



Care to Go Higher CPD 2025-26 Evaluation Report





Contents

- Introduction**2
- Delivery format**3
- Guest speakers**3
- Analysis and evaluation**4
- Pre- and post-programme comparisons**4
- Pre- and post-session comparisons:**6
- Programme qualitative feedback and comments**9
- Learnings and Suggestions for Improvement**10
- Tailored deliveries**12
- Conclusions**12
- Further information**12

Introduction

Background to Go Higher West Yorkshire and Care to Go Higher CPD

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) is a partnership of 13 higher education (HE) providers working collaboratively to reduce educational inequity across West Yorkshire. Our Care to Go Higher CPD was launched in 2020 and aims to give participants an understanding of the overlap between Higher Education and Care Experience and the confidence to support their young people to make informed decisions about their future education. The CPD content was in part developed in collaboration with Leeds Virtual School.

Contents of Care to Go Higher CPD programme and who it is aimed at

The programme covers topics including barriers to higher education, support for care-experienced learners, the application process, and student finance. Guest speakers also contributed throughout the programme, sharing their expertise on key topics. More information can be found about this in the guest speaker section.

Our Care to Go Higher (CtGH) programme is a CPD-certified programme for key influencers supporting care-experienced young people, including foster carers, personal advisers, children's home workers and local authority staff.

Overview of delivery in 2025-26

The programme was delivered across three cohorts during the 2025/26 academic year: autumn 2025, spring 2026 and summer 2026. In total, 41 participants attended one or more sessions. Of these, 33 participants attended more than half of the sessions, and 26 participants achieved CPD-certification by attending all six sessions. There was an increased number of foster carers and the cohorts also included a mix of participants from local authorities and higher education sector, which was good to see. The increase in number of foster carers was one of the key aims for this year's delivery. This was an objective as they play an important role in the lives of care-experienced young people.

What is in this evaluation report?

This report evaluates the impact of the Care to Go Higher programme using feedback collected through pre- and post-session questionnaires completed before and after each session, alongside participant comments which were collected at the end of the course. The findings

provide an overview of the programme's impact on participants' knowledge and confidence in supporting care-experienced young people to access and succeed in higher education.

Delivery Format

Building on the strengths of previous years, the programme continued to be delivered as six weekly online sessions, each lasting two hours. Following the revised delivery model introduced in 2024/25, the programme returned to one session per week for all three cohorts in 2025/26. This approach helped maintain consistency within each cohort while allowing sufficient time for delivery across the programme.

The programme continues to grow its national reach, attracting participants from across England while maintaining strong engagement from organisations across West Yorkshire. Although examples used throughout the programme were rooted in the West Yorkshire higher education landscape, the content remained relevant and applicable to key influencers supporting care-experienced young people nationwide.

Participants who attended all six sessions received an official CPD certificate, while those who attended part of the programme received a Go Higher West Yorkshire certificate of attendance. Where appropriate, the Training Delivery Officer also offered supplementary catch-up sessions to enable participants to complete missed content.

Alongside the full CPD programme, bespoke sessions continued to be delivered for partner organisations, including an in-person session in partnership with Wakefield Virtual School. GHWY continued to offer 30-minute taster sessions, providing a flexible introduction for organisations unable to commit to the full six-session programme.

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers remain a distinctive and highly valued feature of the programme. Each session concluded with a guest contribution, providing participants with additional expertise, real-world perspectives and opportunities to connect with professionals.

These contributions reinforced the session content, demonstrated the shared commitment of partner organisations to supporting care-experienced learners, and enabled participants to build valuable professional networks. Feedback consistently highlighted guest speakers as one of the most beneficial aspects of the programme. More detailed feedback can be found in the feedback session later in this report.

