

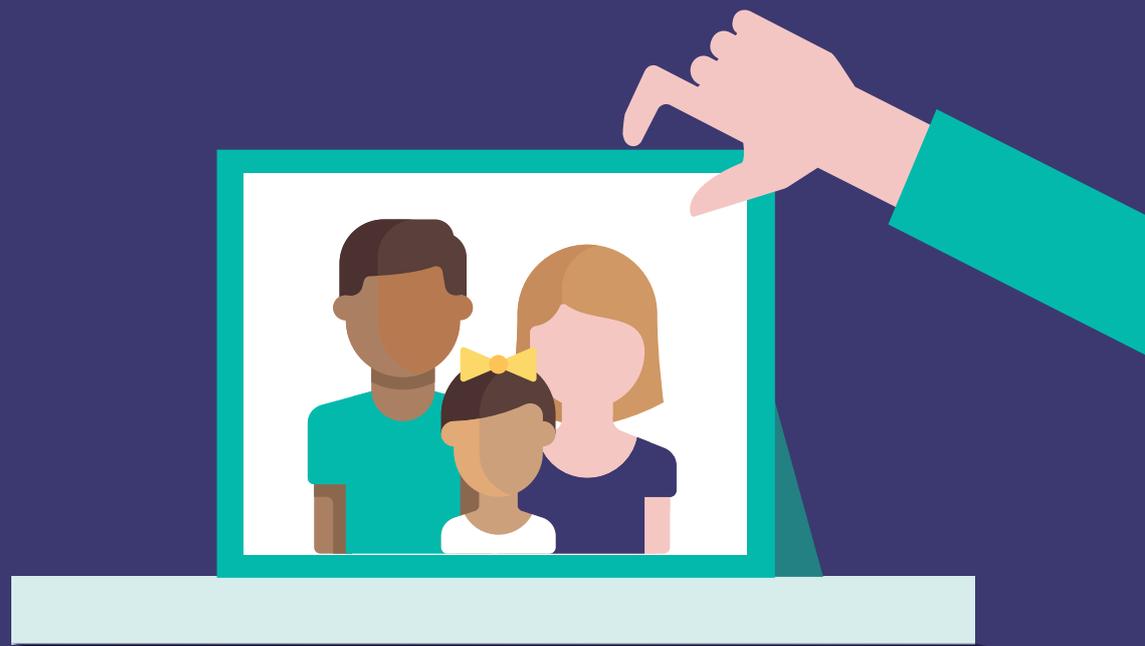
# TAKE YOUR PLACE

neaco



## GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR UNIVERSITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

2024/2025

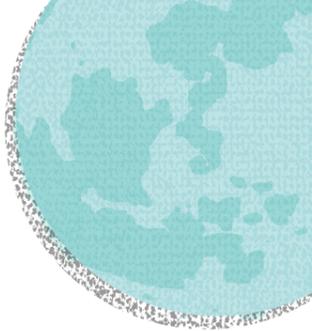


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# WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION AND IS IT FOR ME?



**Higher Education is any study and qualifications that you gain above Level 3. The table below shows the different types of qualifications you can achieve and what levels they are.**

