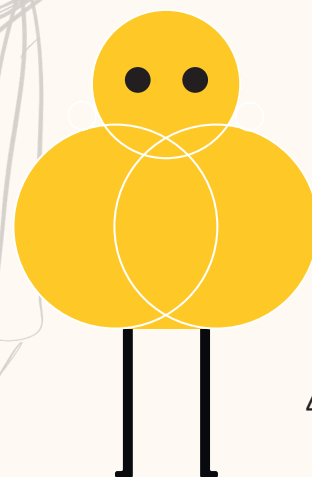
Insight

“I only became aware of the support that was available to me at my lowest”

Feedback

“some parents don’t recognise their children as being a carer, especially those with addiction. This could cause an issues if this box was sent through the letterbox”

“I really wish that my uni had this when I was applying”



Developing Meso Interventions

How might we create the conditions for student carers to talk about their care responsibilities at key touch points?

Target Group:

- 1. All student carers

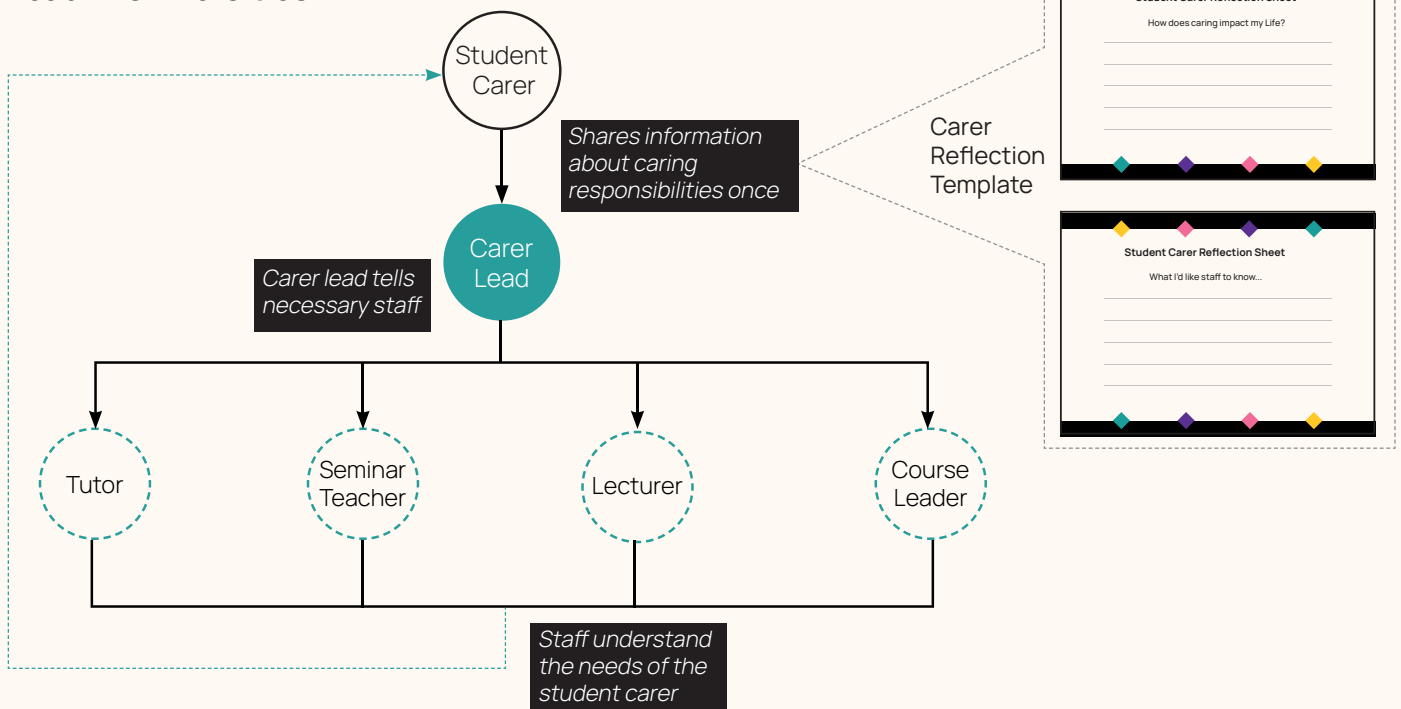
What if universities had a student carer lead who they could explain their situation to only once, and instead having to explain to every teacher or even worse, not explain to anyone at all. This creates the conditions for student carers to speak to someone who has been trained and understands how to support student carers, while also being the voice of that student and telling the appropriate staff about the students situation. This takes the pressure off of the carer and reduces risk of constantly explaining their situation or not getting told off lateness for example.

A second way to create the conditions for carers to talk is through university wide teacher training. If teachers are trained in the ability to identify student carers, they can be curious and take an opportunity to ask questions instead of immediately punishing 'hidden' carers.

Insight

“I never find the right time to tell my teacher about my care responsibilities, and when I tell teachers, I feel embarrassed and that I am over sharing”

Role of a Student Carer Lead in Universities:



Developing Meso Interventions

How might we allow student carers to connect with one another in a 'safe' and understanding environment?

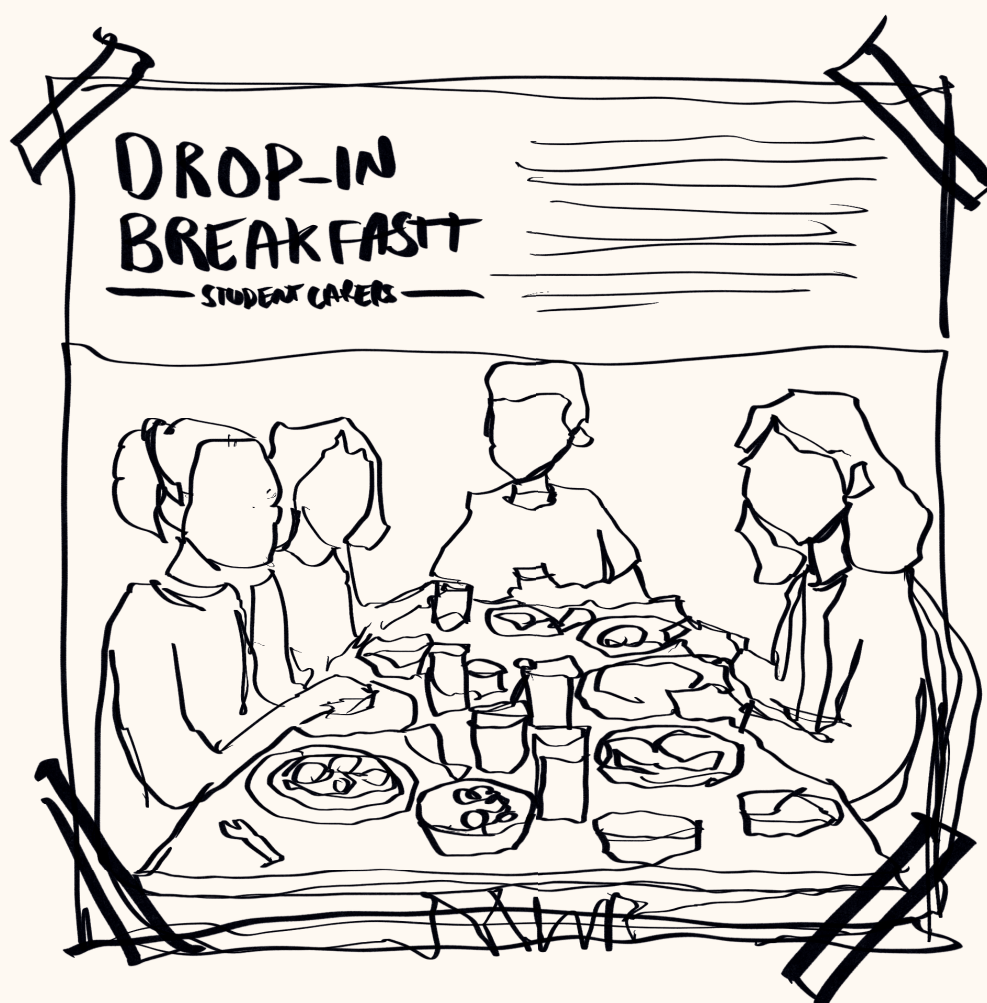
Target Group:

1. All student carers

What if universities set up monthly breakfast 'drop-in' mornings for student carers across the university and create the conditions for carers to connect in an informal and relaxed environment. The significance of the session being a 'drop-in' was informed by a conversation I had with a social care worker at York Carers. Drop-ins create a situation where there is no pressure to join and recognises that carers responsibilities are unpredictable so emphasis on not setting precise times for carers to join the session.

Insight

“I feel isolated and that no one will understand what I am going through”



Developing Macro Interventions

How might UAL and universities alike become recognised as an accredited caring university?

Target Group:

- 1. Self-identifying carers currently at university
- 2. Self-identifying carers applying to university

Insight

“I don’t want my university to make my life harder than it already is”

Student Carer Benefits

Validation and Recognition:

Accreditation can help validate student carers’ experiences and make them feel seen and understood within the university environment. This can be particularly important for those who struggle with identifying as carers or feel that their caring responsibilities are not acknowledged.

Clear Framework and Guidance:

Accreditation schemes provide universities with a structured framework, such as the Quality Standard in Carers Support, to guide the development and implementation of support services for student carers. This clarity helps universities understand the specific areas they need to address and the standards they need to meet.

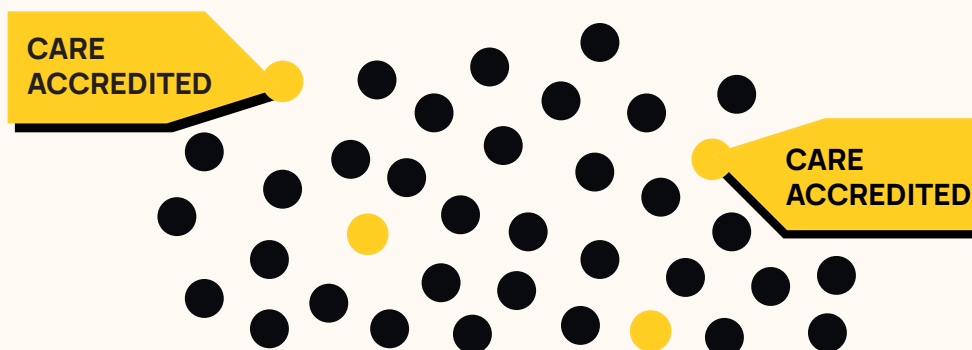
Institutional Benefits

Enhanced Reputation:

Gaining accreditation demonstrates a commitment to supporting minority groups and potentially attracting a wider range of students from different backgrounds.

