

Sir John Cass's Foundation Lecture 2017/18



The importance of education on the life chances of children in care

The Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly
Pro Vice Chancellor,
Research and Enterprise,
St Mary's University,
Twickenham



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Foreword

Sir John Cass's Foundation has evolved over its more than 270-year history to become one of the leading independent education charities in the UK. Founded in 1748 by City of London politician and philanthropist Sir John Cass (1661–1718), the Foundation has a rich history of supporting pioneering initiatives to promote participation and achievement in education for the most disadvantaged young people in the Capital.

We proudly continue to support the work of our founder through offering grant funding to schools, organisations and individuals in need across inner London. The Foundation also works hard to establish innovative partnerships with leading educational bodies to improve attainment and access to opportunity for young Londoners, always with a focus on how successful interventions can be scaled at a national level.

This year has seen the Foundation continue its support of the pioneering work of the First Star Project at St Mary's University, with the release of the first tranche of a £400,000 major grant to improve the educational outcomes of young people in care. It is an exciting and innovative programme for the Foundation to be involved with and we look forward to being part of the first UK roll-out of the model as it improves access to higher education for Looked After Children.

We were delighted to announce earlier this year our plans to work with our Secondary School in Stepney, the Sir John Cass's Foundation and Red Coat Church of England Secondary School, to transform the School's Virtual Learning Environment into a state-of-the-art independent learning centre, to be named after the Foundation's philanthropic founder, Sir John Cass. The Foundation has pledged a capital grant of £750,000 which will be the single largest capital donation made to the School. The new building will enable students to access resources, study and learn seven-days a week to help instil a greater sense of independent learning to prepare them as they progress into the Sixth Form, further and higher education.

Support has been continued for the outreach and engagement initiatives of London Metropolitan University, who are soon to publish a report to showcase and share the learning and outcomes of the three year, £2.6million grant from the Foundation for the enhancement of their widening participation mission.

The Foundation has also this year partnered with expert researchers from the University of Buckingham to publish the findings of research into the experiences of cyberaggression and cyberbullying among adolescents in the UK, furthering the Foundation's commitment to understanding the issues of the 21st Century classroom.

Alongside our grant making activities and with an ever-changing political landscape and the continuing financial pressures on our education system the Foundation, as one of the leading independent education charities in the UK, is well placed to draw together policy makers, advocates and influencers to address key challenges across the sector. The Foundation continues to be at the forefront of debate, stimulating meaningful discussion through our series of annual lectures.

Each year an important educational topic is explored by a high-profile and influential speaker and we are delighted to have previously welcomed lectures from Lord Adonis, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools in 2007; Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families in 2008; Michael Gove, the then Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families in 2009; Sir Anthony Seldon, Master of Wellington College in 2010; in 2011 the educationalist and former Deputy Head Teacher of St Michael & All Angels Church of England Academy, Katharine Birbalsingh; Sir Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills spoke in 2012; the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield in 2013, Martin Bean CBE, Vice –Chancellor of The Open University in 2014, the Rt. Hon. Lord Baker of Dorking CH in 2015 and in 2016 with an address from Professor Sir Adrian Smith FRS, Vice Chancellor of the University of London.

The Cass annual lecture series has grown in reputation and influence over the past eleven years and is shared widely with colleagues in the Houses of Parliament, Government Ministers, MEP's, universities and schools throughout the UK.

We were delighted this year to welcome the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Enterprise, St Mary's University, Twickenham, to deliver the 11th Sir John Cass's Foundation Lecture entitled "The importance of education on the life chances of children in care."

We were also hugely grateful to have Ms Kerry Littleford join us to provide her personal reflections on her experiences of the impact of education having been through the care system herself. Kerry's powerful personal testimony provided invaluable context to the evening's lecture and was complemented by the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly's thought provoking exploration of the topic.

The Foundation is very grateful to both speakers for their permission to film and publish the transcripts of this year's lecture and personal testimony.

As Chairman I am proud to have seen the Sir John Cass's Foundation annual lecture series grow from strength-to-strength and we look forward to continuing to build on the success and influence of our past eleven lectures. The Foundation welcomes engagement with future speakers, key educationalists, policy makers and advocates who share the Foundation's mission to promote participation and achievement in education for all young people, irrespective of background or circumstance.