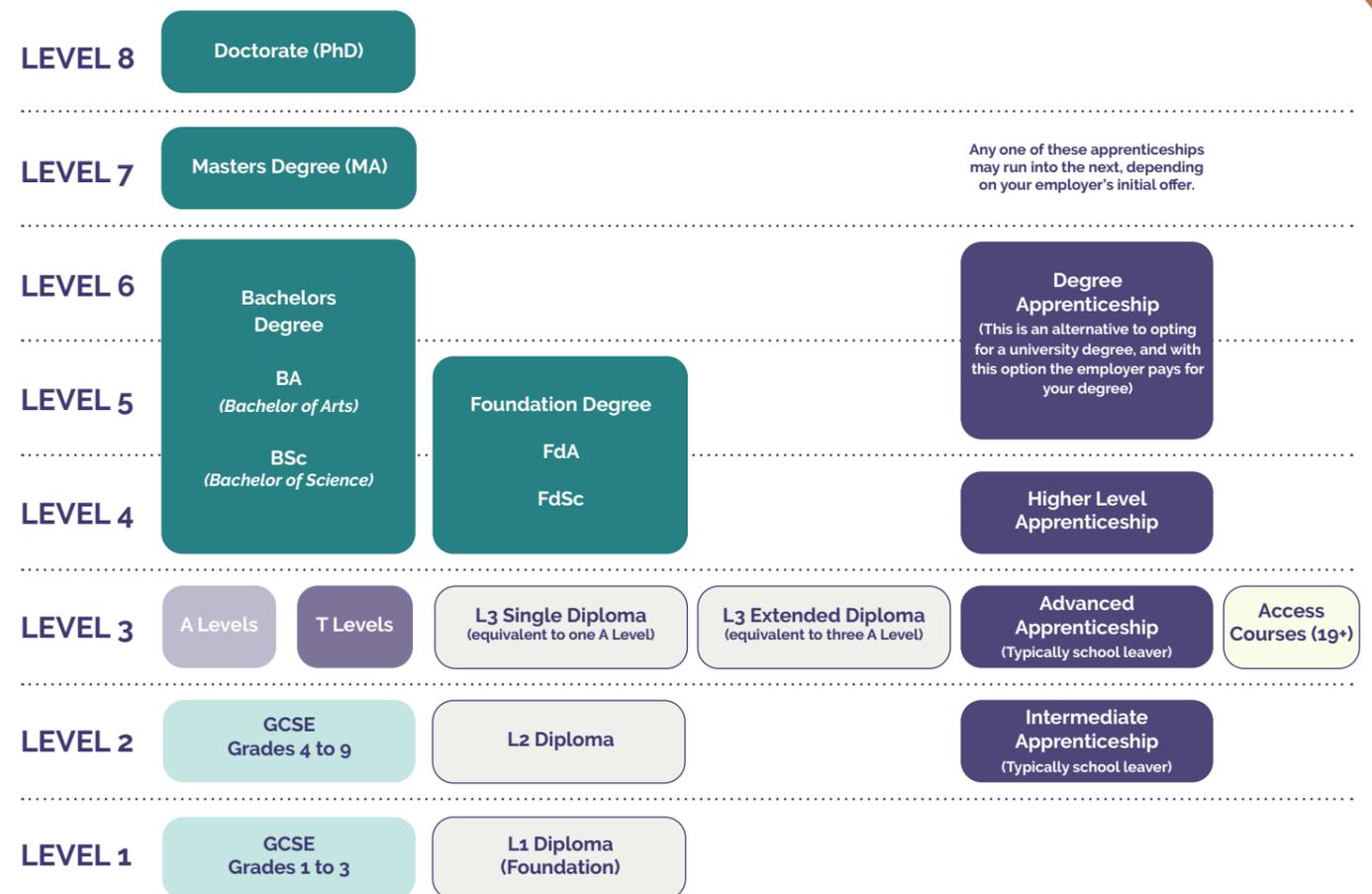
Most people going to university study A levels first, but many universities will also accept people who have studied BTEC's, taken an Access course or have T Levels. It's important to note that you don't have to go to university at 18 as many universities will accept students of different ages. You can study for a degree full time or part time at a university. You can also access higher education through a Degree Apprenticeship where you work and study at the same time. Many large employers are now offering these schemes which are a great way to earn money and gain experience whilst completing your degree. However, they are incredibly competitive so be sure to seek support and / or apply as soon as possible.

People are motivated to go to university for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being to gain a degree, study a subject they are passionate about and widen their career choices. There can also be financial benefits to gaining a degree. Recent statistics show that the average starting salary for a graduate is £26,000, rising to an average of £31,000 compared to non-graduates who average at £24,500.

However, University can also be a great opportunity for self-discovery; to make friends, have new experiences, live independently, and gain important life skills. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to better explore, understand and improve yourself: to reach your full potential in a challenging but ultimately rewarding environment.



## Comparing the different levels of education



# CHOOSING A COURSE

For some, picking a degree will mean aligning with a specific career path. That is, for some occupations, such as nursing or paramedic science, obtaining a subject specific degree is mandatory. It is always a good idea to research your chosen career path and make yourself aware of any requirements such as these.

However, for many, it is the skills they gain from their degree that is most important. For example, History is a broad degree and the skills you will gain including analysis, investigating, debating, reflecting, evaluating, researching and critical thinking, are applicable to multiple careers.

There are over 37000 courses available at nearly 200 universities in the UK so there is plenty of choice. The most important thing to consider is what you enjoy! You will be studying a subject in depth over a long period of time, so you need to have a genuine interest to keep you engaged and motivated.

