



DECEMBER 2024

# Hierarchy of needs for care experienced young people

## Hierarchy of needs for care experienced young people

The Children's Commissioner's Care Experienced Advisory Board have created a hierarchy of needs (see diagram on following page) based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is a visual guide to help professionals working with care experienced young people understand their needs and support them.

The different levels of the pyramid consider the basic requirements that care experienced young people need to live, to feel safe, to feel a sense of belonging confident and self-fulfilled, enabling them to access and participate in any experience.

The bottom of the hierarchy starts with the most basic needs. The basic foundations are minimum requirements. It is useful to understand each level to best support the young people you are working with.

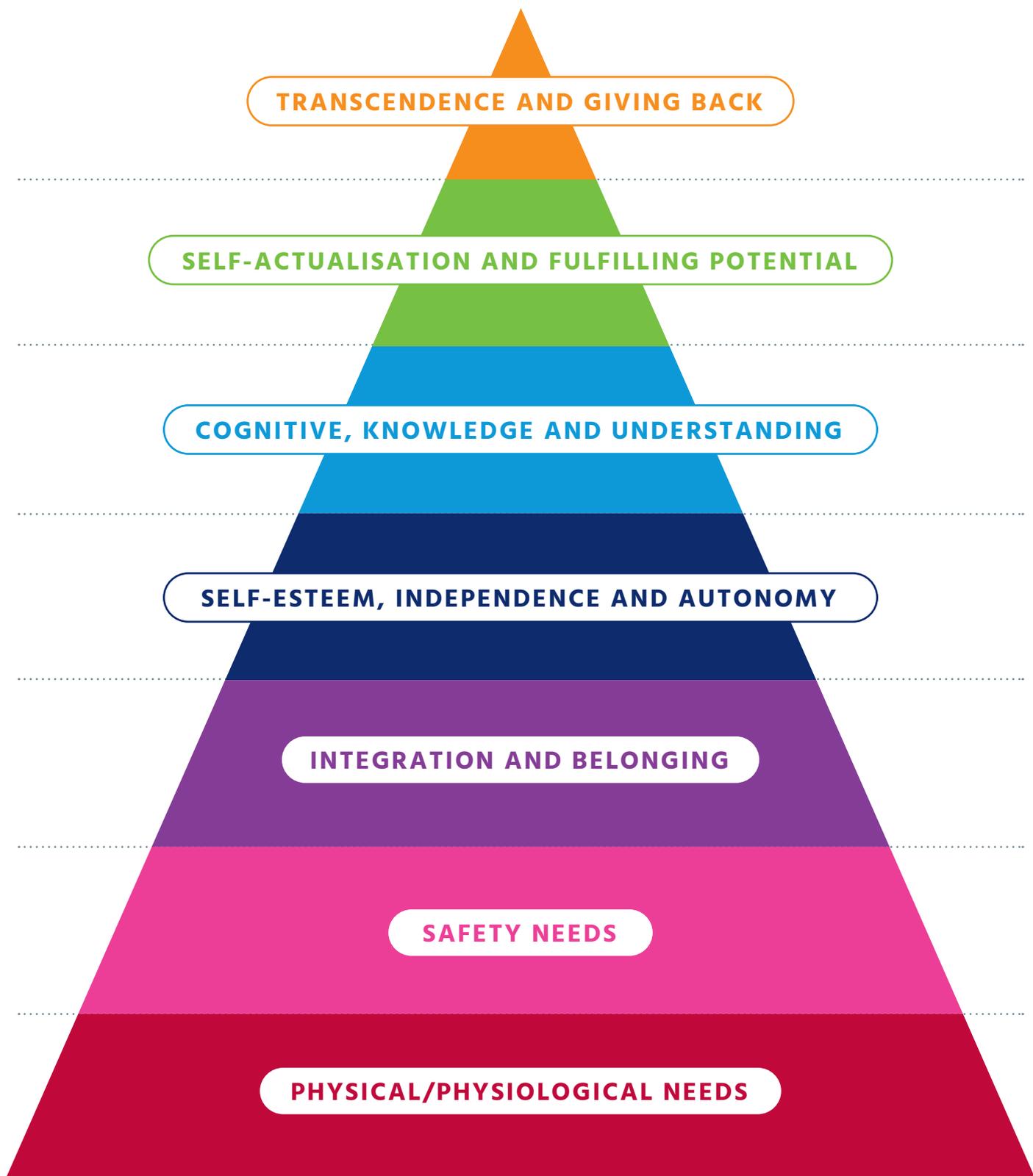
Particular needs will be different for different individuals. It is important to talk to, and support, each young person to explore what the top of the pyramid looks like for them and how to unlock their full potential. Reaching the top requires feeling like you have everything you need and that you are able to achieve the things that you want to achieve and are happy in yourself.

“ Ensure we are listened to and our needs are taken into consideration, we need agency and to have a voice in decisions that affect us.”