As we move into the tercentenary year commemorating the life of our founder Sir John Cass, we reflect on our long and proud history of bringing young people from all backgrounds into education. The Foundation's grant giving, partnerships, research efforts, institutional relationships and affiliate organisations together with our annual lecture series continues our commitment to offer both practical and strategic solutions to honour our founding mission.

Dr Kevin Everett (Deputy)
Treasurer and Chairman of the Board
Sir John Cass's Foundation

The importance of education on the life chances of children in care

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

May I begin by saying how grateful I am for the invitation to address you tonight, and thank you Professor Lewis and Dr Everett for your warm words of welcome.

You will all be aware of the history of Sir John Cass's Foundation and the Cass Business School and that the initial partnership was formed out of the vision and desire of Sir John Cass to educate the children of London.

With that in mind, I want to talk to you today about the imperative of tackling the poor educational outcomes of children in care and examine some different approaches. I intend first of all to go over a few of the key facts, do a brief historical overview of attitudes towards children in care and how best to support them – particularly with their education – before turning to St Mary's experience with the First Star Academy, a programme initiated in the United States. I believe that this educational project currently being funded by the Cass Foundation at St Mary's University, Twickenham with the participation of a number of local authorities in London could provide a new model for tackling what has sometimes been seen as a virtually intractable problem of how we help children in care and on the edge of care.

So first let me address the scale and nature of the challenge we are facing, and the people we are trying to help: children in care.

Who are they? Why are they there? And how do their life chances and outcomes compare to those of children who are not in care?

Who is in care?

Figures from the Department for Education¹ (DfE) show that the population of children in the care of the state, in residential or foster homes, is currently over 72,000 in England. Approximately 44,000 of them are of school age.

The number of children in care has been increasing consistently over the past nine years and according to one recent measure it is now higher than at any point since 1985. The Department for Education estimated in 2017 that children aged between 10 and 15

years represent the majority of the looked after population (39%), while children under one year old are in a minority (5% of the looked after population).

The population includes more boys than girls (56% vs 44%) and is mainly White (75%), although children from minority ethnic groups appear to be overrepresented when compared with the general population.

How do they do in life?

For all of us who are concerned citizens, we have to confront the fact that the outcomes of many of these children are terrible.

- ▶ Those who have been in care from 10 to 17 are five times more likely to be convicted of a criminal offence or subject to a final warning or reprimand than other children, with over a third of children in young offenders' institutes looked after children²;
- ▶ Young people in care are five times more likely to have been excluded from school³;
- ▶ Around 45% of looked after children in the UK have a diagnosable mental health disorder and that up to 70-80% have recognisable problems, compared with 10% of the overall population⁴;
- ▶ Most lack stability and support during their school years which leads to academic underperformance, with a 50% risk of foster placement breakdown amongst teenagers during any 12-month period. In 2012, 22% of looked after children had two foster placements within 12 months and 11% had 3 or more. This is hugely disruptive to their schooling, emotional development and stability⁵;
- ▶ Children from the care system face a much higher risk of homelessness, teenage pregnancy and unemployment⁶.

Educational attainment

Those in care perform markedly worse in terms of educational attainment.

A recent House of Commons Library paper noted:

“Attainment for the looked after population is lower than national

levels at all ages of assessment. For example, among Year 11 students in 2014, 31% of looked after children obtained five GCSEs at grade A* to C, compared with a national figure of 75%. Only 14% of looked after children achieved five GCSEs A* to C including Mathematics and English, compared with 55% nationally”⁷.

In 2015, the DfE reported that just 6% of people who have experience of the care system went on to attend university, compared with almost 50% of young people in the general population⁸.

This educational failure has profound consequences.

Evidence from the British Cohort Studies⁹ shows that the quality of adult life is closely related to educational qualifications. Each step up the educational ladder is associated with improvements in health, both mental and physical, employment, income, housing, family life, absence of addiction problems, and lower risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Now of course there are many reasons why children in care perform poorly, notably the transient and unstable nature of life in care, numerous placements and moving schools. Other problems include the fact that children in care frequently experience more than one social care worker and/or a low priority given to education by social workers¹⁰. But poor educational achievement and outcomes for children in care does not lead me to suggest for a moment that we oughtn’t to place child in the care of foster parents or in residential homes if they need it. Indeed, there is important evidence to suggest that being taken into care actually improves the outcomes of those children, compared with children defined as ‘in need’ but left with their own families¹¹. Care, in many respects, can be seen as a ‘protective’ factor.