**So, how do you narrow it down?  
Here are some of our top tips:**

- **Research, research, research!** There will be subjects you are very familiar with but others you've never heard of before. Take your time to explore what is available and where these degrees can take you in the future.
- **Deep dive University websites.** Read the course descriptions, take time to understand the topics you'll be studying and the structure of the overall course, consider how you will be assessed, check out unique courses such as combined degrees (study 60:40 split between two subjects) or sandwich courses (a year of study / working abroad between your study) etc. You may come across 'Gateway programmes' that have been designed to help those who have experienced some disadvantage in their schooling gain entry to the University. These are all important features that could help sway your decision.
- **Visit campuses.** You truly don't know the heart of somewhere until you've visited. What is the culture like? What resources do you have on campus? Are there societies you are passionate about? Do you like spending time in the city? Of course, attending open days can get expensive so be sure to check out the finance section of this booklet for further guidance.
- **Talk to students.** Schools or Universities would be happy to connect you with current students studying your degree: the perfect opportunity to ask tough questions and get truly honest answers!
- **Get it out on paper.** It may sound trivial, but pro / con tables can be an efficient way to consider multiple options at once. If you are struggling, complete this task with a friend or someone from your school or college albeit a teacher or careers advisor.

For many students, this part can feel overwhelming. This is why it is important to start this discussion as early as possible to give yourself lots of time to make an informed decision.

# OPEN DAYS / APPLICANT DAYS

Visiting a university, whether it's one of your choices or not, is a great opportunity to learn more about higher educational study. Though it can feel intimidating, visiting these spaces often alleviates anxiety for students, helping them picture themselves in these new environments.

## What is an open / applicant day?

From a practical perspective, it is an opportunity for you to learn about the city, the university and its facilities, accommodation, your course etc. However, it is also an opportunity for you to make valuable connections with existing students and support staff, have the platform to ask any burning questions and ultimately see if you can picture yourself happily studying there.

## Isn't it expensive?

Your local authority will cover the cost of at least one open day for you and, depending on your circumstances, may cover the cost of someone to travel with you. Similarly, they will support with the cost of applicant days, interviews, or auditions etc. Be sure to ask your social worker or personal adviser about this or check out the finance section of this booklet for key contact details. Likewise, your education setting may also be able to support you with this financially if you ask.

## Care Leaver Opportunities

Some universities offer experiences specifically for care leavers. Often, a simple google search will reveal these events or you can search what is on offer at specific institutions on the [Propel website](#). Failing that, approach your chosen universities and ask for the widening participation or care leaver lead who should be able to support you.

## Student Ambassadors

Typically, universities will employ student ambassadors to show visitors round. They are a fantastic source of student-centered information, and you shouldn't feel scared to ask them questions such as:

- What is the accommodation like? Do most people live in halls of residence?
- What is the town or city like? Is it student friendly?
- Is there good transport to the university and around the local area?
- Is there a student services or support department that can help if you are having any difficulties?
- Are there any jobs available on campus or locally for students?

**This table has information about what support is available at the five Universities in the East Anglia region.**

Support Offered	Anglia Ruskin University	Norwich University of the Arts	University of Cambridge	University of East Anglia	University of Suffolk
<b>Pre-entry</b>					
Named contact	Margot Broadbent-Yale arucare@aru.ac.uk	Kim Hood support@norwichuni.ac.uk	Kirstyn Kedaitis realise@admin.cam.ac.uk	Liz Ferguson includingme@uea.ac.uk	Claire Palmer C.Palmer5@uos.ac.uk
Outreach Programmes	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Open day travel expenses	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Contextual Admissions	✔			✔	
<b>During Studies</b>					
Care Leavers Bursary	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Priority 52 week accommodation	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Part of UNITE Foundation Scholarship Scheme					
Student Ambassador Employment	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Mentoring/support officers/named contact	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Care-experienced student network	✔			✔	
<b>After Studies</b>					
Support with graduation costs		✔			
<b>Useful links</b>					
<i>*Correct as of 2023. The overview is for illustrative purposes only - please contact institutions direct for full details of the support offered.</i>	<a href="#">Support for care leavers - ARU</a>	<a href="#">Bursaries</a>	<a href="#">Financial support</a> <a href="#">Open day and event travel fund</a>	<a href="#">Contextual admissions</a> <a href="#">Bursaries</a> <a href="#">Travel fund</a> <a href="#">Social work intergated degree apprenticeship</a>	<a href="#">Care Leavers Covenant</a> <a href="#">Care Leavers Bursary</a>



# APPLYING WITH UCAS

If you are looking to study full-time in England or Wales, all applications will be handled through UCAS online. Typically, this is completed during sixth form or college. **No longer a student? Do not fret. You can still apply but as an independent student instead.**

Applying to university can feel complicated, but if you have all your information to hand, then all you need is time. Before making any application, you will need the following information:

- 1) Your top five university choices. You do not have to pick five if you don't want to, but you cannot select more than that.
- 2) Your previous exam results. Some institutions may want to know your predicted grades for any up-and-coming assessments too.
- 3) The names and contact information of your references. Typically, this will be school staff such as your head of year, teacher, mentor, or careers lead. If you are no longer in full time education, you may need to contact your previous school or college for assistance or, in some cases, ask an employer.
- 4) Your personal statement. Again, some students can find this part overwhelming, but you needn't worry - be sure to check out our advice regarding writing statements in the following chapters.