Competitive Advantage:

As awareness of the needs of student carers grows, accreditation can become a distinguishing factor for prospective students, giving accredited universities a competitive edge in attracting and retaining talented individuals from diverse backgrounds. A clear outline of support can set the expectations for the student and further work towards reducing the rate of drop out for student with caring responsibilities.



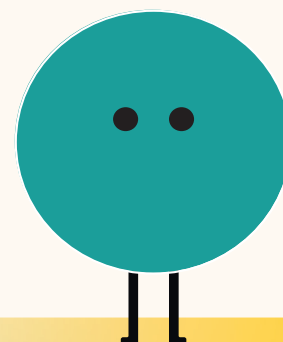
Developing Macro Interventions

How might we provide a clear and easy to understand student carer specific policy?

Target Group:

1. All student carers

Getting a clear policy in place is the foundation of getting a support framework which can help student carers understand where and how to get help. UAL currently has a policy for student carers however, again, it is hidden under examples of being a parent. As previously mentioned this is a huge barrier to support for student carers meaning they often become aware when having informal conversations with support staff.



Insight

“I thought this was for students who were parents, not young adult carers”

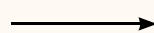
Current UAL Policy examples

The PCSA sets out arrangements for required support and adjustments for students experiencing parenthood or caring, for example:

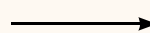
- Time off for relevant appointments (e.g. fertility treatment, scans, adoption appointments) and catch-up arrangements for related missed sessions
- Authorised absence for parenthood and caring (see below for more information) – for example, arrangements for keeping in touch, keeping up to date with course developments, preparing for return, and bespoke re-induction
- Adjusted assessment arrangements – for example, additional time
- Adjustments required arising from pregnancy-related health issues
- Adjustments required for managing childcare or other caring responsibilities alongside study – for example, timetabling changes to minimise childcare costs, managing drop-offs and pick-ups. (Please note the expectation is that childcare arrangements are made for core group teaching.)



Easy to read and understand



Less steps to access support



Reduced rate of drop-out

Reforming Proactive Policy

The policy should set out clear examples of being a student carer and the standardised support available.

The support the university should offer:

Student Carer Bursary

Method of accessing: Non-invasive explanation needed, just a request for a carer's advocacy letter from a care organisation.

Current method of accessing: 1. Providing access to all bank accounts and detailing every payment over £100. 2. Submitting evidence to prove you cannot afford cost of living for the year make it to the end of the year. 3. Sharing very private letters detailing a parent's disability.

Travel and access bursary:

Emergency travel is a frequent yet expensive challenge faced by student carers, and it is often not fully realized until they join university. Travel expenses can also act as a barrier, preventing student carers from attending their university of choice in favour of a more accessible local option. A travel and access bursary would allow carers to afford emergency trips home and create more inclusive opportunities for students to attend the university of their choice.

Academic support

Academic support is currently available at UAL and has been somewhat beneficial for me, helping to make the pressures of caring and university life more manageable. However, staff were not aware that I was a carer until I embarked on this project, which led to my discovery of the available support. When interviewing mental health staff to understand the support offered at UAL, I found there was confusion between sibling carers and student carers. While both are important, they require very different types of support.

Having an in-house student carer lead would ensure that staff are trained to recognize and address the specific needs of student carers. This would reduce confusion and ensure that appropriate support is provided quickly and accurately.

Access to CBT counselling or referral to care organisations

At UAL, student carer support falls under the responsibility of the mental health team. While mental health is a significant challenge for student carers, it is not always the type of support they need. UAL offers CBT and counselling, which can be hugely beneficial, but there is no formal referral process to local care organisations. This could, firstly, provide tailored support to student carers and, secondly, alleviate some of the pressure on the university's mental health department. Additionally, it would create an opportunity for students to connect with other carers.

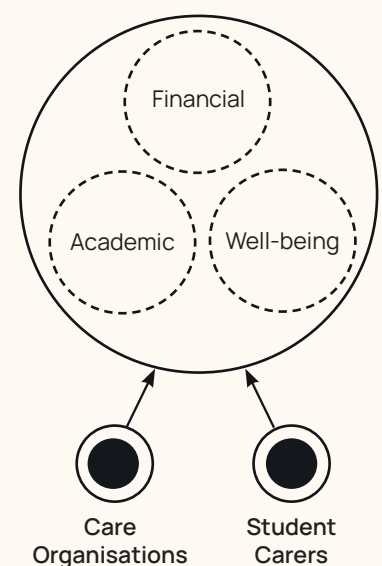
Insight

“I have 9 bank accounts as I look after my mothers money, it's really invasive”

Feedback

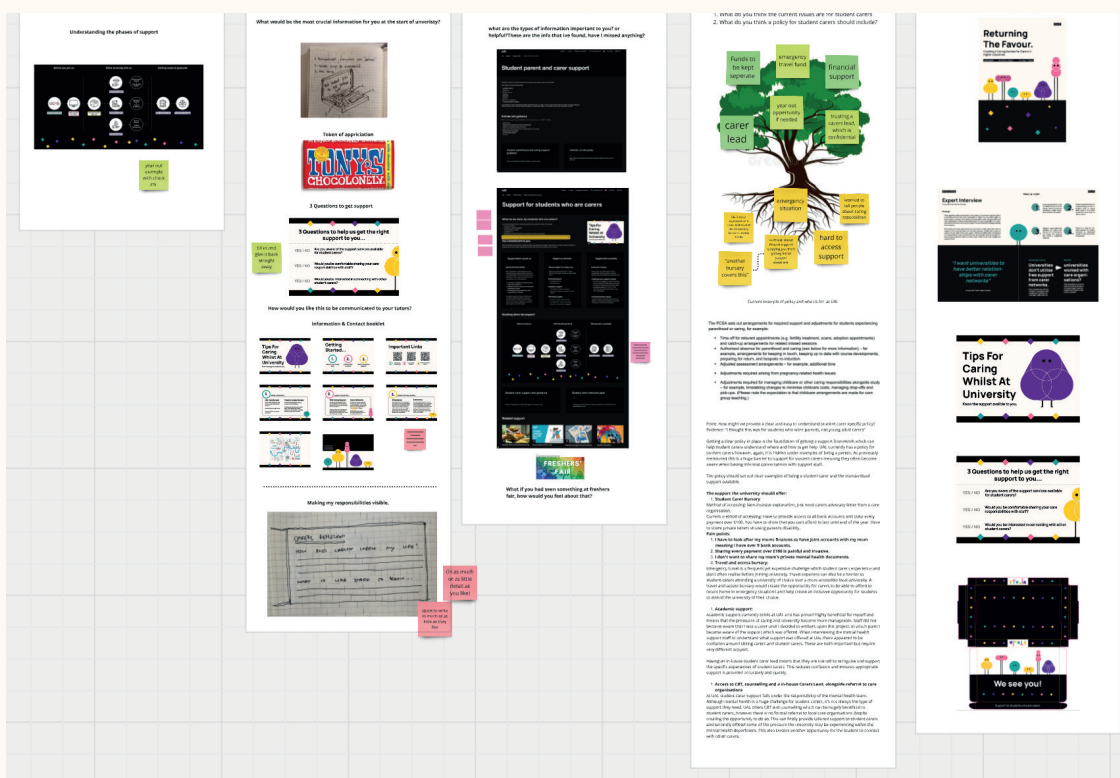
“you often have to demonstrate that you have no other means to survive. It shouldn't affect your eligibility to receive other forms of support”

Carer Policy



Testing with Student Carers

Iterating on prototypes



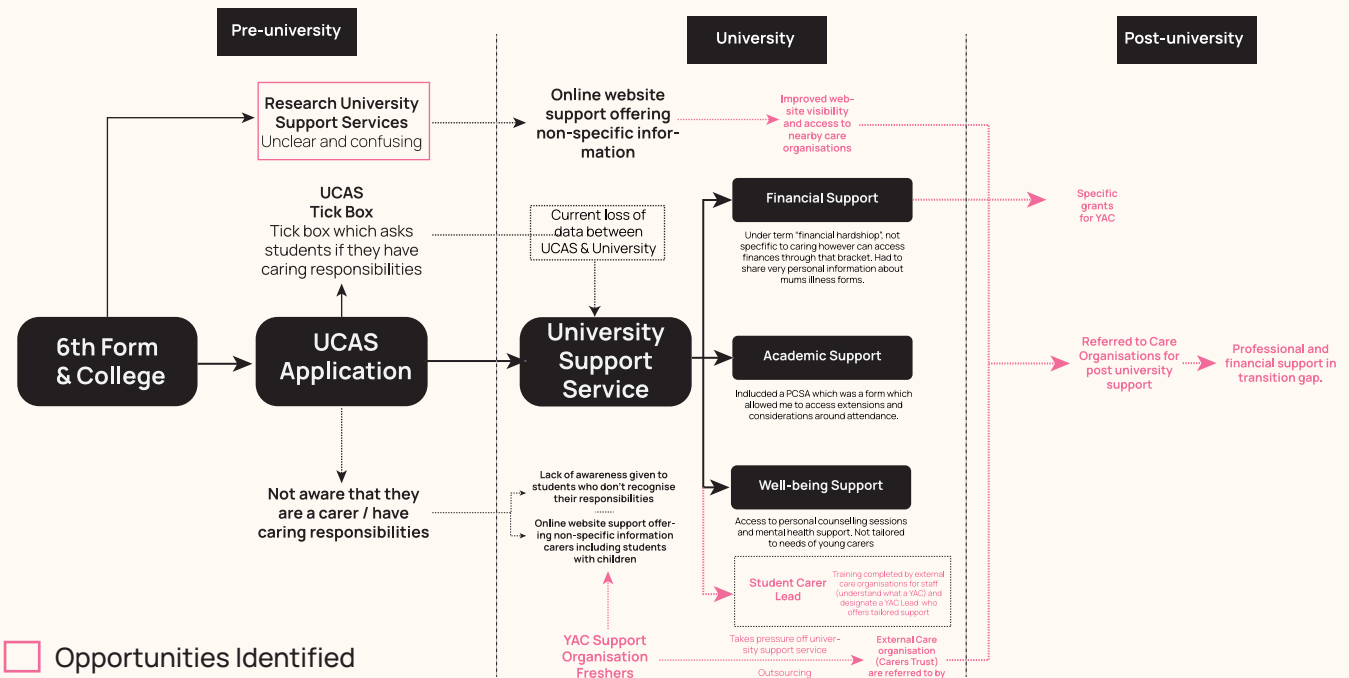
Key takeaways

- The student carer found the redesigned website clear, digestible, and easy to follow. They particularly liked the flowchart diagram, which visually represented the support journey, and the use of simple language and visuals.
- Concerns were raised about the discreet packaging and delivery of the welcome package, as some carers may not want their families to know they are accessing support. They suggested that the package be collected on campus or that students be given the option to provide an alternative address for delivery.
- The importance of clear and separate signposting for student carers, distinct from student parents or those with childcare responsibilities. They suggested including examples of caring situations in the definition of a student carer to make it easier for students to identify with the category.
- A need for confidentiality and reassurance that disclosing their caring role wouldn't lead to judgment or affect their academic standing. They felt that a student policy should explicitly state that information shared with the carer's lead would be kept confidential and wouldn't be shared without the student's consent.
- The student carer stressed the importance of financial support, including a travel fund that wouldn't affect eligibility for other forms of financial aid. They argued that relying on hardship funds for emergency travel was insufficient, as these funds often require students to be in dire financial straits before they can access them.
- The student carer appreciated the inclusion of links to external carer organizations and information on carers' allowance in the redesigned website. They felt that this would help students access additional resources and understand their entitlements after graduation.