But it does lead me to conclude that education has to have a major focus when we think about how to deal with children in care, and even more focus than it has had to date – and that more radical interventions in children’s education ought to be considered.

A brief historical overview

The focus given to education and children in care has increased in recent years, but arguably has had too little attention in a system which has suffered from sharply shifting policy approaches over the years.

One of the seminal moments in the developments of post-war policy was the Curtis Report in 1946 – which was set up after the death of a child, Dennis O’Neil, from beating and starvation in a foster home. It went on to recommend that foster children should be brought up in a way resembling as closely as possibly ordinary family life and underlined out how important it was to consider education as part of overall well-being.

The 1948 Children Act, which followed that report, went on to set up children’s departments in every local authority to oversee children’s care, an arrangement which has persisted in various guises since that time.

Since then the focus of debate has shifted. However, between attempts to improve the quality of the care system and a focus on adoption or support for troubled families (in other words trying to keep children out of the care system) with much less focus on educational attainment than there had been before.

Indeed, despite an influential report from the Social Services Select Committee on children in care in 1984 which criticised a failure to plan effectively for children, neglect of children’s education and little focus on outcomes, and the subsequent setting up in the Children Act of 1989, of the “Looked After Children” system (a planning and recording system rolled out through the 1990s with a focus on outcomes), there was little practical emphasis on education by local authorities in the second half of the 20th century.

According to Jackson and McPaulin writing in the journal of the British Psychological Society: “Arguably for most of the 20th century social work was dominated by psychodynamic theories and later with a preoccupation with children protection, following a series of child abuse scandals.”¹²

To his credit, in response to vigorous campaigning on the issue, this changed under the 1997 Labour Government. Frank Dobson when Secretary of State for Health introduced the concept of ‘corporate parenting’ – the idea that local authorities should act in the best interests of the child in their care and should, like any other well-informed parent, give education a top priority. Since then, educational attainment for children in care has stayed a focus of policy across all administrations.

The Department of Health introduced The Quality Protects programme (1998) which for the first time set targets for educational outcomes of children in care, placement stability and reducing time spent out of school, all backed by a significant injection of funds. Local authorities began to appoint lead officers with special responsibility for improving educational outcomes for looked after children.

Five years later in 2003, a report from the Social Exclusion Report in Downing Street recommended setting a target to narrow the educational achievement gap between young people and their peers and paved the way for the introduction of the Children Act 2004 – the first legislation to include a specific duty for local authorities to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after.

The recommendations were reflected in a number of significant policies announced in that period, leading up to a Green Paper – Care Matters – in 2006 that was developed during my time in the Education Department and published by my successor as Education Secretary, Alan Johnson.

That paper made a series of proposals aimed at addressing some of the structural reasons why children in care fail to make educational progress. They included recommendations to create “designated teachers” in schools, who would have overarching responsibility for overseeing looked after children who came into their schools.

It contained proposals to pilot the introduction of a “virtual head teacher” within a local authority, whose job it would be to monitor the progress of looked after children in the borough – providing a consistent oversight of their educational journey, ensuring they would not fall between the cracks, if, as many looked after children do, they moved school.

The paper also made recommendations to give cared for children more say over whether they stayed with their foster families up to the age of 21, or left care before they turned 18. It also proposed a bursary for all young people in care to go on to higher education, and proposed ways of helping them with accommodation at university outside term time.

While not all the proposals in the Green Paper were implemented, it led directly to the Children and Young People Bill, which was passed with all party support and which resulted in important improvements.

It has undoubtedly succeeded in giving young people in care more agency over the choices that affect them, and has developed a better process for more consistent oversight of looked after children as they move through the education system.

The role of virtual head teachers, which was expanded after a successful pilot, was recently praised in Ofsted's 2016 report Social Care:

“In the majority of local authorities inspected, virtual head teachers have taken an effective lead role in ensuring that the necessary oversight and challenge is provided for children looked after”.

Overall, the changes that sprung from Care Matters have, I believe, made an important cultural difference, and I was delighted to see the proposals taken a step further by Edward Timpson, in the Coalition Government, putting virtual head teachers onto a statutory footing – and indeed the proposals of that government to add to the Pupil Premium to provide extra financial support in the school system for children in care.