Guest speakers in 2025/26 included:

- **Higher Education Outreach Professionals from Leeds Beckett University**

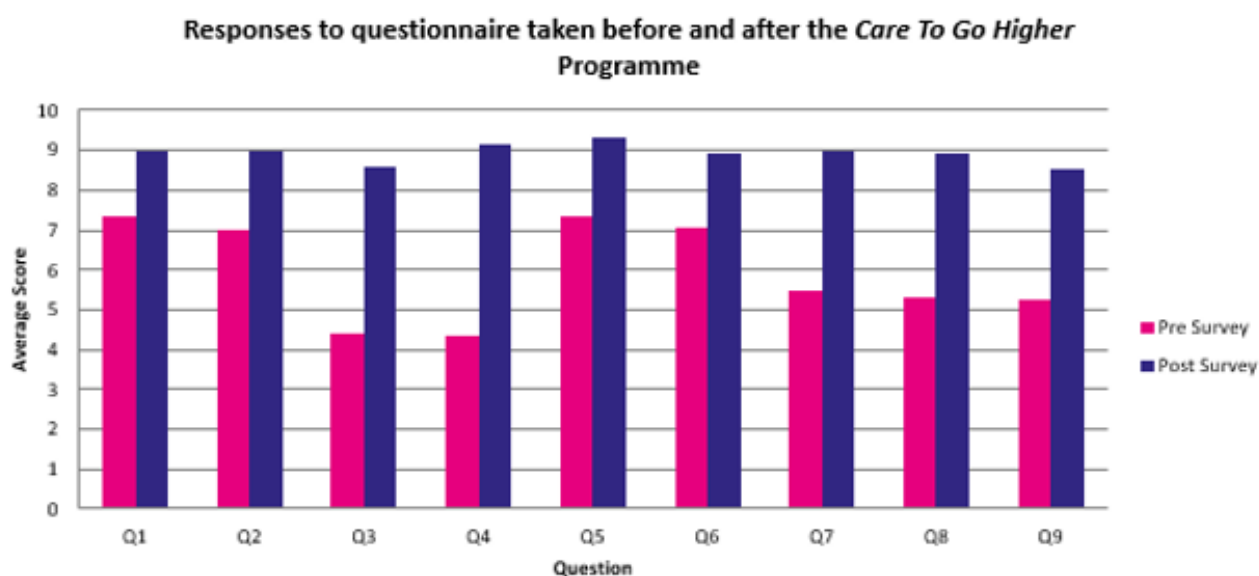
- Higher Education in Further Education representatives from Luminate Education Group
- A care-experienced student from University of Huddersfield
- University representatives from University of Bradford
- Higher Education staff from the Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds
- Staff from Unite Foundation
- Access and Participation teams from UCAS

Analysis and evaluation

This section presents an overview of the impact of the Care to Go Higher CPD-certified programme, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data. Pre- and post-programme questionnaires provide evidence of improvements in participants' knowledge and confidence, while anonymous feedback offers deeper insight into how the programme was experienced in practice. Together, these findings highlight the effectiveness of the programme in strengthening understanding, fostering confidence, and equipping participants to support care-experienced young people around Higher Education.

Pre- and post-programme comparisons

Participants were asked to complete a non-mandatory questionnaire before the programme started to assess their existing knowledge and understanding of key topics. The same questions were repeated after the programme, enabling us to measure how effectively it enhanced participants' knowledge and understanding and demonstrate the overall impact of the programme.



Q1.1 How would you rate your knowledge of Higher Education?	Q1.2 How would you rate your understanding of Higher Education?	Q1.3 How would you rate your knowledge of how the care experience and Higher Education interact?	Q1.4 How would you rate your knowledge of supporting informed choices for care-experienced young people?	Q1.5 How would you rate your knowledge of the value of Higher Education?	Q1.6 How would you rate your knowledge of the experience of Higher Education?	Q1.7 How would you rate your knowledge of supporting aspirations in care-experienced young people?	Q1.8 How would you rate your understanding of your support role for care-experienced young people in relation to Higher Education?	Q1.9 How would you rate your access to expertise in Higher Education?
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The data demonstrates consistent improvements across all nine areas of knowledge and confidence measured. Average scores increased in every category, with gains ranging from +1.67 to +4.83 points on a 10-point scale. These findings indicate that participants not only strengthened their existing knowledge but also made substantial progress in areas where confidence and understanding were initially lower.