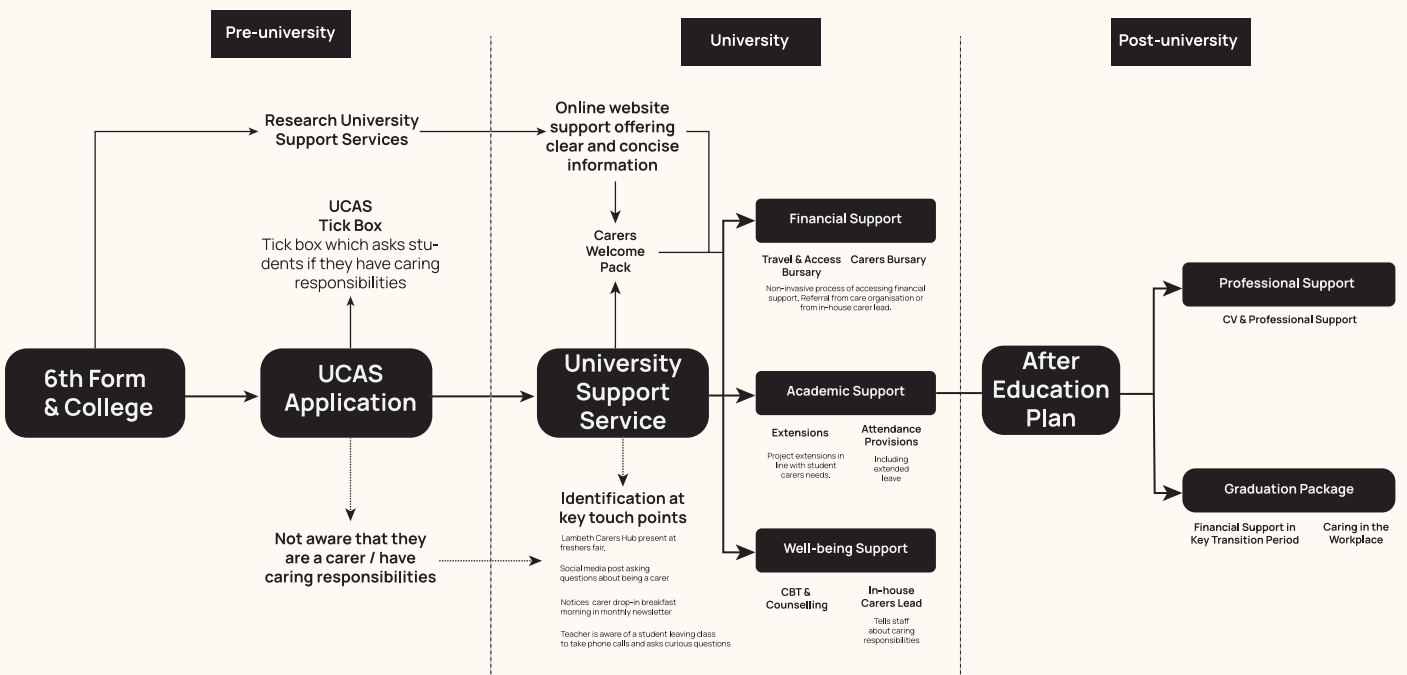
System Interventions

System Map

Existing Service Map

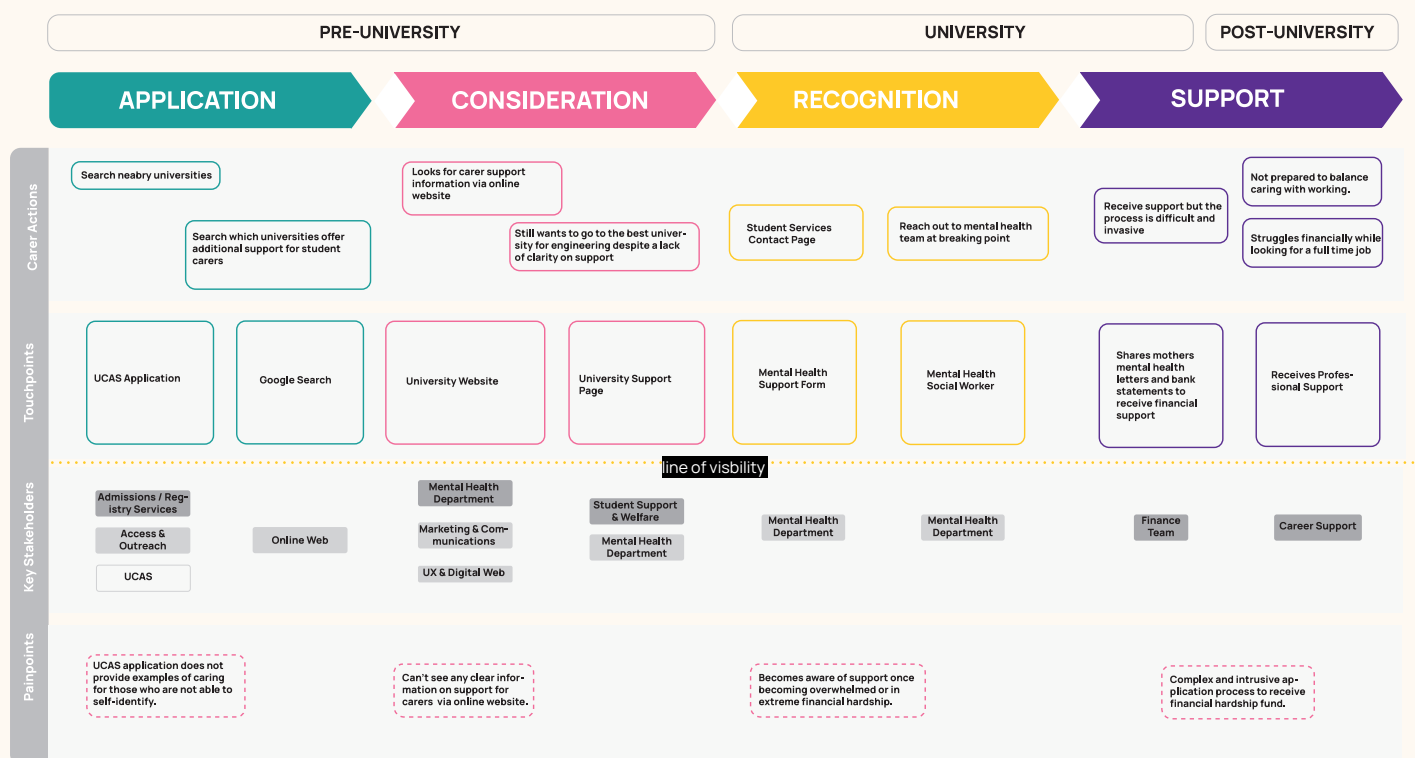


Proposed Service Map



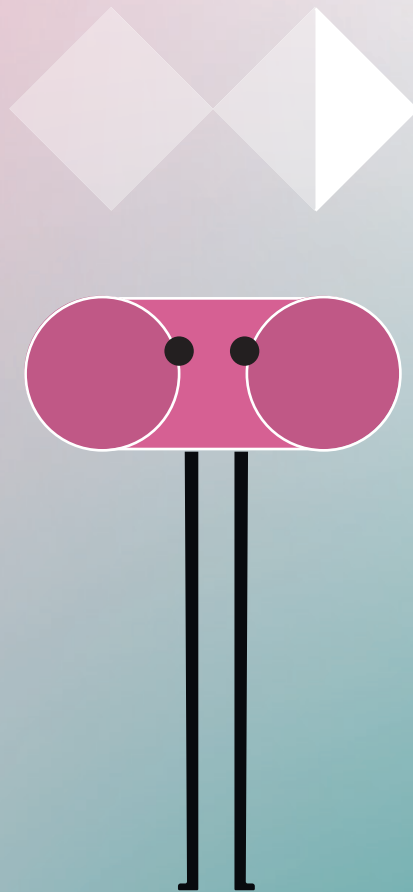
Initial Service Blueprint

Macro Intervention



Service Blueprint

This initial service blueprint breaks down key phases in the application journey of a student carer. It investigates the stages of the application process while identifying key actions, pain points, and stakeholders who play a role in completing the application journey.

