When did you decide to go to higher education?
My decision to study at higher education began around the age of 16 when I was beginning Year 12 at sixth form. I decided to pursue my options for degree level study simply because I really enjoy maths, for that reason I decided to study Mathematics at The University of Sheffield!

Who helped you in the decision-making process?
My foster carers helped me make this decision by talking about their university experiences and some of the benefits of studying for a degree. My school also supported me with my application to university through UCAS.

What was your route into higher education and how did your decisions affect you?
My route into higher education was through GCSEs and A-Levels but beforehand, I hadn’t really given much thought to my GCSE and A-level subject choices – which turned out to be a mistake! If you’re thinking about going to higher education, I would strongly advise researching your A-Level subject choices before making a decision as this could impact your future options (GCSE choices are less of an issue, but some courses require specific GCSE subjects and grades, too!).
What financial support have you received at higher education?

I receive a significant amount of financial support from my local authority (for expenses like travel, textbooks) through higher education bursaries. I also receive financial support from my institution (care leaver’s bursary and an additional scholarship), as well as external companies such as the Unite Foundation, who provide 3 years of accommodation for free to care-experienced and estranged students. As I cannot rely on parents/carers if I’m struggling financially, this support has allowed me to live comfortably at university.

What other support is available?

Alongside financial support, higher education providers have a strong support system in place for all students. The support ranges from academic to mental health, it’s a really supportive environment.

Finally, what advice would you give to care experienced learners who may be considering higher education?

My advice to students (and carers/supporters too) who are thinking of progressing into higher education is to:

- Find out exactly what support you are entitled to - from all possible sources
- Check out local authority support, as well as directly with the higher education provider and external providers
- Don’t let finances put you off – there is so much support available out there!