

I*CAN



A PRACTITIONERS GUIDE

**Initiating and Supporting Care Leavers into
Apprenticeships in Nursing Programme.**



I*CAN

INTRODUCTION TO I-CAN

The University of Roehampton, supported by funding from the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board, is proud to have launched a programme that will support care experienced people into high-quality training opportunities and employment in the NHS as apprentices. The 'Initiating and Supporting Care Leavers into Apprenticeships in Nursing' (I-CAN) programme is a unique initiative designed to support the region's care-experienced young people to pursue a career in healthcare, through education, clinical skills and training.

The numbers of children and young people who are looked after in the care system across England is increasing, and so too is the need for structures and opportunities to support them. In 2021, an independent review of children's social care, conducted by the Department for Education, showed that care-leavers face worse outcomes than their non-care-experienced peers across key areas including mental health, employment, and education. The report described the disadvantages faced by the care-experienced community as "the civil rights issue of our time."

Programmes like I-CAN have the potential to transform the way we support our care-experienced young people from the age of eighteen onwards when they leave formal care settings. They are designed to address gaps in our care system, and support equality of opportunity for all.

The I-CAN programme aims to match talented care experienced people with acute workforce shortages. I-CAN will provide targeted support for difficult-to-recruit health and care roles, giving care-leavers an opportunity to develop their skills and progress onto the nursing associate apprenticeship programme.

The University of Roehampton is committed to providing education for everyone irrespective of background and helping them develop the tools to succeed. Our excellent reputation in primary and community health education, and the quality of our apprenticeship provision, is widely recognised and endorsed by employers across London and beyond. The I-CAN initiative builds on this track record and provides an opportunity to try a new approach to supporting care experienced young people's successful transition into adulthood, with promising career prospects in the health sector.



**Richard Keogh, Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Research and External Engagement),
University of Roehampton**



THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

CARE LEAVERS

There are more care-leavers aged 16+ across South West London than in any other area of London. For these young people, the path to independence is not always clear or straightforward. They face considerably more challenges when compared to young people who are not care experienced, including to their safety and security, mental and physical wellbeing, and progression to further education and employment.

Without the support network akin to their non-care-experienced counterparts, the barriers to higher education are far

greater for care-leavers. Data from The Department for Education showed that between 2021 and 2022, just 14% of cared-for pupils entered England's higher education system, compared to the 47% of all other pupils who had not been within the system (see table below).

Evidence further indicates that individuals who have transitioned out of care tend to experience lower educational and life achievements when compared to their peers. Even among those who progress into higher education, the majority have reported contemplating

dropping out, citing health challenges, financial concerns, personal and familial difficulties, and difficulties managing academic workload as key factors. Finding a solution that delivers both a safety net and a support system for these young people is paramount, ensuring that they do not simply slip through the cracks. I-CAN is designed to do both of these things, helping in preparing them for a career in healthcare, simultaneously engaging these young people and addressing the large workforce challenge in the sector.

	HE Progression Rate										
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Looked after continuously for 12 months or more	10.0%	9.0%	10.0%	11.0%	12.0%	13.0%	12.0%	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%	14.0%
All Other Pupils	36.0%	37.0%	37.0%	39.0%	41.0%	41.0%	42.0%	43.0%	43.0%	45.0%	47.0%

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

THE SECTOR:

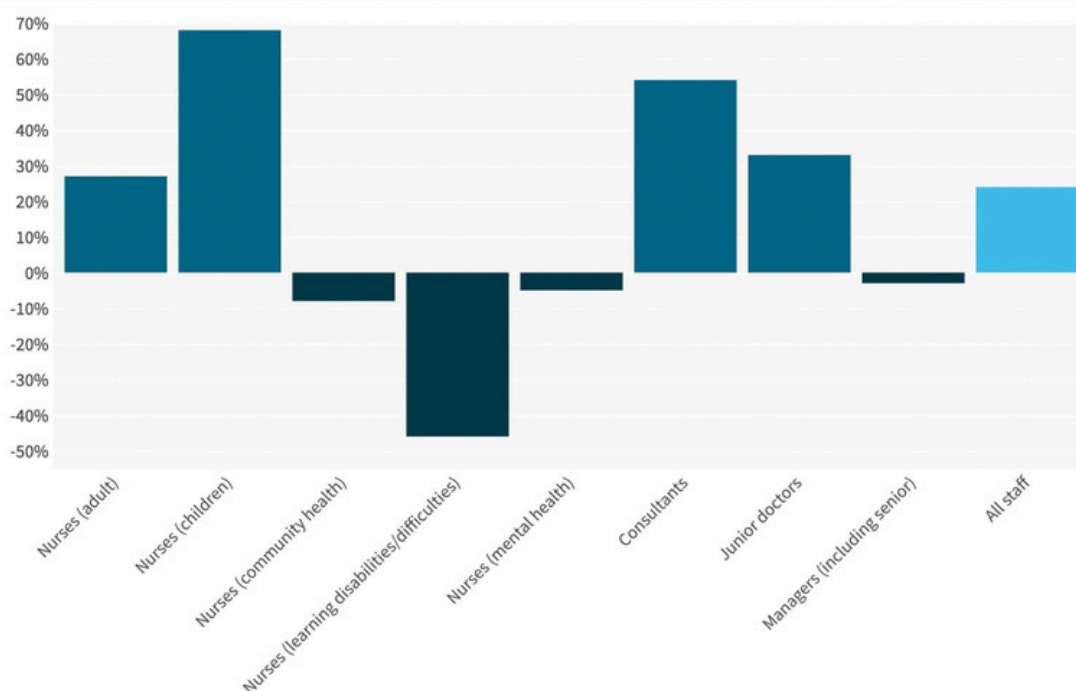
In 2023, the Royal College of Nursing reported more than 40,000 unfulfilled roles in the NHS' workforce across the country.