As a result of many of these measures, the proportion of children in care entering higher education rose to 6% from 1% a decade earlier – woeful still, but definitely progress.

More radical approaches

At the Department for Education, I also became interested in more radical approaches to dealing with the education of those in care or on the edge of care. However, I was particularly impressed by the work of the Buttle UK on funding places for disadvantaged youngsters at top boarding schools, and was lobbied on the issue by Sir Cyril Taylor, then one of my advisers on Specialist Schools and Academies.

Boarding schools have the potential to change the outcomes of children on the edge of care or in care quite dramatically – a fact recognised by the current government – and yet cost a fraction of the cost of a residential care placement. In 2014, the National Audit Office found that the average annual spend on residential places was between £131,000 and £135,000 per child¹³, clearly much higher than funding a boarding place for a child at a state boarding school, or indeed even at a top public school.

But despite the recognition from government that boarding can be appropriate – and transformative – for a number of children, it has not become widely adopted. It was hugely disappointing to learn earlier this year that the work Buttle UK had been doing with the Educational Endowment Foundation to measure the educational and well-being outcomes of using boarding for these children had to be brought to an end without completing the research, as they struggled to receive referrals of children from local authorities.

Despite support from the Government, Buttle UK said: “...it became apparent that considering boarding school as an option in a systematic way is not something local authorities, as a whole, are yet ready, willing or able to do”.

Why? Partly because local authorities are aware that the needs of children in care are complex and many may not be able to benefit from a boarding school environment or be able to have their needs met by them. They were also concerned about what the child would do in the summer holidays.

According to Gerri McAndrew, Chief Executive of Buttle UK, quoted in the TES: “There’s an ideology that people think that boarding isn’t right for these children. I think people don’t have the same

aspirations for these children as they might for others....there's a concern about what happens to children in the holidays when they're not at school, there are concerns that the schools won't cope with children with some of the difficult behaviours."

So tonight I want to talk a little bit about another radical intervention, which overcomes some of the criticisms of the boarding school system, but which I think is underpinned by the same principles. In particular, it provides a mechanism for exposing children in care to the education system in a way that offers stability and consistency, together with a powerful message about where these children, and the people who care for them, can set their horizons.

Let me explain more by telling you something about the First Star programme in America and how we are importing it here to London in an initiative that we think could transform the educational and employment outcomes of children in care.

First Star in the USA

First Star, a charity led by Peter Samuelson, operates across a number of prestigious universities in the USA including UCLA and George Washington DC and its academy programme launched in 2011. Its success has seen it expand to thirteen campuses serving approximately 350 young people¹⁴.

The First Star programmes are the USA's only long-term programmes for young children in care.

The programme spans four years, involving four residential summers at a university and also monthly sessions during the school year. And throughout the four years students receive continual support in order to sustain the progress they make.

90% of the young people who attend First Star academies in the USA go on to study at university. This compares with the national average of 3%, demonstrating the incredible results the programme can achieve.

As an example, UCLA has seen multiple benefits achieved for the children of Los Angeles. UCLA served as a pilot university for First Star in 2011. Los Angeles has over 22,000 young people in care, which is the largest group of fostered young people in the country.

In 2015 the first class that had entered in 2011 completed their journey. 98% of students completed high school, compared with 50% of care leavers nationally, and 85% went on to pursue some form of higher education, compared with 10% of care leavers nationally. Some of the students who took part went on to attend some of the USA's premier universities, including: UCLA itself, UC Irvine and California State University. The impressive results have continued in the subsequent cohorts to graduate.

Those who went to university are all still there and, of those who did not go on to university, are all in employment. Normally, by age 19, 51% of American girls in foster care have been pregnant, but there were no pregnancies, and there were significant improvements in foster placement stability.

As well as increasing the chances of fostered children graduating high school and going to college, First Star has also given these children a voice to explain to authorities in their own words the barriers they face.

Young people taking part in the UCLA summer programme have spoken on behalf of their peers, testifying in front of policy makers and achieving policy victories to improve the situations of children in care.

So the programme achieves its core aim of increasing the educational attainment and chances of the children it takes on, but the UCLA programme demonstrates the wider impact it can have in allowing these children to find their voice and be listened to in a way that may previously have seemed unthinkable to children who have been consistently marginalised.