As a care leaver, it is also important to tick the box that informs UCAS you have been in care. This is completely confidential and will not be used against you. It does however let the right people at the university know that you might need further support, financial and/or wellbeing, which can be sorted before you even arrive on campus.

Please note, UCAS have unveiled plans to replace the traditional personal statement with a new approach centred around structured questions. These changes will not happen until Autumn 2025 at the earliest, in time for 2026 entrants. For the most up to date information on applying, please check out the UCAS website [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com).

For specific dates in your application cycle please check the UCAS website

UCAS Deadlines  
When To Apply For University Courses

## June to September

Consider different courses and universities - research is key! Register on the UCAS hub and familiarise yourself with the application process.

**Early May:** UCAS Undergraduate search tool will go live

**May:** UCAS Undergraduate application system will go live

**September:**

Applications can be submitted through UCAS (although they will be open until January).

Consider how to strengthen your personal statement - the summer can be used to secure work experience, attend summer school or widen your reading in your area of interest.

## Mid - October

Any applications for **Oxbridge** and also courses in **medicine, veterinary medicine/ science and dentistry** should be submitted.

## January

This is the main UCAS deadline for the majority of undergraduate courses. The deadline will be the last Wednesday of January at 6pm.

If you're applying through your school/college, please check their deadline, and follow this to get your application in on time and to get the correct support. This gives them enough time to read your application, check you've entered your qualifications correctly, write and attach your reference, and submit your application.

## February

From February **Student Finance England (SFE)** will open applications - see [gov.uk/student-finance](http://gov.uk/student-finance).

## February

**UCAS Extra Opens** - If you do not hold an offer for your chosen course, you will have another opportunity to add a further choice through Extra.



## End of May

**Student Finance applications will close** - ensure you have completed your application in full to guarantee your student loan to be in place for the start of your university course.

## October to June

Attend **Open Days, Taster Days, Virtual Events, Applicant Days**. Where offered, apply for accommodation, and also seek out support where needed.



UCAS

UCAS

## Early June

If you receive all your offers in May you have until early June to **accept your offer**.



## End of June

Any applications received after the end of June will be entered into the Clearing process.

## May

**Universities make a decision on your application** if you applied prior to the January deadline.

## July

If you receive all offers by early July you will have until mid July to **accept your offer**.



**July**  
Clearing opens

## Mid July

**Universities make a decision on your application** if you applied prior to the end of June deadline.



## Results day

Date to be confirmed.  
**Results day is the day you will secure your place at university.**  
If you didn't get the grades you were expecting, don't panic, there is lots of support available around clearing and you will be supported to find an alternative place to study.



## September/October

**University will start - Good luck!!!**  
Enjoy welcome events and take opportunities to network.



# WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement is an opportunity to show the university why you would be a good candidate for their course. They want to see your personality, your skills and experiences but also your academic passion too. Remember, your **one** statement will be sent to **all five of your choices** and must only be **4000 characters (including spaces)** long. Starting from scratch can be overwhelming but hopefully this step-by-step guide can help:



## INTRODUCTION

## SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

## ACADEMIC ANALYSIS

## CONCLUSION

This is a great opportunity to show your personality – but keep it brief. Think: who am I, what am I studying, what would I like to study and, most importantly, why do I want to study it? A personal anecdote always works well here e.g., “when I heard my local council woman speak, I was inspired to pursue politics” or “watching my brother recover from a sport related injury inspired me to learn more about Physiotherapy”. If you are interested in a particular niche, this is also a great place to introduce it. Note: some people find it easier to leave writing their introduction until last!

**4-5 sentences**

Here, universities want to know what relevant skills or experience you already have that make you a strong candidate for the course. This can be academic, personal or employment examples. Start by asking a teacher or researching online the top five skills required for your chosen degree. Then, using a mind map, come up with evidence as to how you showcase these skills. You may find that some evidence more than on skill! Struggling? Try this exercise with a teacher or friend. Once complete, pick 2-3 of your strongest examples and write a small paragraph for each.

**2-3 small paragraphs**

Here, universities want to know how you have engaged with your chosen degree outside of the curriculum. Have you watched an interesting documentary, participated in a short course, listened to a podcast, or read a valuable book? In this section, you want to follow a PEAL structure: Point, Explain, Analysis and Link (back to your course). By analysis, all we mean is 1) do you agree or disagree and 2) are there other resources that support or contest that point? If you are struggling for resources, be sure to ask your teacher or career support for direction.