The largest increases were in Question 4 (“knowledge of supporting informed choices for care-experienced young people”, +4.83), Question 3 (“knowledge of how the care experience and Higher Education interact”, +4.17), Question 8 (“understanding of your support role for care-experienced young people in relation to Higher Education”, +3.58), Question 7 (“knowledge of supporting aspirations in care-experienced young people”, +3.50), and Question 9 (“access to expertise in Higher Education”, +3.25). These results suggest the programme is particularly effective at addressing critical knowledge gaps around supporting care-experienced young people, strengthening participants’ understanding of the relationship between care experience and Higher Education, and increasing confidence in their own professional role.

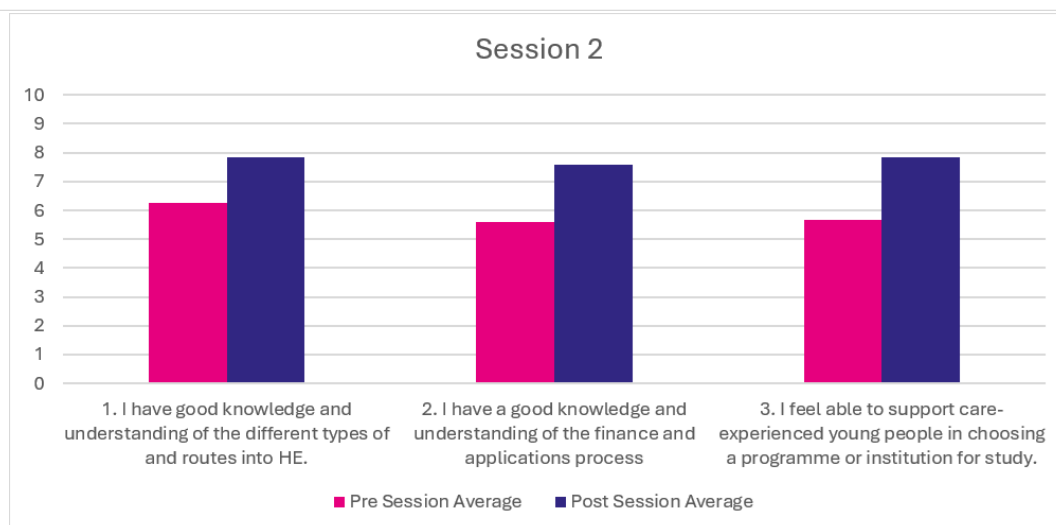
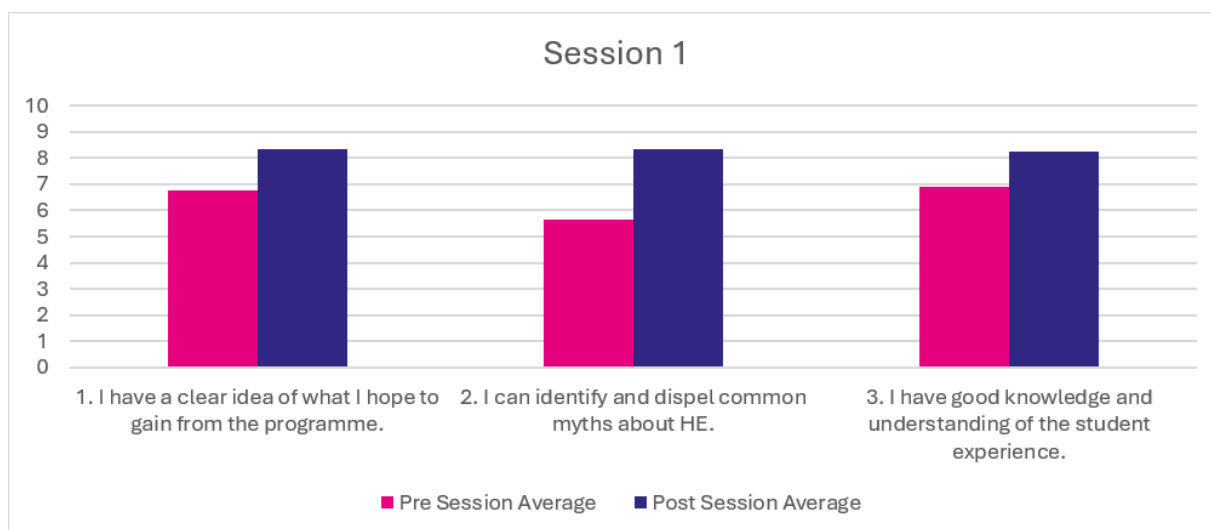
Other areas, including knowledge of Higher Education (Question 1, +1.67), knowledge of the Higher Education experience (Question 6, +1.83), understanding of Higher Education (Question 2, +2.00), and knowledge of the value of Higher Education (Question 5, +2.00), also demonstrated meaningful improvements. While gains in these areas were comparatively smaller, this likely reflects stronger baseline knowledge among participants, with the programme reinforcing and extending existing understanding.