First Star at St Mary's

St Mary's is the first university in the UK to join the programme.

Working with and adapting the First Star programme from the USA, we have just started to offer a four-year programme for looked after young people of secondary school age, supporting their academic and personal development and helping them aspire to and access university. The programme is focusing on education (both helping them achieve at GCSE and A Level and preparing them for university), life skills and emotional resilience. It also offers a programme of support for foster parents aimed at reducing the chances of foster placement breakdown and thus increasing stability.

We have taken advantage of St Mary's natural fit, experience and resources and First Star's proven model and track record and have adapted it for the UK. We will raise young people's aspirations by making them comfortable on a university campus, whilst offering a mix of support from academic tutoring, peer mentor support, emotional resilience and life skills training and practical support to get them through exams and successfully apply to college and university. In partnership with local authorities, we aim to deliver similar life-changing results for young people in the UK to those seen in the USA.

Thus, in this pilot four-year programme, 30 young people, currently living in foster care or children's homes in London boroughs including Richmond, Hounslow and Wandsworth, Southwark and Kingston will be enrolled in the St Mary's First Star Academy. The first cohort arrived in May 2017.

These young people will spend a day a month and four weeks each summer on St Mary's campus, from the age of 14 to 18. They will be supported by peer mentors drawn from among St Mary's students, with priority given to students who are themselves care leavers. Working with local authorities and with the backing and support of other grantees we believe we can achieve results that stand in comparison with the work already undertaken in the USA.

While it is too early to judge the success of the first summer, the initial feedback is encouraging, with every single student

seeing the programme through to its conclusion – even those who had previously booked family holidays or, in one case, a scout camp in the middle of the programme! And they all committed to coming back to the university one Saturday every month until next summer and staying with us for the four years. If successful, we hope that the model will be taken up by universities across the country and supported by local authorities and the Government.

Conclusion

I want to end by saying a few words about why it is appropriate that this programme is being rolled out in the UK first by St Mary's, and why it is also appropriate that Sir John Cass's Foundation – alongside the Cundhill Foundation, the MariaMarina Foundation and several individual donors - should support it.

As you know the core vision of the Cass Foundation is to contribute to educational policy, practice and research in order to shape and meet the evolving needs of London's young people.

Well I can think of no area more deserving of attention than the educational needs of young people in London who are in care. As I hope I have shown, the life chances of youngsters who have been brought up in care are significantly worse than for young people as a whole.

We know that educational attainment is closely linked to life outcomes. If we can find a way to provide children in this group with a little more stability and little more ambition, then we can open new doors for their future that otherwise remain locked.

And why is St Mary's so involved in this?

Well in part because we are a university that has a long association with education. We were founded in 1850 as a Catholic teacher training college, to help educate the vast swathes of children who were entering London due to Irish immigration.

Those origins have been maintained through St Mary's ongoing status as a leading institution in educational research and a beacon of teacher training. But they also live on in the underlying ethos of

St Mary's, which is encapsulated in our formal mission to “develop the whole person and empower our community to have a positive impact on the world”.

That is our purpose and with your help we hope the First Star Academy will take us one further step in that direction.

- 1** Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2017, National Statistics, Department for Education.
- 2** Criminal Care, Children's Homes and Criminalising Children, Howard League for Penal Reform, 2016.
- 3** Outcomes for Children looked after in local authorities in England, year ending 31 March 2016, National Statistics, Department for Education.
- 4** Joe Sempik, Mental Health of Looked After Children in the UK, published by NICE.
- 5** Outcomes for Children looked after in local authorities in England, year ending 31 March 2016, National Statistics, Department for Education.
- 6** Care leavers' transition into Adulthood, NAO, Department for Education, 2015.
- 7** Children in Care: Statistics, House of Commons Library, 2015.
- 8** Jackson, S. & Simon, A. (2005) 'The costs and benefits of educating children in care.' In E. Chase, A. Simon & S. Jackson (Eds.) *In care and after: A positive perspective* (pp.44–62). London: Routledge.
- 9** *Ibid.*
- 10** Jackson and McPaulin, (2006) *The Education of Children in Care*, the psychologist.
- 11** Rees Centre (2006) *The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data*, Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford.
- 12** Jackson and McPaulin (2006), *The Education of Children in Care*, the psychologist.
- 13** *Children in Care*, National Audit Office, 2014.
- 14** Figures taken from firststar.org, the First Star website.