**2-3 small paragraphs**

This is an opportunity to summarise all your key strengths: the reasons why you would make a great candidate for the university. Keep it brief but highlight all your best attributes and experiences and how this will impact you as a student.

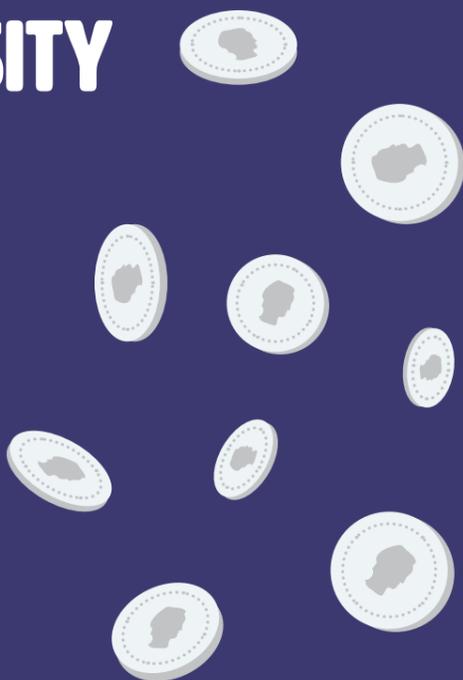
**4-5 sentences**

But most of all remember, the reader is rooting for you – they want you to do well. They aren't looking to catch you out but make sure the university and / or course are right for you. So write confidently, believe in what you have to offer and seek help if you need it, sooner rather than later.



# MONEY FOR UNIVERSITY

One of the biggest anxieties for prospective students: finance. We've compiled this comprehensive guide to all things money, alongside some essential support links to help make sense of money!



## Student Finance

Applications for student finance are completed via the [GOV website](https://www.gov.uk) and you don't have to wait until your place is confirmed to make your application. It is important to also supply a letter from your local authority confirming that you have been in care if you want to have access to all the financial support you are entitled to.

Student finance is broken into two main categories:

- 1) Tuition Loan – to cover your tuition fees which are paid directly to your university.
- 2) Maintenance Loan – to cover living expenses and paid directly into your bank.

As a Care Leaver you will be entitled to the full maintenance loan which is paid in three annual instalments – September, January, and April of each year. You will receive your first payment after you have registered with your institution. The amount you will receive depends on where you are studying and the length of your academic year.

You do not need to start repaying your loans until the April after you graduate and once you earn over a certain threshold. Once that threshold is passed, you will pay a percentage of the loan back each month. This usually happens automatically.

Some people may feel unable to use existing student loans due to their faith or conscience. From 2025, the government is introducing Alternative Student Finance which will be certified as being Sharia compliant [Alternative student finance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)

The DSA scheme aims to ensure everyone has the support and adjustments they need to succeed during their studies, whether those adjustments relate to mental health, long term illness or any other disability. You can apply for a DSA when you apply for your student finance, but you will need to supply evidence of your disability such as a letter from a GP, a dyslexia assessment or something similar. This evidence needs to be as current as possible.

Once your application has been accepted you will be asked by student finance to arrange a "study needs assessment" with a DSA approved organisation. This will determine the nature of the help you need such as specialist IT equipment or a non-medical helper. Usually, the DSA will be paid directly to the organisation providing you with the service or the equipment. You don't generally receive cash but may be offered support like printing credits. You will have to pay the first £200 towards the cost of any computer equipment.

## Bursaries

Almost all universities offer bursaries or scholarships that are specifically for Care Leavers. These are typically a direct cash payment but can involve money off your accommodation. These are usually applied for at the start of the academic year although you may not receive them until the summer term.

If you haven't done so already look at Propel - Become ([becomecharity.org.uk](https://becomecharity.org.uk)) to see what the universities you are interested in offer and how to apply.

## Higher Education Bursary from your local authority

As a Care Leaver you will be entitled to a higher education bursary from your local authority. To be eligible you will need to start your degree prior to your 25th birthday. A higher education bursary can cover a foundation year or compulsory unpaid work experience element. If you choose to study abroad/undertake work experience you will need to discuss with your personal adviser what finance help you will receive.

For [Cambridgeshire County Council](#) see our Pathway4U local offer website: [Education, work and training - Cambridgeshire County Council](#). We will do a financial assessment and look at your loan and bursaries and ensure that after major bills you have the equivalent of the weekly universal credit amount. You will also receive a £2000 bursary divided between each year of study. We cannot act as a rent guarantor for you.

For [Peterborough City Council](#) see: [Education, work and training - Peterborough City Council](#). As a Care Leaver we will cover the cost of your first year's accommodation. You will also receive a £2,000 higher education bursary. In addition, we will support you financially with the cost of your accommodation in holiday periods and will act as a rent guarantor if you require one.