“ If you look back at what you've achieved and you're happy with it, I think that's the kind of stage of fulfilment. If I look back in 30 years, I'll be like, yeah, I did that and I'm proud of it. I think at that point I'll feel self-fulfilled and feel like all my needs have been met and I've been able to make the most of life and I've made a difference.”



## HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE



## Physical/physiological needs

- › Food
- › Water
- › Shelter – a safe, decent and affordable place to live at all times, support with homelessness
- › Warmth – heating and clothing
- › A bed, bedding, sleep, rest
- › Physical activity
- › Appropriate temperature and air quality
- › Physical comfort

## Safety needs

### PERSONAL

- › Corporate parents
- › Network of trusted and supportive people e.g. carers and regular check-ins
- › Support from authorities or services such as the police, and knowing that there are safe people/organisations if required
- › Relocation where required
- › Safeguarding and trauma-informed practice
- › Young person to be involved in their own safety plan and pathway plan
- › Support with family contact
- › Communication among the adults in their life
- › Support in transitions and moving out of, or back to, their local area
- › Transport to and from services and activities

### HEALTH

- › Resources and services to support with health
- › Support accessing services such as signing up for a GP or dentist
- › Exercise and access to leisure and fitness services
- › Understanding different services and knowing where to go for different support e.g. guide dogs and at-home care
- › Support getting a diagnosis for neurodiversity and SEND or mental illnesses
- › Personalised support and being involved in decisions around their own healthcare plan
- › Explanations in accessible language and being able to make informed decisions about their own health
- › Feeling cared for and respected
- › No stigma around being care experience when accessing services and support
- › Understanding among healthcare professionals who provide services for care experienced young people

### FINANCIAL

- › Support with the cost of living
- › Help with the costs of course resources
- › Help with the costs of travel
- › Advice, resources and lessons or workshops regarding finance and learning to budget, including how much things cost and typical spending on things like food and a car
- › Knowing what they are entitled to at different ages
- › Knowing about bursaries, extra funding, hardship funds, grants, benefits and support accessing or applying for them
- › Recognition of special occasions through celebrations such as a card/present
- › Resources to relocate to a safer space if needed



## EMOTIONAL

- › Professionals that listen to and work with them and are there when needed
- › Regular check-ins and not just being left to their own devices even if they are doing well independently
- › Communication between professionals – “All About Me document” to support this
- › Transparency - open and honest conversations
- › Secure access to resources and services to support with mental health, including helplines
- › Dedicated safe person and safe spaces
- › Being treated as an individual through personalised support
- › Support with accessing care records
- › Recognition of the stigma faced by care experienced people and support to overcome it
- › Independent advocacy to support expressing their wishes
- › Reducing the cliff edge of care by offering follow-on support
- › Encouragement and support to dream big

## Integration and belonging

- › Support to take part in hobbies and clubs and recognising the benefits of this
- › Making connections in their local area - opportunities to meet people and support in building trusting and long-lasting relationships
- › Support to make friends and get advice from the right crowd
- › Support in transitions and moving out of or back to their local area
- › Opportunities to make connections with and join communities of other care experienced young people
- › Celebrating traditions and their cultural and ethnical identity – support for learning about and maintaining their roots/background.
- › Finding out about local community hubs and spaces offering activities such as libraries
- › Support when wanting to live with friends

## Self-esteem, independence and autonomy

- › Choice - the ability to choose their own path, rather than what caregivers and others want for them
- › Skills development and enrichment
- › Continuous teaching on how to be independent – not just a one-day course
- › A passport to independence introduced before age 16
- › Mobility – help with getting around such as driving, cycling, and being able to attend activities or clubs
- › Support with their identity, recognising their values, what is important to them, and goal setting
- › Someone to go to, to find out how to do practical things such as apply for a passport, deal with issues about accommodation etc – or online resources (videos and guidance) to do these things
- › All schools including alternative provisions offer skills and independent living development opportunities