Personal Testimony: a care leaver's reflections on education

Kerry Littleford



Kerry Littleford spent her teenage years in care and has eight younger siblings who also went into care. She now works to alleviate social and health inequalities in Hackney and has begun storytelling as a way to share her experiences. Kerry recently shared her stories at Battersea Arts Centre, on BBC Radio 4's Four Thought Programme and in a recent feature in the Guardian.

When I've finished telling my story, the first thing that people tend to ask me is, 'what helped you break those cycles?' Today I want to start with the answer before I tell you my story, because this lecture is discussing the very thing that has me standing here today, and that's education.

I'm the eldest of nine. I have four brothers and four sisters, and all of us went into care just over 17 years ago.

I had always been the matriarch of my family, the one to look after my siblings when my mum left us alone or there was violence in the house, to figure out budgets and do shops that would fill us up the most on the least amount of money. I would wash and dress my siblings and take them to school from the age of 5.

We were a typical family where the cycles of deprivation and dysfunction passed through the generations. Where poverty, neglect and violence were handed down like family heirlooms. Like so many stories you hear of children in care, my mum had

also been a child in care; she had been neglected, suffered from a violent household, and it was under her care that we all suffered the same fate.

Growing up, I most vividly remember the chaos and fear that pervaded our home life. Risk wasn't a word I think my mum had ever heard – her awareness of risk was, and I would say still is, non-existent. We were constantly put in risky situations.

No one ever did school work with us, parents' evenings were very rarely attended, homework was left in bags. But from a very young age I discovered a natural ability at school and I excelled; it felt easy and right to be there. And it was also a sanctuary. A sanctuary from a home filled with violence and abuse, a home where I had to care for my siblings whilst being neglected by my mum and mis-treated by whichever man was around at the time. The freedom that school gave me to be myself, to look after no one but myself, started a fire in me that no amount of chaos or dysfunction ever quite managed to extinguish.

I grew up with a very strong and determined sense that the life I was living as a child would not be the life I would have for myself. I felt a sense of optimism that doing well at school would lift me from this life one day, and this was partly due to the support I received from teachers, and partly to my own stubbornness and sense of entitlement (I have no idea where I got that from). But I knew that I would not live in a way that left me powerless, like my mum had always been.

University was a huge turning point for me. Probably the biggest that I have ever experienced to date. At university I learned not only about the topic I was studying, but about what parts of the world were open to me (which to my delight I discovered is all of it!), what levels of success I could hope to achieve and how to navigate worlds I had previously felt powerless in. I made friends and colleagues and networks that continue to help and inspire me today, as anyone who has been to university will attest to.

But the one thing I struggled with at university was a sense of belonging. Everyone I met there was from very similar backgrounds to one another, the very opposite to me. They felt like they had a right to be there, they knew how to navigate the systems and how

to use them to their advantage. I struggled with basic concepts like asking for help, using resources that were rightly mine to use, but which felt like they weren't. It took me a long time to feel like that world was mine too, but when it did finally happen it opened up so many more opportunities to me. At the time, there was no support that I knew of for care leavers, I had never heard it mentioned and certainly was never approached about it, despite them knowing my background. I know that there have been long strides since then, but it still feels like we have a long way to go.

Navigating the education system whilst being in care wasn't easy, and there were many experiences in my life, despite having the determination and ability to achieve, which could have quite easily sent me in the opposite direction.

I have a Masters, but initially had to defer for a year because my fees weren't paid on time. The reason I was given from my aftercare worker was that her department had never dealt with someone wanting to do a post-graduate degree before, so they didn't have the processes in place, meaning they ended up paying for my fees late and forcing me to defer.

In the second biggest city in this country, just eight years ago that team had never had a care leaver request help to do a post-graduate degree before. I'm not sure what else you could hear tonight to call you to action if not that. It just can't continue to be the case that care leavers remain the most underrepresented group in higher education. It should have been made as easy as possible for me to enter higher education but instead I faced barriers that I had to knock down alone.