For [Norfolk County Council](#) see: [Financial support - Norfolk County Council](#). As a care leaver we will cover the full cost of your accommodation during holidays as well as term time whilst you are studying as an undergraduate. You are entitled to a £2000 bursary if your course is two years or more and we will agree with your worker the best way to pay you this bursary either as a lump sum or instalments.

For [Suffolk County Council](#) see: [Services for young people leaving care - Suffolk County Council](#). If you go on to attend university, you are entitled to a bursary of £2,000 with the payments equally divided across the duration of your time at university. In addition, you can claim Income Maintenance in term time and your accommodation costs during holiday periods. You will be helped with your books through a one-off payment of £150.

## Household items to take to university

Regardless of which local authority you are under you should be able to access your Setting Up Home Allowance/Grant to buy small items ready for university such as bedding, towels, plates, cutlery, and cooking equipment if you are moving into student accommodation. Before you purchase anything, you might want to check what your university provides as some offer "starter packs" for care leavers.



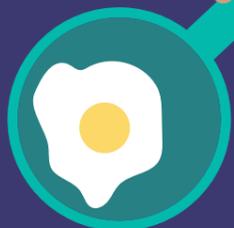
# ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

## Halls of Residence

You can generally apply for accommodation at your first-choice university from spring onwards, picking two to three in order of preference. If possible, we recommend looking at accommodation in person but most first year students choose to live in self-catering halls of residence. These are typically single bedrooms with small ensuite bathrooms and shared kitchen facilities, divided into small flats of 8-10 people. If you are bringing all your belongings with you, size may become an issue but don't fret - get in touch with the care leaver contact at your university who should be able to discuss the most suitable option of accommodation for you.

In terms of availability, feel reassured that almost all universities will prioritise care leavers for accommodation in their first year. However, it is always important to ask about the length of the contract i.e., does it include the Christmas and Easter breaks, does it include the summer holidays? Most universities will offer accommodation to Care Leavers over the summer vacation but this might mean moving to a different accommodation block. Remember that if you choose to stay for extra weeks you will have to pay for these.

Once you have been offered a place in hall you may have to pay a deposit to secure your room (usually around £300), though some universities will reduce or waive this altogether for care leavers. There is no harm in asking. Guarantors are another important part of accommodation: a third party who agrees to cover your costs if you cannot. Unfortunately, not all councils can act as a rental guarantor so always seek advice from your worker and / or potential university.



The [Unite Foundation](#) offers a limited number of fully funded accommodation places at 25 universities for Care leavers and estranged students.

## Shared Houses

Most second and / or third year students go into shared accommodation with others they have met on their course or friends they have made socially. Usually, these houses are from university approved landlords and though bigger in size, often fit less students. This can mean higher monthly costs and responsibility. However, do not worry - this is exactly what the university's accommodation team is for who can help navigate this transition. Our biggest advice? Don't leave it too late to start looking as spaces fill very quickly! If you are a bit older and would prefer to not live with 18 year olds you may wish to consider shared living as an option in your first year of study.

## Staying Put

If you choose to study at a local university, you may have the option to stay put with your former foster carers and commute. As a Care Leaver you will still be entitled to the full maintenance loan in this scenario.

## Staying In Your Own Accommodation

If you have your own council/housing association property you may decide to retain your property and commute to university. As a care leaver you will be entitled to the full maintenance loan in these circumstances. You will not be able to claim housing benefit, unless you have dependents, but will be entitled to council tax exemption. You will need to contact your local council about claiming the council tax exemption.

# TIPS AND ADVICE FOR CARERS

Many young people in care may not consider university as an option for them, so one of the most important things you can do is to talk about university. Encourage your young person to stick with their education and not to get disheartened even if they get some disappointing assignment or mock exam results. Universities are looking for potential and can make contextual offers that consider the fact that children in care have often had a disrupted education.

Arm yourself with as much information as possible and if you are not sure ask at PEP meetings or contact your supervising social worker. Some young people don't like the label of "being in care" and so won't ask about any extra support or financial help that they are entitled to receive. You can find details of what each individual university offers by looking at the Propel website and by contacting the care leaver lead at individual universities. Propel - Become ([becomecharity.org.uk](https://becomecharity.org.uk))

Try to accompany your foster child to 2/3 university open days if possible. You should be able to take younger foster children along and this may in turn motivate or inspire them. If that will be difficult for you then ask for some respite/day care.