## Cognitive, knowledge and understanding

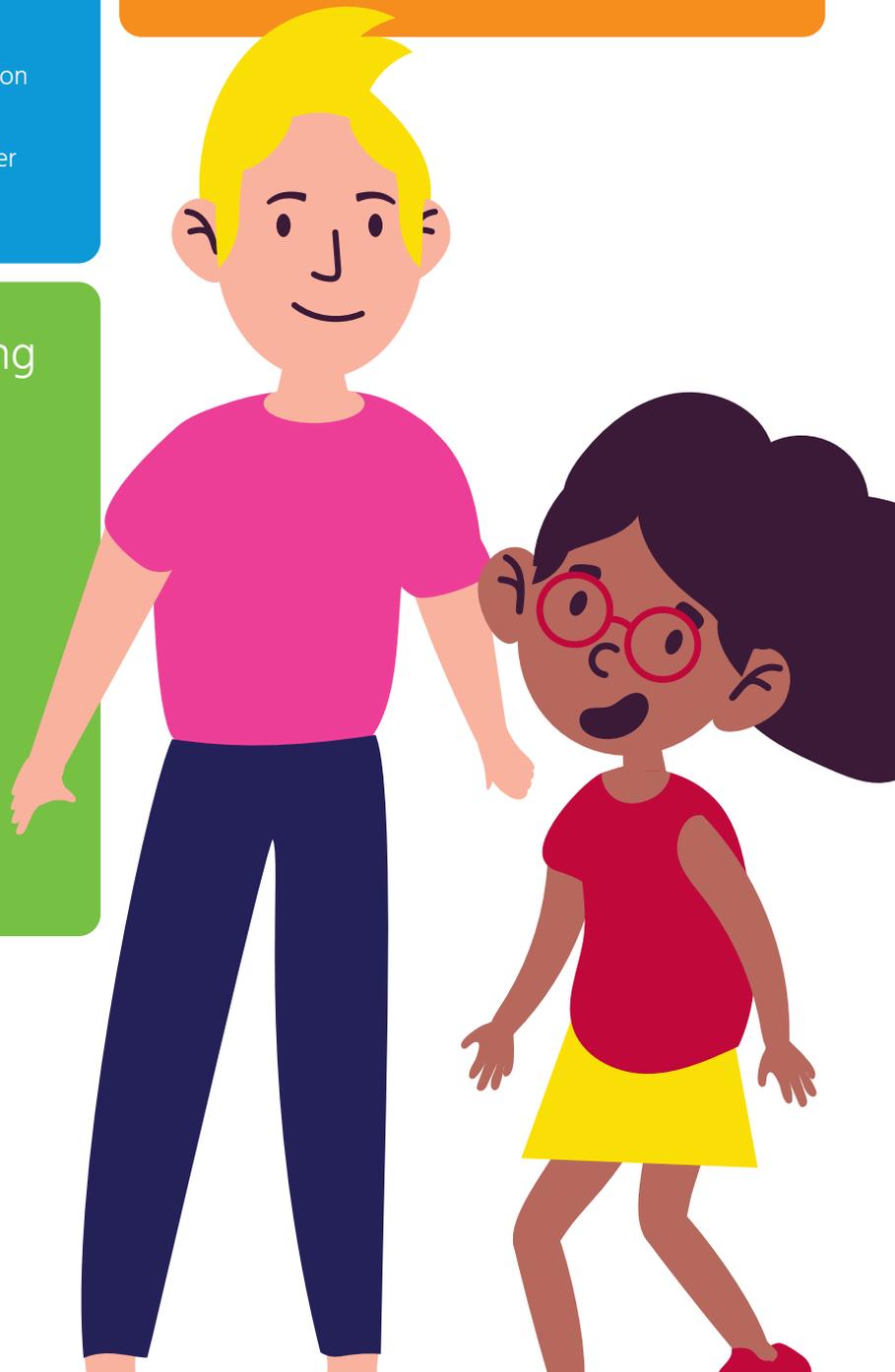
- › Knowing who and what they need to succeed
- › Support with life transitions
- › Knowing what options there are for education and careers
- › Support to apply for further study and jobs
- › Recognising backgrounds and challenges when pursuing education at different stages
- › Research skills – make informed decisions based on understanding evidence
- › Knowledge and skills required to undertake higher education or jobs

## Transcendence and giving back

- › Feeling part of wider society
- › Being able to provide a unique perspective based on lived experience
- › Opportunities to make a difference in particular within the children's social care system and helping others going through it
- › Going beyond ordinary limitations and goals

## Self-actualisation and fulfilling potential

- › Rising above the obstacles faced due to care
- › Feeling able to achieve dreams
- › Having a fulfilling life
- › Succeeding in personal goals and having drive
- › Stretch goals and pushing to reach full potential
- › Feeling content and positive looking back on achievements and what's to come
- › Feeling confident in decisions made
- › Knowledge of self and own identity



## WHAT CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE SAID

“ Ensure we are listened to, and our needs are taken into consideration, we need agency and to have a voice in decisions that affect us.”

“ It’s important to develop loving and nurturing relationships with adults and professionals that show they care for us.”

“ It can affect mental and physical health – didn’t have a good relationship with system which affected relationship”



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Children’s Commissioner for England’s Care Experienced Advisory Board, who have created this hierarchy of needs for care experienced young people. The Board is made up of young care experienced people, some of whom are currently in education and/or employment, and this hierarchy of needs is based on their insights and experiences.

Throughout this publication, spoken statements and written comments by the Children’s Commissioner’s Care Experienced Advisory Board have been quoted.

### THANK YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER’S CARE EXPERIENCED ADVISORY BOARD:

Brad	Kayleigh
Bryony	Luke
Carla	Mahnoor
Courtney	Maz
Fatmata	Megan
Flory	Mei
Georgia	Sapphire
Hannah	Scott
Ira	Semilooore
Jamilat	Shannon
Jon	Tiana
Kaitlin	Zachary



## CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Sanctuary Buildings,  
20 Great Smith Street,  
London SW1P 3BT

020 7783 8330  
[childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

 @childrenscommissioner

 @ChildrensComm

 @childrenscommissionersoffice



[childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/)



[childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/imo/](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/imo/)