

The Hepp guide to higher education for care experienced students



A partnership of
Sheffield Hallam University
and The University of Sheffield



Is higher education for me?

As a young person leaving care, you have as much potential as anyone else and all the same higher education opportunities are available to you.

This booklet will give you information and insight about the additional and specific support provided for care experienced students, to help you explore your options and take the next steps on your education journey towards a fulfilling career!



Hepp's **“To Go Or Not To Go?”** booklet provides a comprehensive overview of higher education and will answer more questions you may have. Access it at www.hepp.ac.uk if you haven't received a copy with this booklet.

Not everyone enters higher education at 18. Some people work for a few years and return to education when they feel ready. You'll still be able to access financial support later if you decide to do this, although some specific care leaver support is time limited.

What support will I have?

All higher education institutions offer a huge range of support to all students, including academic support/personal tutor, academic skills support, employability/careers support, welfare/wellbeing advice, disability support and the Students' Union.

For care experienced students, many universities and colleges will have specific bursaries* available, as well as a named contact who has specific responsibility for supporting care leavers before and during study.

Some institutions offer additional support including:

- ▶ someone to attend an open day with you
- ▶ help with your UCAS application
- ▶ help with interview preparation
- ▶ guidance and support in finding accommodation
- ▶ 365 day accommodation
- ▶ some consideration of your final grades if your studies have been disrupted
- ▶ summer schools
- ▶ mentors/ambassadors

Visit www.propel.org.uk and use the location search to find out what support each individual institution offers for care leavers.

“I always wanted to go to university in order to do my dream job, however the support from the university support scheme really gave me the push I needed to apply and interview. Many people have a negative past but it's important to put this behind you and do what you want to do for you.”

Amy, Sheffield Hallam University



*A bursary is financial support that does not have to be repaid.

Your Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Your local authority will help you get the best results you can, supporting you to attend and do well at school. The PEP is a record of what needs to happen to enable you to do this until you are 16 and is the joint responsibility of your local authority and your school. You will also be invited to your PEP meetings so that you can have your say.

Your Pathway Plan

Just before you turn 16, your social worker will contact you to talk about your plans for the next few years and what support you'll need. Many young people leave care without the support they're entitled to, making it difficult to access housing, education and employment. Make sure you find out about everything that's available to you, from your local authority to children's trusts.

This Pathway Plan can cover many different areas of your life such as where you'll live, money, jobs, health and hobbies. Its purpose is to ensure that you're supported both financially and in reaching your goals. Make sure you tell your social worker about your interests and what you want to achieve in the future—be honest and don't be afraid to dream big!

Your Pathway Plan will include your plans for education, training and work. You need to make sure it includes costs for your future education and training:

- ▶ the cost of applying to university, e.g. UCAS fees, getting to open days or interviews
- ▶ tuition fees
- ▶ application, exam and additional course related costs for certain courses
- ▶ accommodation costs, including during holiday periods
- ▶ living expenses
- ▶ transport to and from your education establishment
- ▶ books and equipment
- ▶ childcare costs (if applicable)
- ▶ educational trips or work experience



“Whilst school was always my ‘safe place’ from everything that was going on at home, everyone knew I was a child in care. University was different, I was just Hannah and it was an incredible feeling. The only people that knew about me being a care leaver were those that I chose to tell, for the first time I was able to control who knew things about me.

I chose to go into higher education because of wanting to teach and to prove to myself and to those around me that I was just as capable of achieving my dreams as anyone else, that being a care leaver does not have to define me.”

Hannah, The University of Sheffield

“As a young teenager, I was aware my circumstances were different to others and I was never sure which ‘box’ I fitted in to. Going to university was my opportunity to break out of the stereotype/assumption that I couldn’t do the same things as others.”

Sandranne, Sheffield Hallam University



What about financial support?



Student Finance England is the government organisation who lend students the money to help pay for their higher education study. This is called a student loan and covers tuition fees and some living expenses. See Hepp's **"To Go Or Not To Go?"** booklet for more information.

Most UK citizens can receive a loan if they are studying for their first degree or higher-level qualification in the UK. Visit www.gov.uk/student-finance to find out what you might be entitled to. Care leavers should be assessed as independent students for student finance.

Care experienced students going on to higher education can get a £2,000 bursary from their Local Authority (more information about this at www.gov.uk/leaving-foster-or-local-authority-care).

Higher education institutions also provide their own forms of financial support - visit www.propel.org.uk or an institution's own website for specific information.

There is also additional financial support available to young people in care for their further education. The 16-19 Bursary provides £1,200 a year, paid directly by your school, college or training provider. You can use it to pay for costs like equipment for your course, lunch and transport to and from school or college.



"My biggest concern about going into higher education was the financial aspect of it. My foster carers were very helpful in getting the Local Authority to be clear exactly what support was available and my sixth form also supported me with filling out extenuating circumstances forms for the universities I applied to."

Lewis, The University of Sheffield

Should I disclose my care experience?



When you complete your UCAS application there's a question that asks if you've spent time in care (in the additional information section). It's up to you whether you answer this question but, if you do, it could be of benefit to you.

Higher education providers are likely to ask for supporting information from your referee and/or from you as the applicant or your advocates. Reasons for confirming you've been in care are:

- ▶ admissions staff reading your application will understand why there may be a gap or gaps in your education, why your work may have been affected and also the significance of what you've achieved
- ▶ the university or college may be able to offer you extra personal and financial support

You might also want to mention your care background in your personal statement, but it's completely up to you! Being in care may have given you relevant experiences and personal qualities to include that support your application, e.g.:

- ▶ being able to adapt to new situations
- ▶ inspiring your choice of course
- ▶ positions of responsibility (voluntary or paid), e.g. peer mentor
- ▶ summer schools or other additional activities
- ▶ making you more disciplined or determined
- ▶ weighing up information and making informed choices



What next?

- ▶ Speak to different people about higher education—from your social worker to school careers lead and teachers.
- ▶ Start to think about what you might want to include in your Pathway Plan/PEP.
- ▶ Do your research about higher education, especially your preferred institutions' support schemes—there are lots of starting points in this booklet.

If you're considering a local university, then both Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield have schemes providing help and support:

- ▶ SHU Progress - visit www.shu.ac.uk/shuprogress or contact the SHU Progress team on 0114 225 4777 or shu-progress@shu.ac.uk
- ▶ University of Sheffield—for the Widening Participation team, visit www.sheffield.ac.uk/schools/programmes or send your questions to schoolsliasion@sheffield.ac.uk.
- ▶ Access Sheffield, visit www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/access or get in touch at access@sheffield.ac.uk.

You can also check out these websites for more information and guidance:

- ▶ UCAS Undergraduate: Support for care leavers - www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/ucas-undergraduate-support-care-leavers
- ▶ National Network for the Education of Care Leavers - <https://nnecl.org/>
- ▶ Propel (supporting care leavers in higher education) - www.propel.org.uk
- ▶ Higher Education Progression Partnership (Hepp) - www.hepp.ac.uk



**Sheffield
Hallam
University**



The
University
Of
Sheffield.