## What you can say to encourage young people

- You will be able to live independently and make your own decisions.
- You will always feel proud of your achievement and get confidence from it.
- You will find clubs and societies for every interest imaginable.
- You will have access to more jobs when you qualify (40% of jobs ask for a degree).
- You will fit in. Higher education welcomes all kinds of people from all types of backgrounds.
- You can study a subject you're good at and care about.
- You will have the potential to earn more money (on average graduates earn 55% more over their working lived than those who start work at 18).
- You will have the chance to choose a city or town you would love to live in.
- You will meet new people and make lasting friendships.
- You will have access to lots of support to help you get there, and stay there, so why not take advantage of it?

## Advice for when your young person starts university

Send lots of texts when your foster child first goes away. If you have a Staying Put arrangement expect that your young person will want to pop back and use your house as hotel. This is normal teenager behaviour! Encourage your young person to get involved in student clubs and societies especially if they are commuting to university or if they are quite shy.

# STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



## Meet Emma – a third year at The University of Essex studying Philosophy, Religion and Ethics. She states:

"I always knew I'd go to uni if I got the grades ... it was only when I got the grades that I realised I'd be moving 150 miles away from comfort and had no idea how to afford all the costs. My personal advisor did a great job of getting me the financial support I needed. I knew it was important to tick the box on the UCAS form stating I have been in care to ensure I didn't get extra financial pressures on me. I've found uni fun and feel I've progressed hugely. However, there were specific challenges – in my second-year house, one estate agent wouldn't accept a local authority as a guarantor for the rent, so I had to ask my granddad, who I didn't really have a strong enough relationship with at the time, to step in.

It had been understood that I'd stay with my carers over the holidays if I got into uni. If I let them know when I was back, there was space for me. It wouldn't necessarily be in my room, as they also looked after several other children in care, but somewhere. At the start of my third year, I moved permanently into my university house. I have the house for a year, so I don't have to worry about where I live during the holidays. After I graduate, I plan to start a master's in social work, which is like a three-year degree crammed into two years. I hope to practice social work and make my way as high as I can to the top!"



## Meet Zion, a youth justice, community safety and applied criminology MA student studying in Middlesex. He states:

"I didn't get the grades I needed for university and panicked. Instead, I sent a letter to the uni and told them about my social enterprise business idea and how I needed to do the course to help me gain the knowledge - and they took me on! I'm being funded by my employer, a fostering agency, which is great – they also really liked my business idea which is why they agreed to help me. I sit on their fostering panel and work as a mentor for young people in care.

I didn't go around telling people at uni I'd been in care, but I didn't keep it a secret. I ticked the care leaver box on the UCAS form because it meant I got financial help from the uni. There was also a care leaver's group at uni too. The best thing about university has been the amount of likeminded people there are. I made loads of friends and because I was president of a society, I got my name shouted everywhere I went! I think you should seriously consider going to uni if you feel it will help you towards fulfilling your dreams and ambitions. It's about more than just getting a job!"

Thanks to Propel for providing these student stories. Wanting to hear from more care leaver students? Check out the useful websites section of this booklet for me connections.



# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Regardless of how ready you may or may not feel to go to university, anxiety, nervousness, and fear are all very normal emotions to experience during this time. Often, university will mean moving away, living independently, travelling far from your support networks, and experiencing plenty of new, unfamiliar circumstances. Therefore, it is valuable to educate yourself on the support structures within your chosen university to make your experience as positive as possible.

## Student Support

Every university will have a student support service designed to help you settle in and get used to student life. This can include money advice, disability support, and counselling and wellbeing. Though levels of provision vary between institutions, many universities will offer complimentary counselling sessions, workshops, online webinars, and digital resources for students to use as they please. Likewise, they may also train up student ambassadors who are another valuable support network for those needing additional support.

## Connection

Why wait until you get to university? We encourage students to set up a WhatsApp with friends, carers or support workers from home. This is a great way to keep in touch with home and let them know how you are doing. They can also use it to check in on you. Likewise, many students often connect with others on their course before they arrive, through social media groups, forums and email chains. Be sure to check out our useful links section to find the most popular student platforms.



## Outside of University

There are also several brilliant communities that can care for your mental health outside of education. Here are some of our top suggestions:

### Student Minds:

access support online and find out if your university has signed up to the Student Minds Mental Health Charter. [studentminds.org.uk](https://studentminds.org.uk)

### Student Space:

information and support including videos by students talking about their experiences of starting university. [studentspace.org.uk](https://studentspace.org.uk)

### Young Minds:

useful information and support for now and when you go to university. [youngminds.org.uk/young-person](https://youngminds.org.uk/young-person)

### Rees Foundation:

offers general support, guidance and signposting to other useful sources of information. Their support workers are trained in mental health first aid and always willing to offer emotional support if you need it. [reesfoundation.org](https://reesfoundation.org)

### Mental Health Foundation:

works towards good mental health for all; as everyone knows, prevention is better than cure. Everything we do is focused on protecting people's mental health. [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://mentalhealth.org.uk)

### Papyrus:

UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people. [papyrus-uk.org](https://papyrus-uk.org)

### Sane:

a leading UK charity providing emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness. [sane.org.uk](https://sane.org.uk)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We know that the experience of care leavers heading to university is a unique one. When supporting students, here are the most frequently asked questions we receive:

**Q** I am worried that I won't fit in socially at university. Because of my family history I struggle to be around people who drink excessively and don't students party all the time?