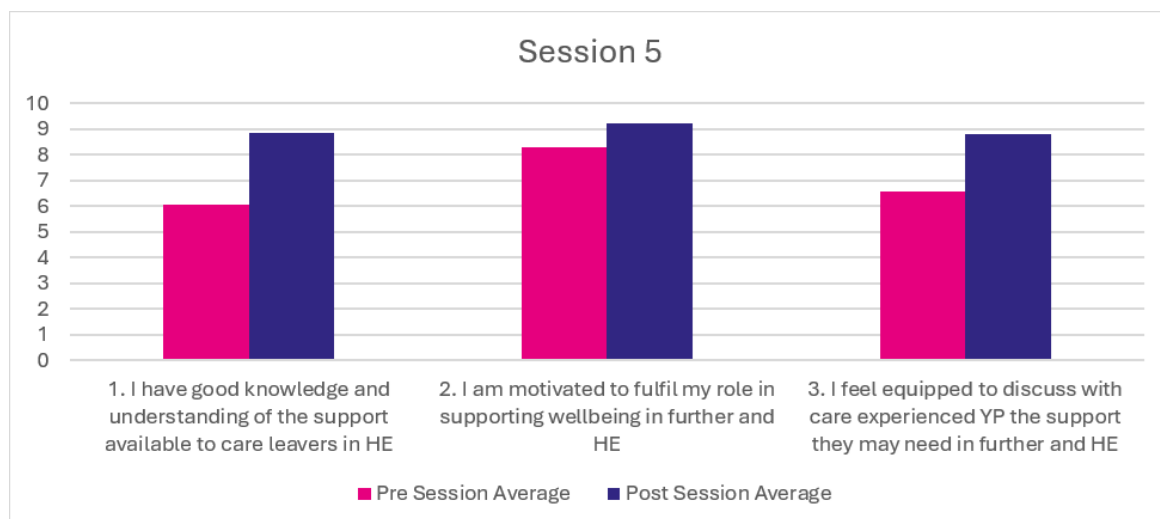
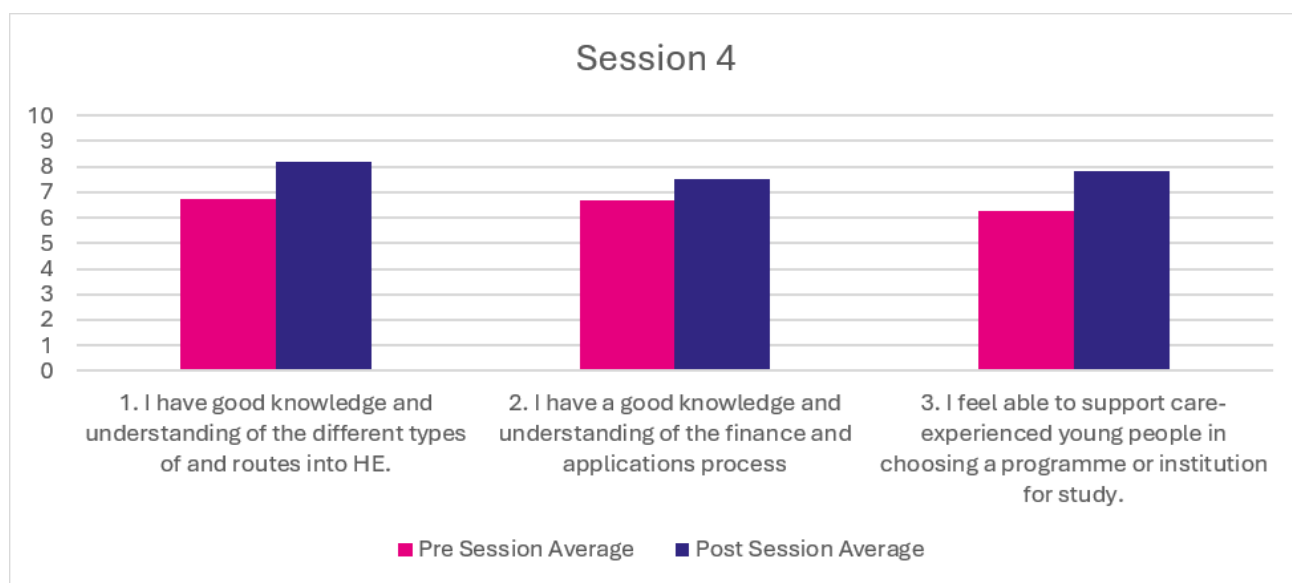
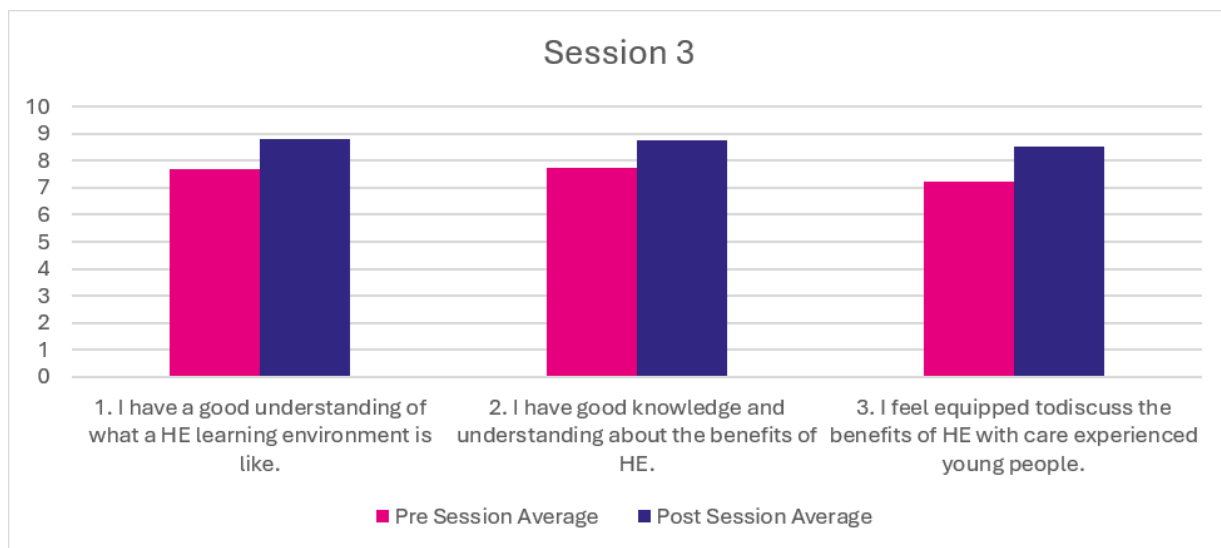
Overall, the findings provide strong evidence that Care to Go Higher delivers broad and meaningful impact across a range of knowledge and confidence measures. The programme enhances participants’ understanding of Higher Education, deepens awareness of the specific challenges and opportunities facing care-experienced young people, and equips professionals with greater confidence, knowledge, and practical understanding to support informed decision-making, raise aspirations, and improve progression to Higher Education. Participants are also signposted towards the Care To Go Higher newsletter which aims to support ongoing learning and access to future opportunities.