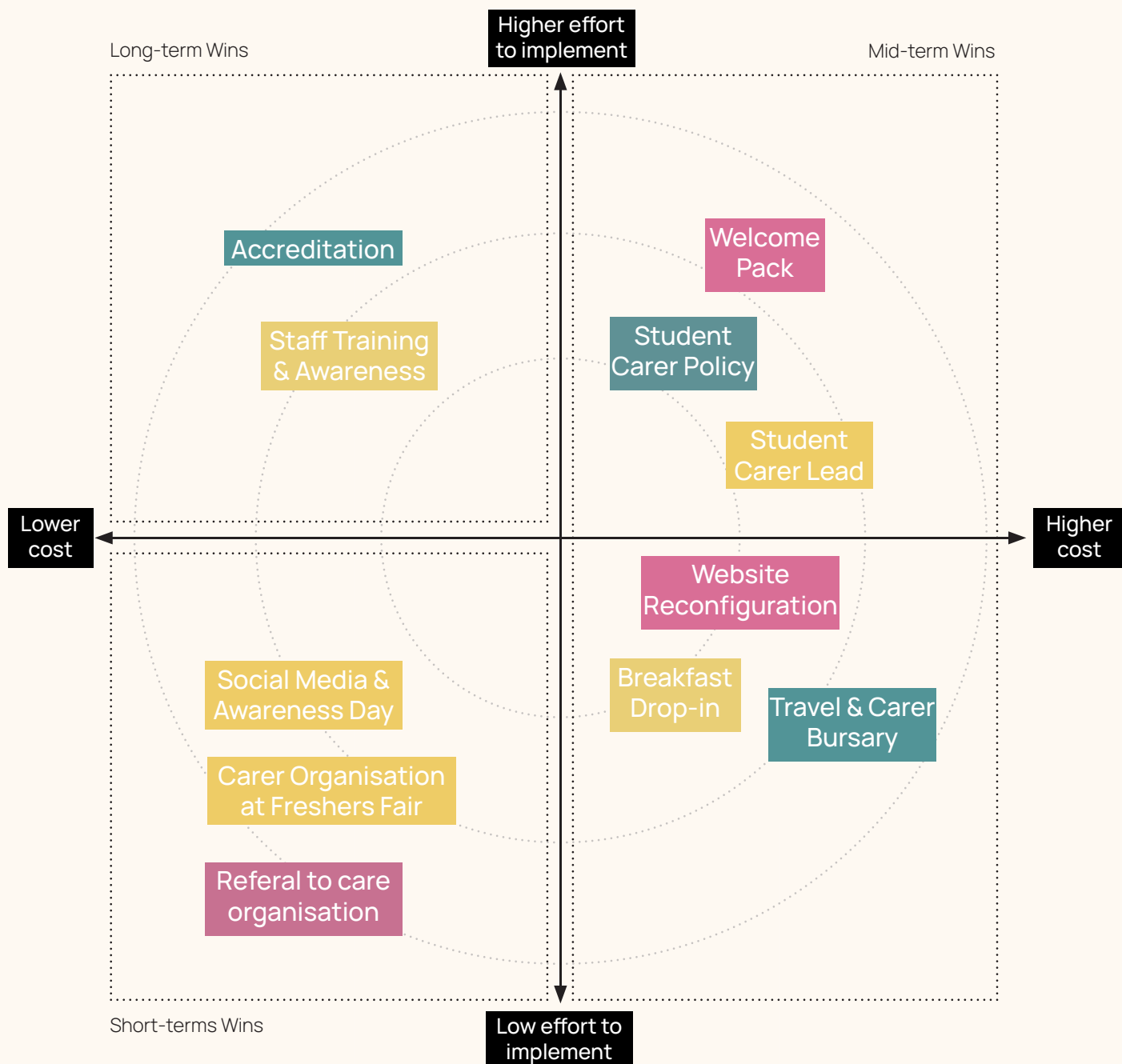


DELIVER

Deliver focuses on creating a proactive support service and understanding how service interventions can be adopted throughout an institution.

A Caring Service

Service Interventions



Macro

Meso

Micro

Estimation of effort / cost.

Intervention Matrix

This helps to provide an understanding of the estimated effort and cost associated with each intervention while outline a potential strategy to implement each intervention.

MITIGATING RISK & UNCERTAINTY

For Student Carer's



1.

APPLICATION

"I care for my mum, and can see that the university I want to go to offers support for student carers on their website. So I can tell UCAS and they will inform my university"



2.

CONSIDERATION

"I thought I might need to live at home, but university will help me financially and help pay for emergency visits home. This means I can go to my preferred university"



RECOGNITION

"When I joined, the university reach out to me, this made me feel recognised. They also shared a welcome pack of what support is there for me!"

3.



"I started to feel a little overwhelmed but I was able to reach out for support before it got out of hand. I read my carers tip book that I was given when I joined."

4.

"I have put in place a plan for my future and have been in contact with the Carers Trust in-case I need any-more support with my caring role."

SUPPORT

"I reached out for help when an emergency came up. The staff were so helpful and getting support quickly, saved me from further struggles"

5.

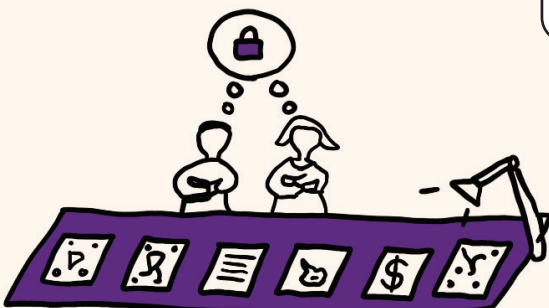
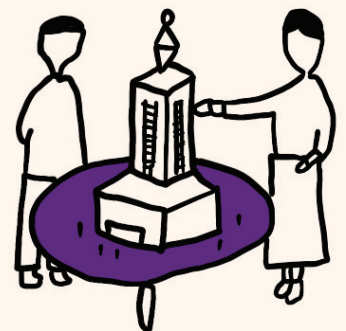


6.

"I connected with other carers"

"Exceptions for my attendance"

"It was easy to access support"



Configuring a Proactive Service Intervention

1.

Making support visible at key touchpoints, such as university websites, is essential for communicating available support to student carers. Clear, accessible information can reduce anxiety and reassure carers that they will be recognised and supported.

2.

Understanding available support helps student carers plan how to use it, guiding decisions on whether to attend a local university or move to a preferred one. This clarity creates the conditions for a fairer, more equitable experience, allowing carers to pursue their goals while balancing their responsibilities.

3.

When starting university, it's crucial that student carers are recognised by the institution. Since universities have access to UCAS data, they have the opportunity to proactively reach out to carers. This allows them to share available support at the beginning of the journey, rather than when it may be too late.

4.

Visible support allows student carers to seek help quickly when issues arise. Having a dedicated carer lead to advocate for them eases the burden and simplifies the process of accessing support. This ensures that issues are addressed as they occur, rather than when the carer reaches a breaking point.

This is an example of proactive service intervention, where support is outlined before and at the start of the university journey. Such an approach may help reduce the dropout rate, which is four times higher for student carers than their peers (BBC News, 2015).



Making Important Information Visible

Improved Website Configuration



Support for students who are carers

What do we mean by students who are carers?

You should be responsible for providing unpaid care to someone who has, for example:

- A long-term illness
- A physical or learning disability
- A mental health condition
- An addiction, or
- Temporary care needs following, for example, an accident or operation

Caring responsibilities might include physical care (e.g. helping someone out of bed), personal care (e.g. helping someone wash), emotional support, collecting prescriptions and helping to give medicine, and providing emergency care. This might also involve practical household tasks (e.g. cooking and cleaning), managing the family budget, and looking after siblings.

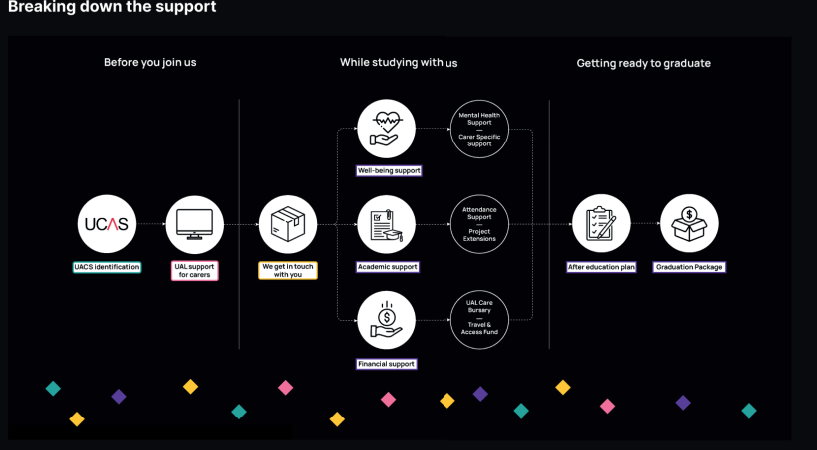
There are many different types of caring responsibilities – and many different types of carer. Here are some examples:

- A 17 year old supporting her partner with an alcohol problem.
- A 24 year old caring for his father who has heart problems and mobility issues.
- A 32 year old looking after their autistic child.

If you are a parent or have parenting responsibilities, please see this [web page](#). If you are not sure which category you fall into please contact studentsupport@UAL.co.uk

Our commitment to you

We're committed to ensuring that you get the support you need at each stage of your journey. Our team of experts are able to understand the often complex requirements that you may have if you provide care for someone.



Support before you join us	Support at university	Support after university
<p>Self identification (UCAS)</p> <p>When completing your UCAS application, you will notice that there is a question asking if you have any caring responsibilities. Here are three reasons why it's a good idea to answer "yes" and disclose your caring responsibilities in your UCAS application.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your chosen universities can connect you to the support you're entitled to. Admissions staff can consider your achievements and potential in context. The information you share about your caring responsibilities is confidential. <p>It's important to point out that your decision to tick "yes" will not negatively impact on a university's decision to offer you a place. UAL want to make you aware of all the support available to you, so that you access support as and when needed.</p>	<p>Tailored support for being a carer</p> <p>We have worked with student carers to help us understand what support will help you while studying with us.</p> <p>Financial support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel & Access Fund UAL Care Bursary <p>Academic support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extenuating circumstances extensions Recognition of impacts on attendance and class interest <p>Well-being support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to in-house student carer lead Counselling, CBT and psychology support Referral to care organisations (map here) 	<p>Graduation Package</p> <p>Student carers who complete their first year of undergraduates studies are eligible for a financial package to aid with graduation costs and life after UAL.</p> <p>Creating a carer support network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Carers Trust website up to date resources and advice on anything from local support and knowing your rights to wellbeing and mental health support. The Children's Society also has lots of useful information and a website specifically for young carers called Includo. <p>CV & Professional support</p> <p>Sa coehera nideatrix nonnalicae in sedem morum lam taberene, ut rocoimo vitar? Paludens, coe em morum iam taberent, ut nuroimo vitar? Paludens, c</p>

<p>Student carer support and guidance</p> <p>→</p> <p>Read our full guidance on getting the support you need to study</p>	<p>Student carer welcome pack</p> <p>→</p> <p>Getting you the information you need to get started as a student with care responsibilities at UAL</p>
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Related support

<p>Student Carers Breakfast Morning</p>	<p>Young Carers Action Day</p>	<p>Money management and advice</p>	<p>Student Diversity</p>
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The basics

It's important that key touch-points, such as university web pages, provide concise and clear information to help potential student carers self-identify and support existing student carers.

Phased support

Phased support presented in a diagrammatic format helps student carers navigate complex support systems and reduces fatigue caused by processing large amounts of information.