One of my siblings has also gone to university, he has aspergers and is very high-functioning, and he has incredibly supportive foster parents and the kind of mind that will flourish in academia. But for all of my other siblings, their struggles in life took over and affected their ability to take part in school in a meaningful way. Pair that with the lack of understanding and support I know they have all felt from their schools and it seemed pre-destined that education wasn't for them, and they checked out. Only now, two of my sisters who had children at a very young age are starting to think about their careers, going back into education for training and to complete exams they didn't pass when they left school. This

is over a decade after leaving school and they constantly tell me how behind they feel with life, how much harder they are finding it now to try and go back and patch up the holes of their education.

Education was transformational for me, but that doesn't mean that I think that academic achievement is the only road to success. There are so many other routes to success that see less tribute, especially in creative or skilled roles. But it is undeniable that giving the same rich experience of education that so many children have with the support of their families hugely impacts on a person's life chances. Life chances are the opportunities we all have to improve our quality of life, and those opportunities come from our access to key rights like education.

I work in public health, where we look to alleviate health inequalities by breaking down barriers in access and knowledge. That's what we need to continue to do for children in care, breaking down all the barriers that stand in the way of taking full advantage of the excellent education systems we have in this country. No one's life should be pre-determined once they're removed from their family and taken into care, but the discourse remains that children that come out of care have worse outcomes in life, will do worse at school and are one of the least likely groups to continue into higher education.

So, "Education and its impact on the life chances of children in care". Well, if done right, it's utterly transformational.

Thank you.

Sir John Cass's Foundation

Promoting participation and achievement in education

As expressed by the Foundation's Treasurer and Chairman, Dr Kevin Everett, the Foundation has evolved over its more than 270-year history to become one of the leading independent education charities in the UK. Today the Foundation has links in nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary education, alongside its grant giving programmes which provide funding to schools, organisations and individuals-in-need across inner-London.

The Foundation prides itself on developing long-term partnerships with key educational establishments and it is now 16 years since the Foundation made a multi-million pound grant to City University's Business School, subsequently re-named the Cass Business School. The Foundation continues to provide on-going support to this and seven other establishments bearing the name of the founder, including the London based Cass primary and secondary schools, of which the Foundation is the sole Trustee.

Over the past year the Foundation has continued to advance its mission to help educate London's young people living in disadvantaged communities through our grant giving programme. The Westway Trust was awarded a grant to improve school readiness of children from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Chance UK was awarded a grant to undertake a pioneering Randomised Control Trial with children and their families living in Hackney who had been identified as high risk of long-term social and educational exclusion. The Foundation has also supported a number of arts-based organisations with grants to The Samosa, Theatre Royal Stratford and The Lyric Hammersmith, each using art to challenge behaviours and tackle obstacles which had previously prevented young people from succeeding in mainstream education.

Alongside new awards, the Foundation continued its support of the innovative work of the First Star Project at St Mary's University, support was also continued for the outreach and engagement initiatives of London Metropolitan University through the concluding phase of a £2.6million three year grant from the Foundation for the enhancement of their widening participation efforts.

The Foundation was also pleased to announce its continued support and partnership development with Hampshire County Council through the confirmation of a further multi-year grant award to the Hampshire and Hampshire and Cass Foundation Mountain Centre, located in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The collaboration originated from a shared commitment to outdoor education and a clear understanding of the remarkable impact it can have on both the academic and personal development of young people. Since its inception in 2014 the partnership has enabled over 5,000 students from across inner-London schools supported by the Foundation to access the Centre. For many of the Foundation's young beneficiaries a trip to the Hampshire & Cass Foundation Mountain Centre is often the first time they have had the opportunity to experience the countryside and we are delighted to continue to support this hugely valuable venture.

Finally, the Foundation was delighted to hold the 11th annual lecture this year and welcomed over 200 guests to the Cass Business School to hear the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly deliver a thought-provoking exploration into the impact of education on the life chances of children in care. We hope this event leads to much meaningful discussion and action. It was particularly interesting to hear the discussion that followed this year's lecture with a lively Q&A session. My question to our speaker, and to our audience, was how we galvanise support from across the political spectrum, as well as from educators, academics, funders, local authorities and the third sector to influence and push forward with the creation of a Care Leavers' Covenant for England and Wales. This would follow on from the Scottish example to formalise a commitment from Government to support and guide care leavers transitioning into adulthood.

For further information on the work of the Foundation and to read more about our annual lecture series please visit: www.sirjohncassfoundation.com

Richard Foley
Clerk and Chief Executive
Sir John Cass's Foundation