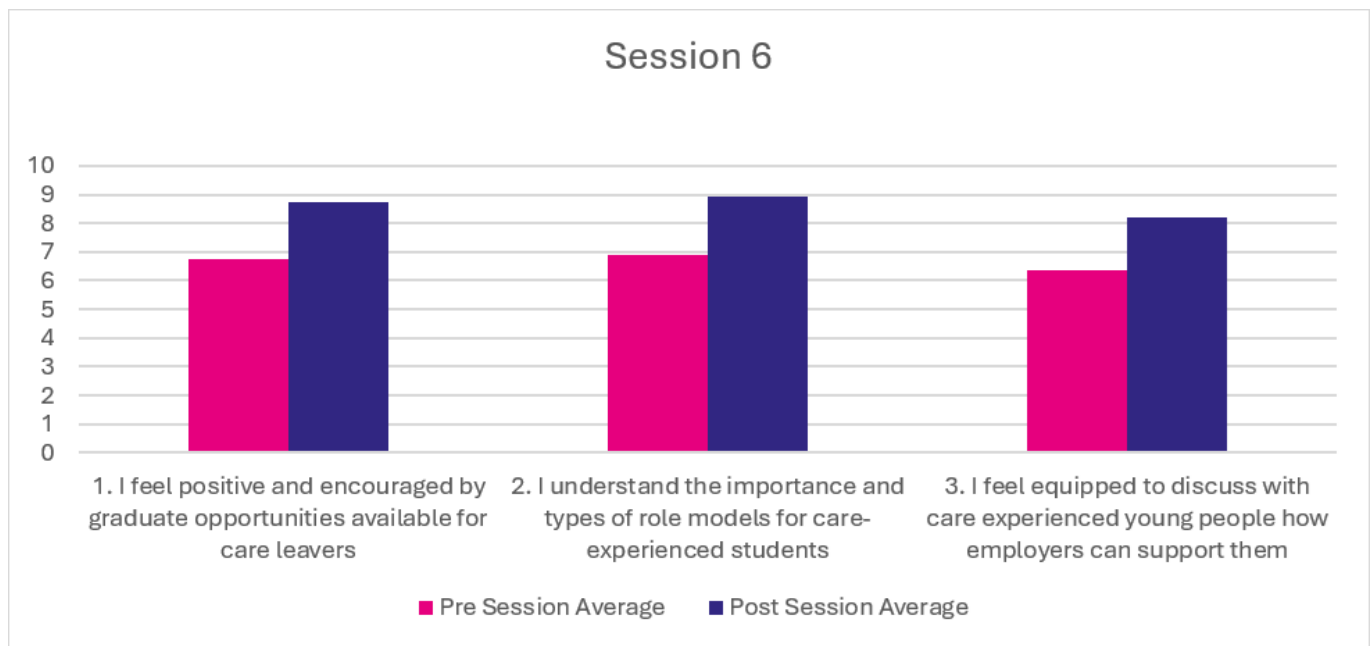
Pre- and post-session comparisons

As well as pre- and post- programme comparison, there is pre- and post- session comparison for each session. Participants were asked to complete a short non-mandatory questionnaire before and after each session. These assessed changes in knowledge and confidence relating to the session content and provided insight into overall progress across the six-week programme.

Each questionnaire contained three questions. The same questions were asked both before and after each session, allowing for direct comparison. Participants rated their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 10 being Strongly Agree. Statements covered a wide range of Higher Education topics, including those specifically relating to the experiences of care-experienced young people. An example of a typical statement was: "I have a good understanding of what a Higher Education learning environment is like." The data demonstrates consistent improvements in knowledge and confidence across sessions. The next section will display the pre- and post-session responses for each questionnaire, with conclusions being drawn at the end.