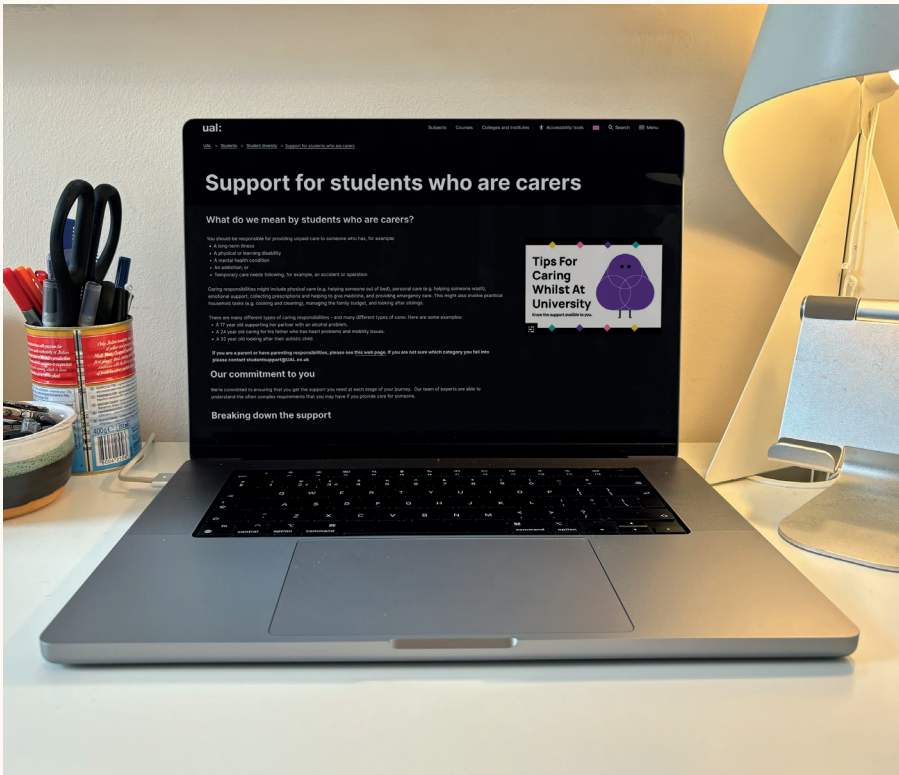
Breakdown

A clear breakdown of support addresses the needs of prospective, current, and graduating students, creating a holistic framework that ensures all stages of the student carer journey are covered.

Policy & related support

Providing access to a standalone student carer policy, separate from other support policies, reduces confusion and ensures related support is easily accessible. Related support provides an opportunity to spread awareness on the wider student carer community.

What the student carer sees...



Clear Terms

An immediate landing page should clearly define what a student carer is, provide examples of caring responsibilities, and differentiate this group from students with parenting responsibilities.

Additionally, a link to a “Tips for Caring” PDF outlining the support offered by the university is valuable.

Clear Journey

Breaking up large blocks of text with simple diagrams creates a more digestible and relatable experience for students at different stages. These diagrams help carers easily locate themselves within the support framework and understand their journey.



Recognising Carers Early

Welcome Pack

Carers Welcome Pack

1.

Surprise:
Comforting gift such as a Chocolate bar or simple snack

2.

3 Questions:
Three key questions to get the right support.



3.

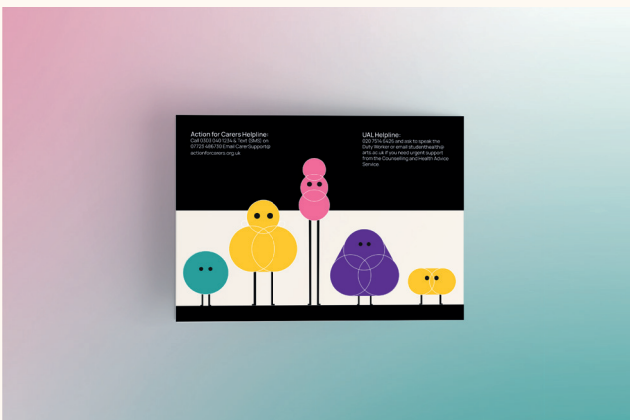
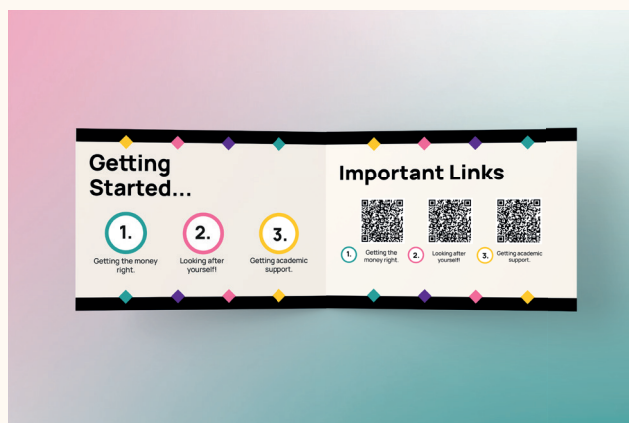
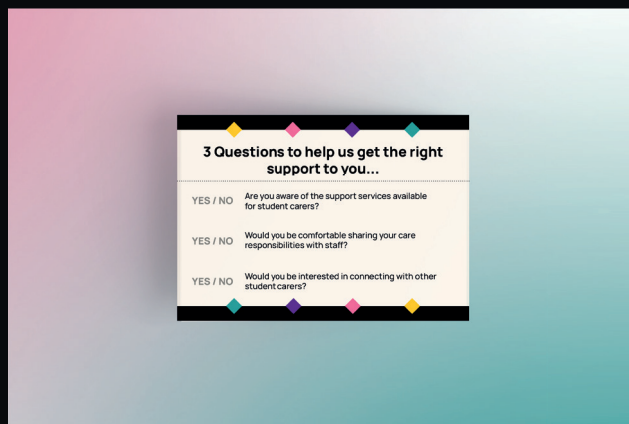
Support:
Academic, financial and emotional support available.

4.

Reflection Sheet:
Helps carers express how their responsibilities affect their lives.

3 Simple Questions

Asking three simple 'yes/no' questions at the start of a student carer's university journey helps immediately identify the type of support required, enabling universities to proactively provide tailored assistance from the start.



Support Booklet

The support booklet presents financial, emotional, and academic resources offered by the university in a simple, easy-to-understand format. Tested with student carers, it ensures that the most important information is delivered concisely and effectively.

Recognising Carers Early

Welcome Pack



Reflection Sheet

The reflection sheet poses two key questions: “How does caring impact my life?” and “What would I like staff to know?” The first question encourages carers to reflect on how their responsibilities affect them personally, while the second allows them to share essential details with staff to ensure they receive appropriate support. This reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings,

such as misinterpreting a carer’s actions in class. The information can also be shared with the in-house carer lead, who can disseminate it to the relevant staff as needed. Confidentiality is paramount, so this process must be handled with care and only after trust has been established with the student carer.

Accessing Hidden Carers

Identification Opportunities



**Carers Monthly
Breakfast Morning**

Drop-in 9-11AM

Freshers Fair

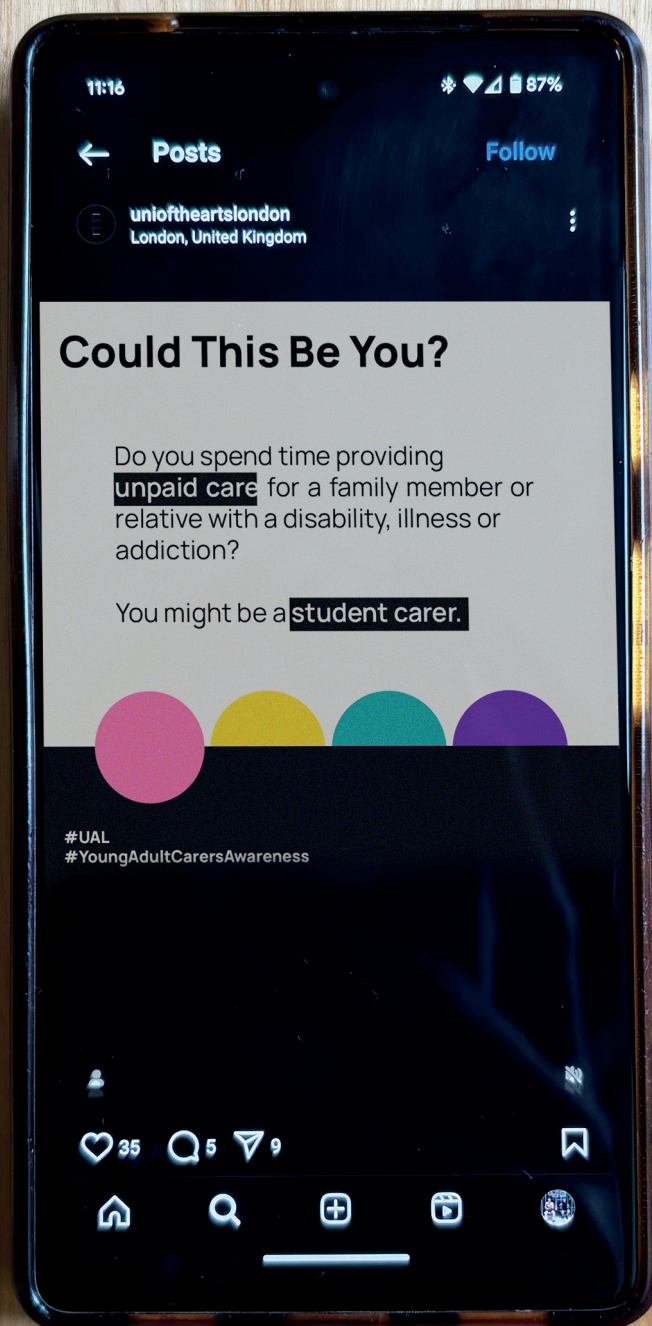
Freshers' fairs provide a valuable opportunity to reach hidden carers who may not realise they are carers. These events serve as key touchpoints to raise awareness and help identify student carers early on.

Drop-in

Monthly drop-ins offer a space for potential student carers to reflect on their situation and explore whether they align with the role of a carer. These sessions also foster connections among student carers, helping to reduce isolation and build a supportive community.

