

# Care Experienced Student



## Institution

The University of Sheffield

## Studying

Mathematics

## Route into higher education

GCSEs, followed by A-Levels

## 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 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!).

## How did you make decisions about GCSE and A-Levels?

I based my decision on subjects that I enjoyed, and this can be a great way to make a decision if you're unsure – just make sure you know any entry requirements for potential future study.

## 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!



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