Evaluation Analysis

Across all six CPD sessions, pre- and post-programme questionnaire data shows a consistent improvement in participants' knowledge, understanding and confidence. Every question recorded an increase in average scores, demonstrating the programme had a positive impact regardless of the topic or participants' baseline. While several sessions began with relatively high baseline scores, reflecting participants' existing knowledge and experience, the programme consistently built on this foundation and strengthened confidence across key areas of supporting care-experienced learners.

The largest improvements were seen in areas where participants are required to provide practical guidance and informed advice. Knowledge of the support available to care leavers in Higher Education increased from 6.07 to 8.86, while participants' confidence in discussing the support needs of care-experienced young people rose from 6.57 to 8.79. Similarly, participants reported substantial increases in their ability to identify and challenge common myths about Higher Education, with average scores rising from 5.65 to 8.35. This suggests the programme is particularly effective in addressing knowledge gaps that have a direct impact on the quality of advice and support professionals offer.

Strong improvements were also evident in participants' understanding of Higher Education systems and progression. Confidence in navigating the finance and application process increased in both sessions where this topic was delivered, rising from 5.58 to 7.58 and from 6.67 to 7.50 respectively. Participants also reported greater confidence in supporting care-experienced young people to make informed choices about courses and HE providers, with

average scores increasing from 5.68 to 7.84 and 6.25 to 7.83 across the two delivery cohorts. These gains indicate that the programme equips participants with practical knowledge that can be applied directly in their roles.

Sessions focusing on the student experience, the benefits of Higher Education and graduate outcomes also demonstrated meaningful improvements. Participants finished these sessions with a stronger understanding of Higher Education environments, increased confidence in discussing the benefits of Higher Education with care-experienced young people, and greater awareness of graduate opportunities and the importance of positive role models. Although baseline scores in these areas were generally higher, participants still reported clear gains, suggesting that the programme deepened existing knowledge while reinforcing key messages.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Care to Go Higher delivers consistent and meaningful learning outcomes across all six sessions. The programme strengthens both knowledge and confidence in the areas most closely linked to supporting care-experienced young people, providing participants with the understanding, practical skills and confidence needed to offer informed, effective and aspirational guidance throughout a young person's journey into Higher Education.

Qualitative feedback and comments

Participants across the Autumn 2025, Spring 2026, and Summer 2026 cohorts were given the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback at the end of the programme. As in previous years, feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants consistently describing the CPD programme as informative, engaging, and effective in building their confidence to support care-experienced young people into Higher Education.

The Training Delivery Officer's approach continued to be singled out for praise across all three cohorts, described variously as engaging, attentive, inclusive, and "down to earth." Participants valued the responsiveness to questions and consistently noted that all voices were encouraged and heard. One participant reflected:

"Rob's [Training Delivery Officer] delivery was fantastic. Very interactive, understanding, and added personal touches. Always had the answers, or endeavoured to find out for us."

Guest speakers remained a key strength of the programme, with the contribution of care-experienced student speakers highlighted as particularly powerful. Participants said hearing lived experience alongside professional input gave them a fuller picture and practical confidence to draw on in their own roles:

"It was good to hear personal experience...the [guest speaker's]

passion shone through. It was good to hear from someone who supports [care-experienced young people].”

Group discussion and the diversity of participants’ own backgrounds and expertise were again repeatedly praised as central to the learning experience, helping attendees reflect on their own assumptions and practice:

“The varied voices in the group helped me to explore my perception of the CE [care-experienced] students’ experience, their motivations and concerns.”

Learnings and Suggestions for Improvement

A new and consistent theme is a desire for better access to session materials. Several participants across cohorts asked for slides and resource links to be shared following each session, rather than rely solely on the Teams chat, and one participant suggested recording guest speaker contributions so they could be revisited. A small number of participants proposed a case-study format tracing one care-experienced learner’s educational journey from school through to HE, to help tie together the varied content.