Accessing Hidden Carers

Identification Opportunities

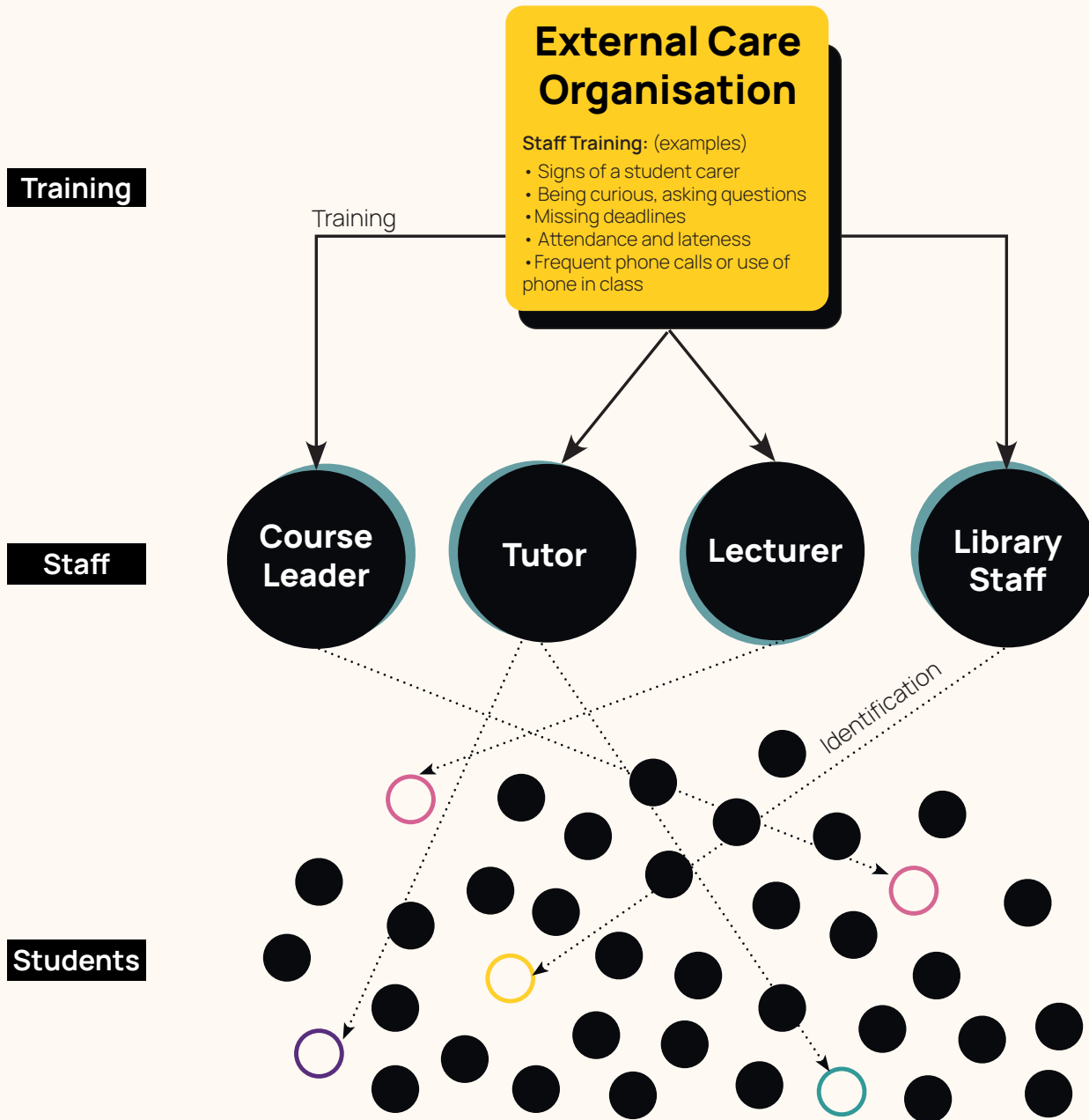


Proactive Social Media Outreach

Leveraging existing university social media and online platforms offers a low-cost, low-effort way to proactively reach hidden carers. Curated content can pose thought-provoking questions and provide direct links to available support.

Accessing Hidden Carers

Improving Staff Awareness

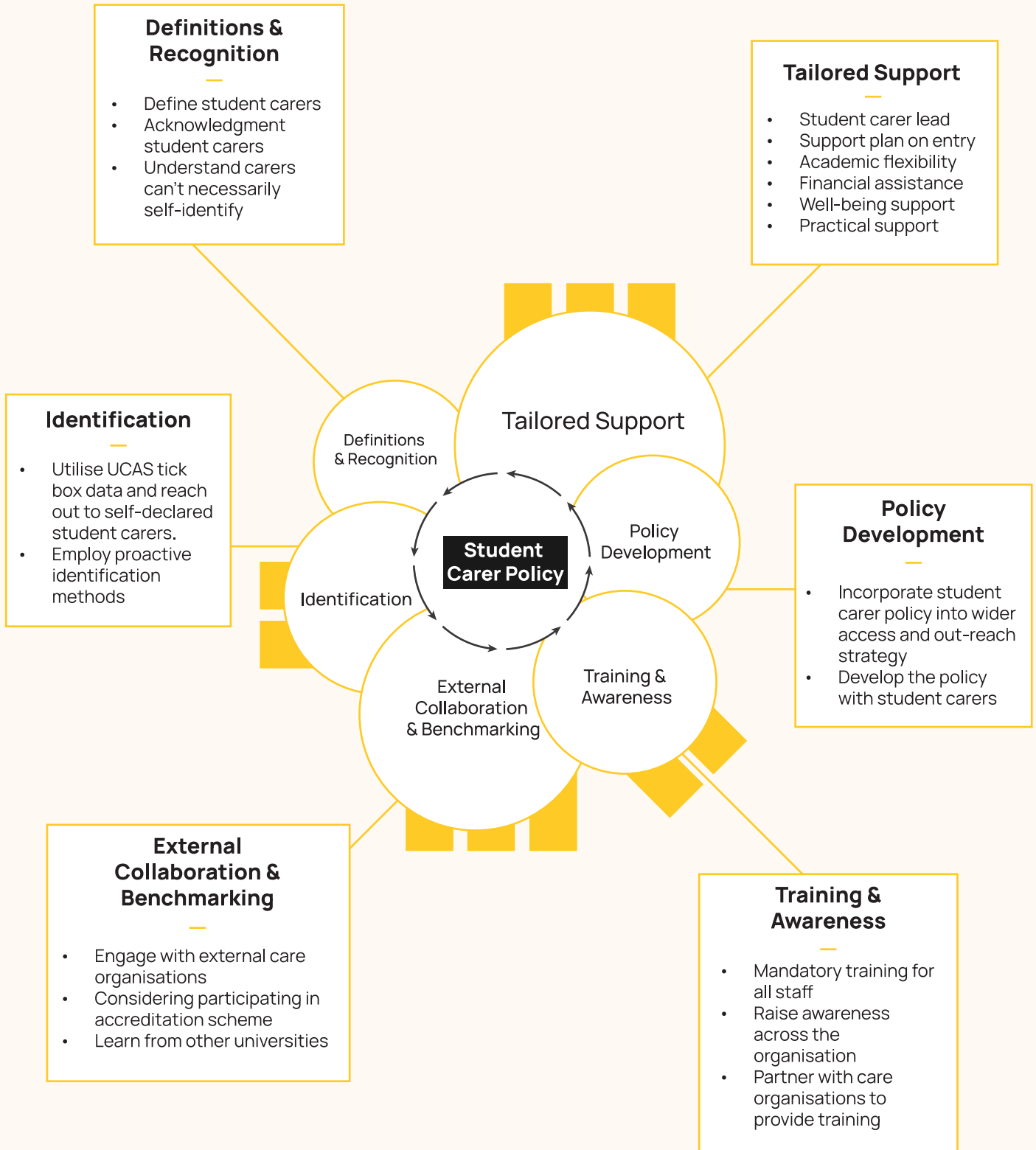


Teacher Training & Awareness

Teachers and university staff interact most frequently with students. With proper training and the ability to recognise common signs of caring responsibilities, they can play a key role in identifying hidden carers by being observant and actively curious.

Getting The Basics Right: Student Carer Policy

Macro Service Interventions



Getting The Basics Right: Student Carer Policy

Macro Service Interventions

Definitions & Recognition

Providing clear definitions of student carers and YACs is essential to help individuals self-identify with the role of a carer. This ensures that self-identified carers can access the appropriate support without being misled by other variations of caring, such as parenting responsibilities or care leaver status.

Support

Support for student carers should take a holistic approach, addressing academic, well-being, and financial needs. It should cater to carers at different stages of their higher education journey, providing consistent and meaningful assistance.

External Collaboration & Benchmarking

External collaboration with care organisations helps keep support systems up-to-date and aligned with the complex needs of student carers. Benchmarking allows universities to evaluate and improve their services, setting clear goals for enhancing the support they provide.

Training & Awareness

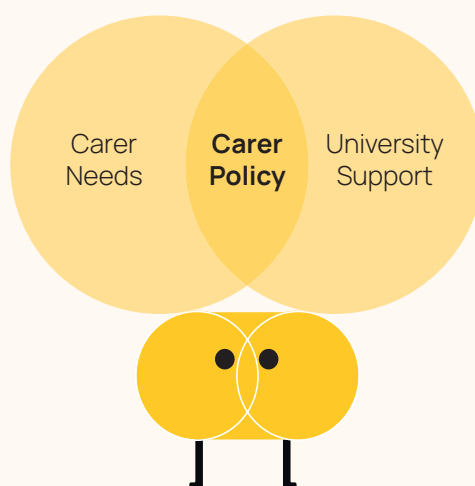
Staff training and awareness play a pivotal role in identifying hidden carers within an institution. This ensures carers can access support proactively, rather than only during times of crisis.

Identification

Proactive identification should begin at the start of a student's journey, leveraging UCAS self-identification data, social media outreach, and staff trained to recognise signs of caring responsibilities.