**A** This is bit of a stereotyped view of students. If clubbing isn't your thing, then don't worry there is loads you can get involve outside of your studies with student societies, sports teams, campaigns and even working for the university as a student ambassador.

**Q** I'm still in care, not a care leaver. Does this mean I shouldn't be accessing these resources?

**A** Not at all! It's great that you're thinking about your future and what you want to do next after school and college. The sooner you start thinking, the sooner you can plan. Talk to your social worker, your carers, and your independent reviewing officer (and personal adviser) about your thoughts. This will enable you can get things written down into your care plan (and your pathway plan) and help plan your journey to higher education.

**Q** I can't get a guarantor for my rented accommodation.

**A** Most student accommodation landlords and agents require students to have a guarantor, to protect accommodation from damage / non-payment of rent etc. In some circumstances, the Local Authority has acted as guarantor for students who come to university from care. You might be able to investigate this with your personal adviser or social worker. The other option would be to pay your accommodation cost for the year upfront to avoid the need for a guarantor if you're able to secure funds from the Local Authority.

**Q** I'm feeling stressed out / overwhelmed but I don't want to ask for help.

**A** Many students feel overwhelmed when they come to university. If you're coming from a non-conventional background, there may be more things to worry about and it may not be easy to ask for help. If you're used to dealing with social workers, you may feel as though asking for support at uni will be like talking to your social worker. This isn't the case. Universities have a whole host of support networks for students to pick from. We think of each student as an individual on your own journey through education. Successful students come from a variety of backgrounds and each student deserves their place at University.

**Q** I'm worried my studies will suffer because of personal issues affecting me outside of uni

**A** If you feel comfortable to do so, you should talk to someone at the earliest opportunity, if you think that your studies might be affected by things going on outside of uni. Be sure to make those closest to you aware but consider reaching out to the University before your arrival - whether that's through student support, other students or student ambassadors.

Provided by: Propel - Become (becomecharity.org.uk)

Provided by: Care leaver frequently asked questions Sheffield Hallam University (shu.ac.uk)

# SUMMARY OF USEFUL WEBSITES



## Become

The charity for children in care and young care leavers. Access useful online resources, bespoke support including WhatsApp messenger and community platforms.



## Propel

A branch from Become, this page is designed to specifically support Care Leavers planning to apply to university. Becca, the dedicated Advice and Support Officer for FE and HE at Become can help with any questions you may have, you can contact Becca at [propel@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:propel@becomecharity.org.uk). You can also see what the universities and colleges can offer, you'll find a detailed support checklist on each of their pages, covering things like specific funds for care leavers and year-round accommodation. Search here.



## UCAS

The ultimate website for all things university. All students applying for university will have to do so through this platform. You can also access lots of valuable information and support through a variety of resources, including guidance on applications, personal statements, courses and finance.



## The Student Room

The UK's largest online student community. Browse different student led forums and chat with others from across the country. A great place to connect with other care leavers or students intending to study the same course as you.



## The Uni Guide

An incredible resource to discover more about specific courses, universities or sections of your application.



## Unifrog

A popular platform amongst schools to manage the progress of your application. Your school or college may give you a login for this website. You can also access additional support, advice and guidance here also.



## Morissby

A popular platform amongst schools to manage the progress of your application. Your school or college may give you a login for this website. You can also access additional support, advice and guidance here also.



## NNECL (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers)

has resources for care experienced students on its website.



## The Care Leavers' Covenant

Supports young care leavers in England aged 16-25 to live independently – here you will find universities and colleges who have made a public commitment to support care leavers, career opportunities



## The EaCES Handbook

Written by estranged and care experienced students to bring together information and advice to help others – including their own experiences and practical tips.



The **IMO** website was set up by the Children's Commissioner for England in collaboration with an advisory network of care experienced teenagers as a space to share stories, experiences, and achievements.



## Ultimate Guide to University for Care Leavers



# TAKE YOUR PLACE



neaco

[takeyourplace.ac.uk](http://takeyourplace.ac.uk)

[neaco@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:neaco@admin.cam.ac.uk)

Developed in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council.



**Children's Services**  
Change Lives, Every Day



**Cambridgeshire  
County Council**