Despite the education and training pipeline having significantly increased over the last decade, this has not resulted in the number of professionals required to keep up with demand for NHS services. Particular areas of care where staffing levels have declined are across community health, learning disabilities and difficulties, and mental health.

These challenges have been recognised in the NHS' Long Term Workforce Plan, which emphasises the need to devise an effective strategy that prepares the right number of people with the necessary skills to deliver the care that people need. There is an urgent need to address these shortfalls before staffing levels across core areas of national health become critical. I-CAN is testing a potential solution, by engaging young people that at present, do not see higher education and a healthcare career as a potential career path.

Some staff groups have seen a decline in growth over the years

Cumulative percentage change in staff groups between 2009 and 2022, indexed to 2009



Source: [NHS Digital](#) • September 2009 is the start of the NHS Digital workforce data records for hospital and community health services.



OUR PLAN

TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES

To help care-leavers prepare for a career in healthcare, I-CAN will deliver a series of eight-week-long programmes focused on improving the functional skills most relevant to the health and social care sector. A blend of theoretical and practical sessions will cover:

- **AN INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**
- **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**
- **DUTY OF CARE**
- **SAFEGUARDING**
- **PERSON-CENTRED CARE**
- **INFECTION CONTROL**
- **BASIC LIFE SUPPORT**
- **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

The programme will offer participants a broad understanding of the wider health sector and the functional skills required to deliver quality care to the community, while simultaneously working to enhance their employability skills. Regular engagement sessions with local employers will allow them to gain additional insights into the access and progression routes available to them, with additional career planning and personal development sessions also on offer.

I-CAN is a fully-funded programme. Recognising that the financial pressures faced by care leavers are a massive obstacle to progression into higher education, we will help cover expenses and time dedicated to the programme (up to £2,000). Learners will have further access to mental health and wellbeing support offered at the University of Roehampton.

All learners who complete the I-CAN training programme will be supported to progress onto the Foundation Degree Nursing Associate programme. Learners will be supported throughout this process, with guidance and mentoring available to ease the transition, as well as opportunities to engage with potential employers and gain vital in-community experience.

I-CAN

HELP US FULFIL THE I-CAN MISSION

I-CAN offers a new path to support some of the most underserved members of our society while simultaneously addressing the workforce needs across the healthcare sector. We want to equip them with the skills and confidence to support the communities in which they live, providing them with a starting point for a fulfilling career in healthcare.

To ensure that we fulfil this mission, we need the support of local councils, employers, support services and organisations working with care leavers, to expand awareness of this programme, reach more potential learners, and provide employment opportunities.





HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

LEARNERS

If you are a care leaver between the ages of 18-29 and would like to consider a career in the health sector, I-CAN could be the programme for you. Through completing this programme, you will gain essential skills that can be put towards your qualifications for a career in healthcare.

EMPLOYERS

As a potential employer, you can play an important role in supporting better professional opportunities for young people. You can help us broker new and emerging opportunities to our learners through jobs, apprenticeships, internships, career talks, or mentoring.

Your support is vital to the success of the programme, for both the learners - promoting healthcare roles as a viable and enticing career option to young people – and for the sector, while also addressing wider regional employment challenges.

REFERRAL PARTNERS

As a referral partner, your support is essential to ensure that I-CAN reaches the young people that can benefit most from the programme, advocating for new opportunities for careers in the health sector. Through promoting the programme across your networks and referring care leavers to our programme, you will play a key role in ensuring the success of I-CAN.

In turn, I-CAN will promote your participation and services to our audience of care leavers, many of which may benefit from the services you provide.



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**HAVE FURTHER
QUESTIONS?**

Contact the I-CAN team i-can@roehampton.ac.uk

Scan for more information