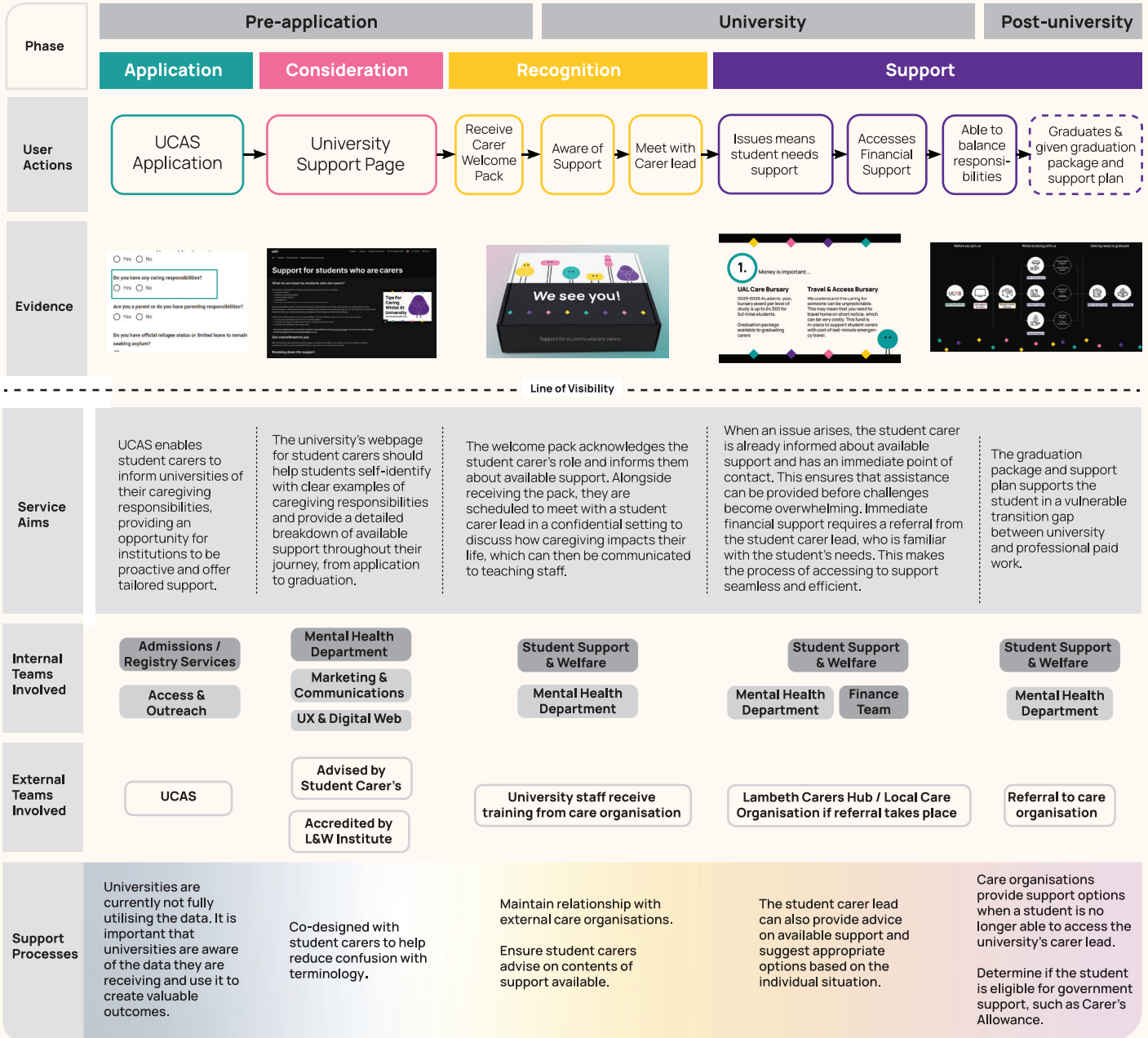
Policy Development

A student carer policy should be integrated into the university's wider access and outreach strategy. Its development must involve consultation with student carers and care organisations to ensure their needs are central to the policy.

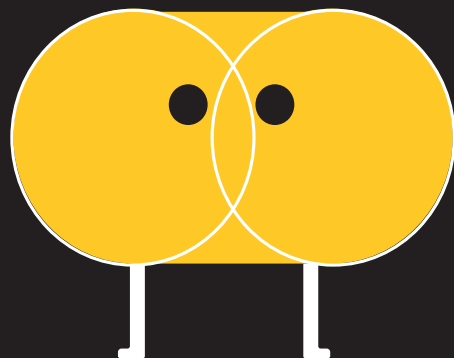


Establishing a Caring Service Strategy

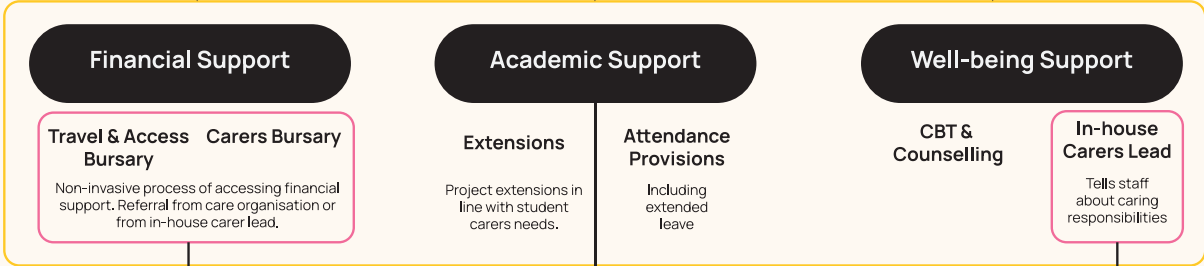
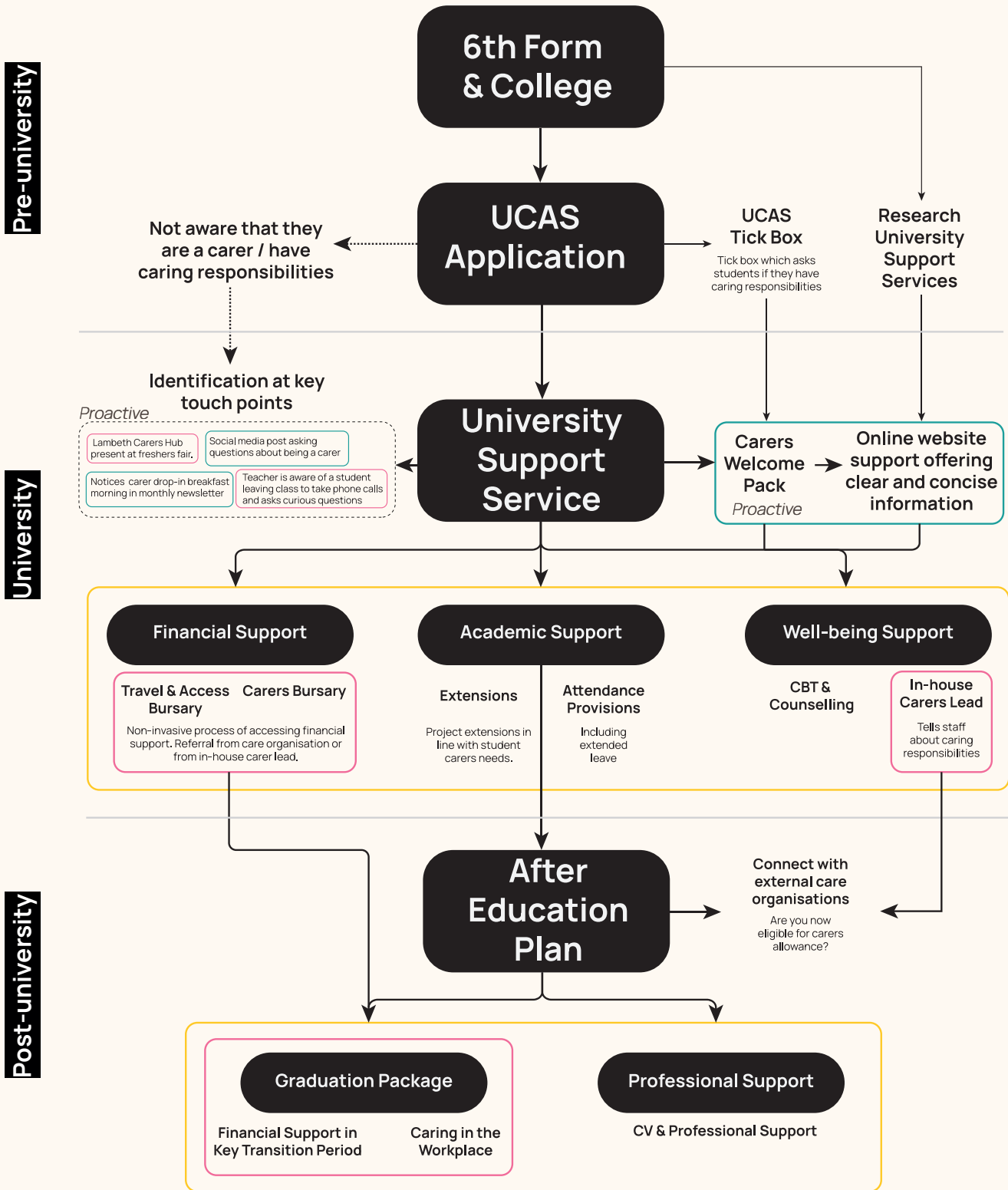
Macro Service Interventions



The journey of a self-identifying student carer



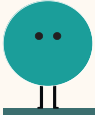
A Caring & Proactive Service



- Macro Interventions
- Meso Interventions
- Micro Interventions

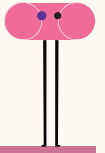
Establishing a Caring Service Strategy

SWOT Analysis



STRENGTHS

- Meet a significant unmet need in supporting students with caring responsibilities.
- Improved identification and proactive support early in the students journey into higher education.
- Enhanced student experience and increased retention of student carers following proactive and early access to support.
- Active role of external care organisations offer support but also provide training and help access student carers at key touch points.



WEAKNESSES

- Student carers may be reluctant to disclose personal information if trust is not built early.
- There could be a worry that telling the university that you are a carer in the application phase may impact the result of your application.
- Competing priorities within universities could lead to insufficient funding for key service interventions.
- Additional barriers for student who don't want their parents to find out that they are accessing support from university.

SWOT

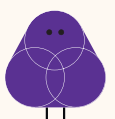
ANALYSIS

- There is a significant, yet often hidden, population of student carers in higher education who require support.
- Ability to leverage existing social media platforms and web pages to help identify, support and bring awareness the student carers.
- Free staff training and accredited programmes which allow universities to be recognised for providing a high standard of support for carers.
- Opportunity to implement a holistic care service which spans across the a spectrum of carer needs at different stages of the journey in higher education.

- Potential lack of long-term commitment from leadership could result in reduced funding and training and awareness.
- Negative stereotypes and stigma around students with caring responsibilities which could create barrier for carers.
- High increase in identified student carers could put pressure on already stretched university support services.
- Collecting and managing data about carers requires careful consideration of privacy and confidentiality.



