**Supplementary information**

**Thematic analysis process**

TA was applied to the data as instructed by Braun & Clarke (2006) in their description of TA implementation. The analytic process is detailed in the table below.

*Table: Process of thematic analysis*

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| **Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)**  | **Description of implementation of thematic analysis phases**  |
| 1. Familiarisation with data
 | Each interview recording was listened to following the interviews, allowing the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were read and re-read while noting any relevant information to the a priori codes and initial points of interest, which later supported new code generation.  |
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| 1. Initial code generation
 | Upon initial data examination, significant elements were coded systematically and data relevant to a priori and a posteriori codes was collated. For example, the following was coded for the a priori code ‘living arrangements’: *“So, it’s a massive transition going from something like that where you are shut in a house with five other people to yourself living in your own flat”* (Lewis).Another extract was coded for the a priori code ‘emotional support’: *“There have been times when I’ve just wanted to walk out because I’m that stressed and stuff but people have been like “no you can do this” ”* (Katie).An example of an extract coded by the a posteriori code ‘resisting support’: *“I dinnae like speaking about my feelings. It’s personal with me… Naebody is interested in listening to what I need to speak about”* (Nicole)A total list of 55 a priori and a posteriori codes were adopted within analysis. |
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| 1. Searching for themes
 | Codes were reviewed and gathered into potential sub-themes and themes. Significant recurring themes were chosen to reflect groups of codes. |
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| 1. Reviewing themes
 | Themes were reviewed to check their relevance at two levels: coded extracts and the data set. A thematic map was created to visually represent the data. |
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| 1. Naming and defining themes
 | Codes and themes were reviewed continually throughout to define themes and narrative of the analysis. Supervision provided support in naming and defining themes which encompassed sub-themes and codes. Participant numbers reflected in each code were stated and checked. |
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| 1. Producing the reports
 | Compelling extracts were selected, and a final analysis of these examples was conducted to check code relevance. A report of the final analysis related findings back to literature and initial research questions.  |

**Implications for FE practice and future research**

As the number of CEYP progressing into FE increases, it is necessary for colleges to consider how best to implement effective support for them. The voice of CEYP was a key focus of this research through which insights were gained into their lived FE experiences, their practical, psychosocial and learning needs and how to best to support their educational progression. Key implications for future FE practice and research based on the CEYP captured in the project include:

* CEYP value FE and the stability and opportunities they are provided with to develop skills and experience necessary for employment.
* CEYP appreciate the independence and agency they gain when entering FE, this should be promoted to support their FE engagement.
* Promotion of CEYP aspirations should be embedded in educational practices to ensure their ambitions are encouraged.
* CEYP value encouraging relationships with FE professionals which are key to their educational attainment.
* FE staff should be aware of CEYP aspiration’s and ensure these are promoted.
* Extra-curricular activities provide CEYP with opportunities to socialise and develop peer relationships in FE, particularly for those previously disengaged with education. Colleges should promote the availability of informal learning opportunities.
* CEYP needs should be considered in design of bursary and college application forms. Information about who their details are shared with and for what purposes should be made transparent.
* Improved collaboration between care and FE professionals could assist better accommodation planning in line with CEYP educational plans, ensuring stability during their studies. Use of advocacy workers in FE could be a promising move towards improved communication between services. Future research should explore the contributions of advocacy workers in FE and their potential mediator role between these services.
* Advocacy workers should be involved with colleges to increase CEYP involvement in design and implementation of CEYP support.
* Student unions should develop CE Officer roles and set up CEYP support groups and peer mentoring schemes. Future research should assess the effectiveness of CEYP peer support and how it can best be implemented.
* FE staff should have greater understanding of CEYP needs and how best to support them. Corporate parenting training should be a mandatory part of initial training and continuing professional development for all lecturers and support staff. CEYP should play a central role in the training delivery.
* Education programmes and raising awareness campaigns could help combat unfair labelling of CEYP and bullying by peers. Further research is required to assess the impact of peer and professional education on labelling and bullying of CEYP in FE.
* Personal and care-related challenges are a significant barrier CEYPs’ educational engagement. CEYPs’ progression benefits from individualised emotional, social, financial and learning support, particularly from professionals understand their circumstances or are CE themselves.
* Colleges should ensure CEYP receive mentored support to continue with education and progress to fulfil their potential. This support should be personalised, consistent and enduring throughout CEYP’s educational pathway and not biased based on level of study or previous rejection of support.
* Suggestions for improvement included inviting all CEYP for needs assessments upon enrolment, potentially leading to individualised support. Many highlighted this support must be personalised with consideration for their unique circumstances, including financial, emotional, academic and social needs. C
* EYP highlighted their limited awareness of support available when beginning college and called for improved signposting. CEYP suggested organising a support information session for CEYP at the beginning of the academic year to increase awareness of support. CEYP expressed it was important for them to access this information discreetly..
* Colleges should make CEYP aware of new entitlements such as financial and additional support needs provision. Furthermore, provision of statutory protections equivalent to those associated with additional support needs provision should continue in FE for CEYP.
* Detailed needs assessments should be conducted when CEYP enter FE to ensure personalised support is available to them should they choose to access it. Additionally, catch-up support should be available to CEYP who have substantial gaps in their education.
* Improved support signposting may encourage CEYP to disclose their care-status, potentially resulting in more accessing support and going on to achieve. However, research is required to assess this possibility.
* Future research with a more differentiated sample could provide insight into a more diverse range of barriers and facilitators of CEYP attainment in FE.