

# Support at University for Care-Experienced Students

At the University of Chester, we understand that if you have experience of local authority care, or are estranged from your family, you are statistically less likely to attend university. With this in mind, we are committed to doing what we can to encourage you to consider university as a viable option for you, as well as supporting you to succeed and fulfil your potential when you are with us. We have compiled the following guide as a reference point to offer some key information about what assistance is available to you.

## Before Application

- **Foster and encourage aspirations** – Think regularly about what you would like to do in your future as a career, what you would like to get out of life, and what makes you happy. Researching careers and job types can never happen too early, so you could start with some of the links below. We would also encourage you to talk about your goals to the people in your life who you trust as this can help you feel focused.
- **Focus on long-term goals** – You might feel like you have many short-term goals and milestones that feel like they are your focus in day-to-day life. As a result, long-term goals can become less of a priority. Focusing on long-term life aspirations can give you purpose, and something to aim for.
- **University activities and projects for target groups** - Every university will have their own team who works with schools and prospective students. They will also likely have some projects or events that they run exclusively for students who are care-experienced, or where being care-experienced is one of the criteria. Seek them out by searching on university websites to find out their eligibility criteria, and how you can be involved.
- **Finance information** – Being worried about finance when it comes to university is common for all students. However, it can be much more acutely felt if you have experienced care, or are estranged from family. We would encourage you to research facts about what you are entitled to, in addition to the standard Student Finance package. Institutions will have their own [bursaries](#) which will each be different. You should also speak to your local authority about this too as the offer varies across councils. More details can be found in [Further Information](#).
- **LAC students' forum** - Websites such as The Student Room offer forums for students to access and discuss issues with other students. This may be a useful resource to gain student life insight and reassurance about what is available. As contributions to these sites are made by students, we would encourage you to verify any information you find out on these sites to ensure it is up to date.
- **External support** - There are many charities and organisations who operate to support students who have experience of local authority care, or who are estranged from family. Many of them can be found in the [Further Information](#) section below.

## During application

- **TICK THE BOX** - It's incredibly important that you tick the relevant box on your UCAS application to indicate that you are a care-leaver or an estranged student. This is simply to alert the universities chosen, to contact you to ensure that all support measures are in place

ahead of term starting. We understand that you may not want the 'label' of being a care-leaver or estranged student to follow you to university; many people use this as a fresh start. However, we would want to reassure you that this information is only shared with the support teams to arrange for support, and will only be shared with other university staff with your permission.

- **Find out what's on offer** – Once you have an idea of the universities you might like to go to, research the support that is available at each. Websites such as Propel (link in Further Information) have information from all universities to highlight what is available for care-experienced students all in one place.
- **Student Finance** – The student finance package will be based on your personal circumstances and so being care-experienced or estranged will have an impact on how much you are entitled to. Student finance packages will be in addition to any bursaries which are awarded by the university.
- **Application support** – At the University of Chester, we provide support for you with your application. This could be ongoing personalised advice for personal statements, a guided tour of the campus to familiarise yourself, and meeting support staff who would be working with you after you have enrolled. If you would like further information, please email [Helen Cooper](#).
- **Local authority** – The offer from each council varies from region to region, so it would be useful for you to ask your social worker or personal adviser to explain all of the options available to you if you decide university is right for you.

## At university

- **Support packages** – Universities will provide support packages for care-experienced students. Again, these will differ from place to place, so it's very important to find out what is on offer before you make your UCAS choices, as it might help you decide which place suits you best. You can find out more about our [support packages](#).
- **University contact** – There is likely to be a team who are responsible for the welfare of care-experienced students as part of their remit. In addition to this at the University of Chester, we also have staff who have designated responsibilities for specific areas. For example, we have a member of staff who is the contact for students who are care-experienced, or who are estranged from their families. Wherever you intend to study, find out who they are as soon as you arrive (or before if you can!). You may never want to engage with that member of staff, but it's useful to know that they are there if and when support is needed. Further information can be found on the [dedicated pages](#) on our website.
- **Financial support** - Often Universities have dedicated bursaries or financial support packages for students who are care experienced or estranged from their families. Again, the financial support offered differs for each university but you can find about more about [Chester's offer](#).
- **Accommodation** – The University of Chester offers 52 weeks of accommodation for students who require it. You can discuss this with the designated member of support staff, or with the accommodation team.
- **Not Alone** - University can be a huge transition with many changes in usual routines, and for some people this can be overwhelming. This can be particularly so for students who have experience of local authority care as you might feel like many things are changing in your circumstances at once. It's therefore important for you to know that **you are not alone** at university. The link member of staff, and more broadly, the wellbeing team are there if and when you need them; Students' Union have reps who are able to sign-post to information;

Residential teams offer support too, with Hall Wardens being on hand; University accommodation is also looked after by our porters 24/7, so there is always someone to talk to.

## Further Information

There are lots of places you can find further information and resources which you might find useful. Some are aimed at advisers supporting students, and others are aimed at students. Here are just a few:

- [Propel](#) – a website that provides information about the support available from all universities relating to care-leavers.
- [National Network for the Education of Care-Leavers](#) – NNECL is a charity set up by universities and works towards ensuring educational progression for care-leavers
- [Stand Alone](#) – A Student Portal with information and support for those who are estranged from their families. Stand Alone have produced a guide explaining how to [apply for Student Finance](#) if you are estranged from your family.
- [Learning and Work Institute](#) – Learning and Work Institute are an organisation who conduct research to improve the employment and educational lives of others. This link is to a guide they have produced for practitioners.
- [Centre for Social Justice](#) – A governmental think-tank with the aim of putting social justice at the heart of parliament.
- [UCAS](#) – There is a designated section on UCAS for care-experienced students, which has a range of information, videos and useful links, as well as information about the application process.
- UCAS have a function called [Explore Jobs](#) that looks at thousands of different jobs which can be filtered in lots of ways to find out more about jobs you are interested in, or about jobs which are completely new to you.
- You can make direct contact with our wellbeing team by emailing [wellbeing@chester.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@chester.ac.uk).
- If you would like to discuss the Care Experienced or Estranged Student Support Packages offered at the University of Chester then please get in touch with Becca Hughes on [r.hughes@chester.ac.uk](mailto:r.hughes@chester.ac.uk).