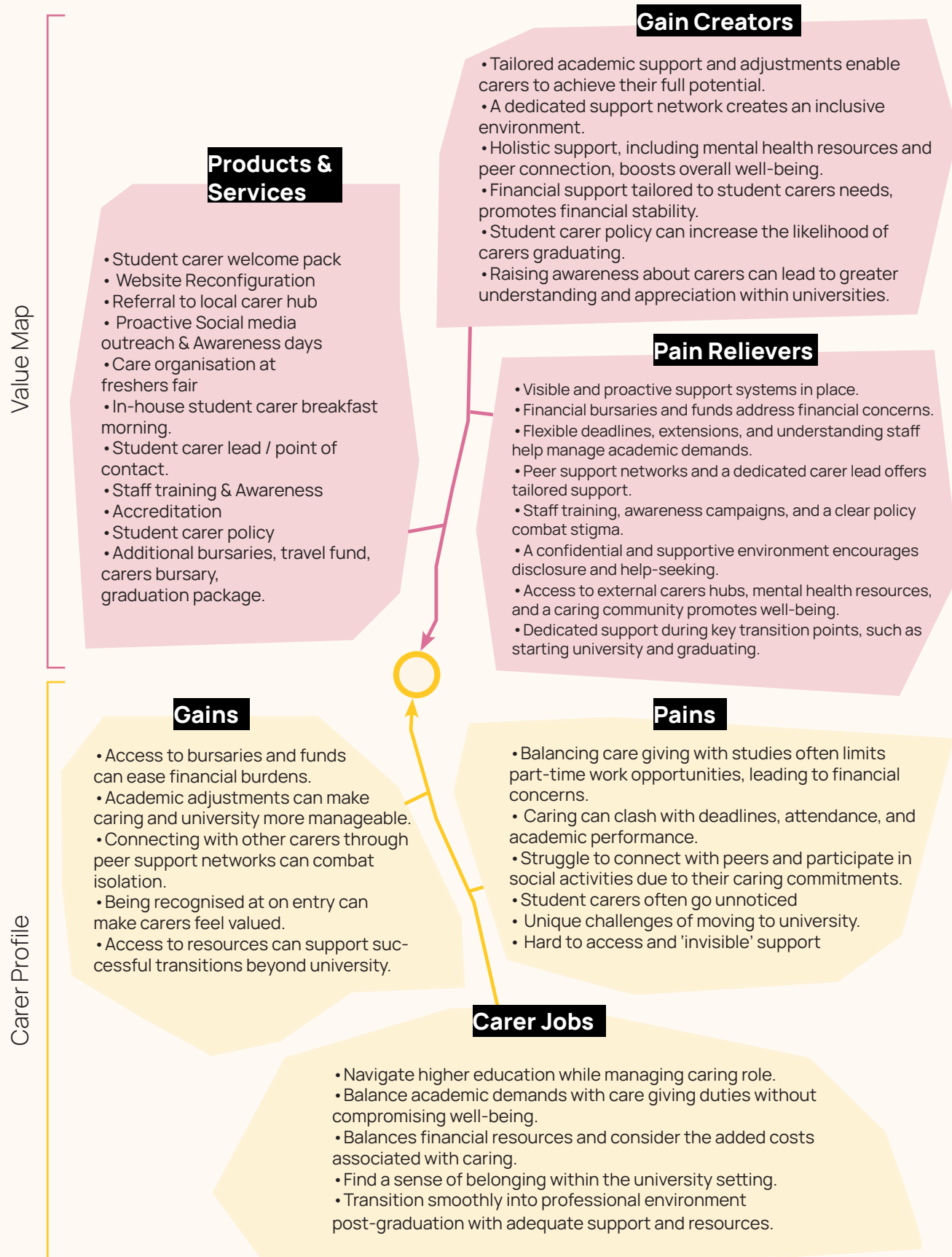
OPPORTUNITIES



THREATS

Establishing a Caring Service Strategy

Value Proposition Canvas



Conclusion

In conclusion, this report highlights the urgent need for universities to take proactive steps to identify and support young adult carers. The findings reveal a significant gap in awareness among staff and carers, perpetuating a cycle of invisibility and unmet needs. Clear, compassionate policies that protect confidentiality, encourage disclosure, and make support visible and accessible are essential and should be the minimum standard.

Confidential disclosure processes and discreet methods of delivering information can help carers seek support without fear of judgement or familial conflict. Targeted financial assistance, such as travel and carers' funds, can alleviate the financial strain many carers face, allowing them to focus on their studies. Alongside policy changes, creating opportunities for student carers to connect with one another and appointing dedicated student carers' leads will help ensure their full spectrum of needs is recognised and addressed.

By adopting these recommendations, universities can create an environment that empowers student carers to thrive both academically and personally. The challenges faced by student carers are hard enough, let's create an experience that actively seeks them out and supports them. This report provides a roadmap for meaningful change, demonstrating how the right support can help carers reach their full potential in higher education.



Moving Forward

This project has enabled me to turn the lived experiences of student carers into actionable service interventions. I have built relationships with the Carers Trust and the Learning & Work Institute, two leading UK charities dedicated to improving the identification and support of student carers. Additionally, I shared my experience at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Young Carers and Young Adult Carers, aligning with its priorities.

Moving forward, I plan to continue collaborating with these organisations, focusing on driving policy changes, including addressing the 21-hour rule that prevents student carers in full-time education from receiving Carer's Allowance (Aylward, 2023).

At the recent 'Driving Change: Supporting Young Adult Carers' Transitions in Education and Employment' event, I had informal conversations with delegates, alongside three other young adult carers who sat on a panel and shared their experiences with the event attendees. This has led to an invitation from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to meet with Government Minister Sir Stephen Timms, who are responsible for current, problematic, carer's allowance. The Minister has expressed interest in hearing directly from me and the other student carers to discuss our challenges and experiences.

This marks a meaningful step towards real-world change for student carers across England, aiming to reduce the financial barriers that affect so many.



Ingredients
Rapeseed Oil

Caution
Do not pour hot oil back into the bottle.
Allow to cool first.

Suitable for vegans

Nutrition

Typical values	100ml	Each tablespoon contains (15ml)	% RI*
Energy	339kJ/82kcal	509kJ/121kcal	6%
Fat	91.7g	1.1g	20%
of which saturates	7.3g	0.0g	8%
Carbohydrate	0.0g	0.0g	0%
of which sugars	0.0g	0.0g	0%
Fibre	0.0g	0.0g	0%
Protein	0.0g	0.0g	0%
Salt	0.0g	0.0g	0%

Pack contains 66 servings
*Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ / 2000kcal)
110ml of oil weighs approx. 100g.

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PROPRIÉTÉ DE IFDD - SYSTEMS GMBH / GERMANY AND NOT BE SOLD

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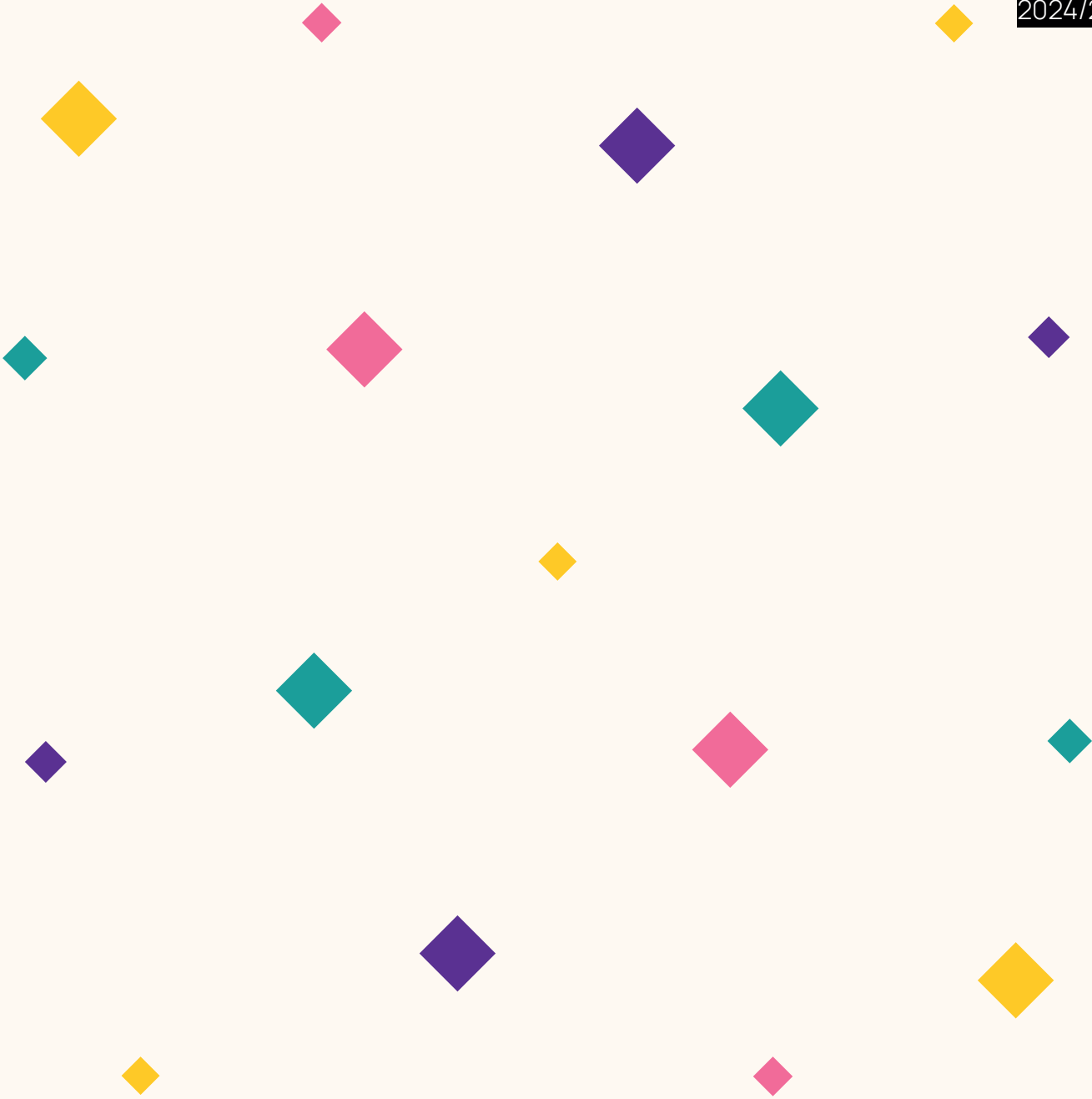
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Lewis Baylin MA Service Design Final Major Project