Suggestions for improvement were minor relative to the volume of positive feedback: more practical or scenario-based activity and easier ongoing access to resources. One participant additionally proposed a register of course alumni to help local authority children’s services identify trained staff more easily. This is one for future development.

Summary of participant feedback

- The programme continued to build participants’ knowledge and confidence in supporting care-experienced young people towards Higher Education.
- Facilitator delivery was again the most consistently and specifically praised element, described as engaging, attentive, and inclusive.
- Guest speakers, particularly care-experienced student speakers, remained the standout resource for adding depth and lived-experience insight.
- Group discussion and the diversity of participants’ own experience were highly valued for reflection and learning.
- The clearest suggestion for improvement was better post-session access to slides, links, and recorded guest speaker input.
- A small number of participants suggested a cross-course case study and an alumni register as ideas for future development.

Next steps

In response to this year's feedback, the following actions are being taken forward:

- Recording guest speaker sessions with consent from participants and guest speaker: A trial will begin to record guest speaker presentations, allowing participants to revisit this content after the live CPD sessions.
- Exploring a discussion space for attendees: The possibility of an ongoing discussion forum between sessions is being explored to give participants a space to reflect and share thoughts outside of the live sessions.
- Improving signposting of resources: Feedback suggested some participants were unaware of, or found it hard to locate, resources that already exist. Rather than create new materials, the focus will be on more explicitly signposting available resources during and after sessions, so participants can find and return to them.
- Developing a case-study resource: The recurring suggestion for a worked example tracing one care-experienced learner's journey through the education system will be considered as a future addition to course content.

Other suggestions, such as changes to presentation software and a formal alumni register with local authority children's services, have been noted. These are not being progressed currently but will continue to be considered as the programme develops.

Future delivery

Building on the programme's success, we will continue to deliver high-quality Care to Go Higher certified-CPD for key influencers supporting the educational journeys of care-experienced young people. The CPD attracts participants across England while maintaining a strong commitment to organisations across West Yorkshire, ensuring its growing national reach complements rather than detracts from its regional focus.

The planning for the next programme is already underway, with the first 2026/27 cohort launching on Thursday, 8 October 2026. We look forward to welcoming a new cohort of key influencers committed to improving outcomes for care-experienced learners. Alongside the core CPD programme, we will continue to develop bespoke and tailored delivery opportunities with organisations.

Tailored deliveries

The tailored deliveries in 2025-26 included 30-minute taster sessions and a bespoke delivery at the Wakefield Virtual School Conference, both providing a flexible way for interested organisations to engage with the programme and its themes.

Our partnership with Wakefield Virtual School has continued to grow, moving beyond one-off delivery towards an ongoing collaborative relationship. Following previous bespoke sessions, this year's Conference delivery further strengthened the partnership, with another tailored session already planned for November 2026. This relationship demonstrates the value of working closely to deliver training to respond to local needs while extending reach and impact of the Care to Go Higher programme.

We are also open to working with all Virtual Schools in West Yorkshire to support key influencers in their area, and will continue to explore these opportunities as they arise.

Conclusions

The 2025/26 Care to Go Higher certified-CPD has continued to demonstrate its value as a high-quality CPD opportunity for key influencers supporting care-experienced young people. The quantitative evaluation shows consistent improvements in participants' knowledge, confidence and understanding in key areas, while qualitative feedback highlights the programme's engaging delivery, guest speakers, and practical relevance.

The impact of the Care to Go Higher CPD programme has also been recognised within the sector as it was a [finalist in the Education North Awards this year](#).

As the programme continues to expand its reach nationally while maintaining strong partnerships across West Yorkshire, it remains well placed to support key influencers in raising aspirations and improving progression to Higher Education for care-experienced learners. By responding to participant feedback and continually refining delivery, Care to Go Higher is well positioned to build on its success and further strengthen its impact.

Further information

For further information about the programme, please visit the [Care to Go Higher webpage](#)



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