

## SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS IN FE AND HE

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### A GUIDE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY WORKERS

UPDATED 2016

**Note:** this is based on the laws and provision in England although aspects of the guide may be useful to those from the other home nations.



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## INTRODUCTION

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There simply aren't enough care leavers going on to further or higher education. There have been vast improvements over the past decade but we believe we can do better. We believe that children who grow up in care should have the same aspirations and opportunities as any other child. We aspire to help by ensuring that they:

- learn about educational opportunities from a young age;
- receive encouragement and guidance regardless of their attainment and age;
- have a team of relevant and informed people to guide their transition;
- receive a package of relevant support throughout their studies; and
- achieve their educational goals, without compromise.

The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) was established in June 2013 by higher education institutions and national organisations committed to the progression and support of care leavers in higher education. Working together NNECL aims to transform the progression of young people in or leaving care into and through further and higher education, by championing the continuous improvement of local practice, multi-agency partnerships and national collaboration.

This guide has been compiled by NNECL to support colleagues in local authorities who are supporting young people into and through higher education. Many colleges and universities offer a range of activities, interventions, advice and support for looked after young people and care leavers. In this guide we'll talk you through the myriad of what's available, how to access it and give ideas on how to apply it for best results.

This guide is designed to act as a signpost, pointing you in the direction of ideas, hints and tips that are proven to work in some situations. We've covered a lot of information and, whether you're after a source for up-to-date statistics, legal definitions, ideas for delivering activity or simply a starting point, you should find it.

We know that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't quite work when it comes students or institutions and therefore we encourage you to find your own path. Be assured your colleagues in NNECL aim to support you in your journey and want to hear how you are getting on.

We look forward to hearing about the good work you do in supporting care leavers.

Best wishes

The National Strategic Group

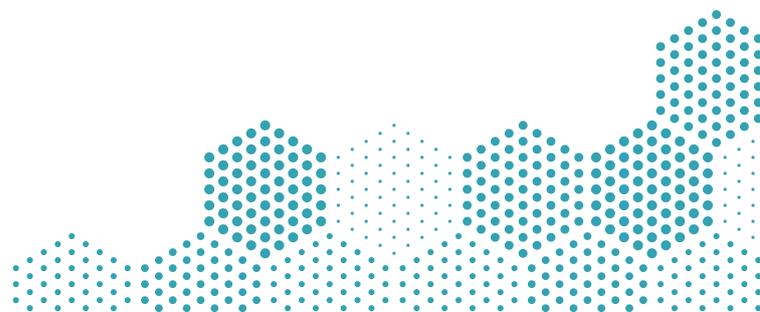
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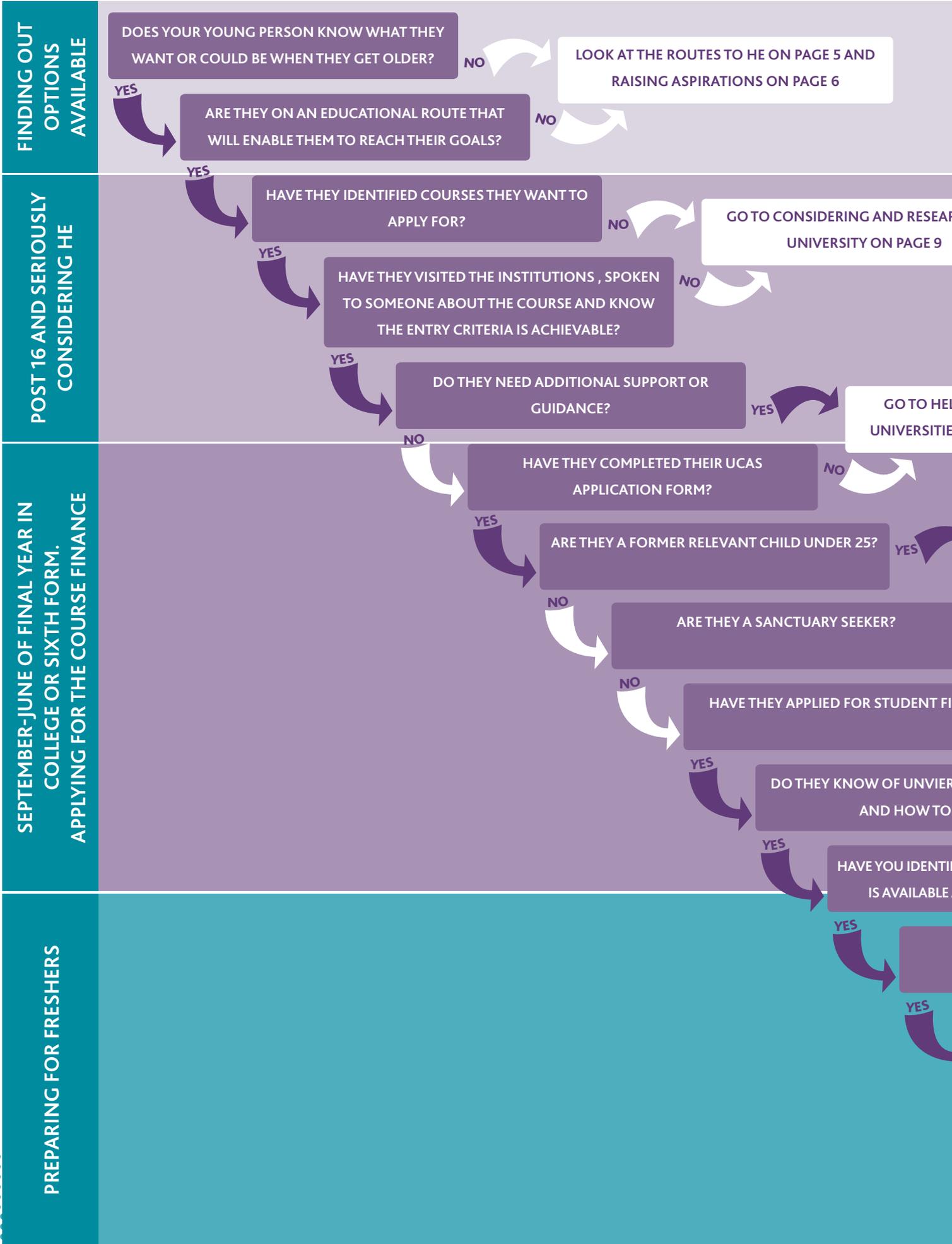
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Note on terms in this guide:

'*Looked after young people*' (LAYP) refers to looked after children or people under the age of 18 in the care of a local authority.

'*Care leavers*' refers to people who have left care and, for the purposes of this guide, they could be any age and may or may not have access to support from a local authority.





SEARCHING

HELP TO LOOK OUT FOR FROM  
UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ON PAGE 15



## WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

Given recent changes in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) it's useful to cover some basics.

### QUALIFICATIONS

At school young people study towards a level 2 qualification, usually GCSEs or BTECs. The most common higher education qualification is a bachelor's degree with honours, such as BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons), which is a level 6 qualification.

Table 1 below shows the various routes and qualifications that young people can take achieving a bachelor's degree. It's important to note that most universities will require a student to have GCSE maths and english at C or above, or an equivalent qualification, no matter how well they perform in their A levels.

### IT'S NOT SCHOOL

There are around 55,000 higher education courses in the UK delivered at over 160 institutions. Students can study anything from English to ethical hacking; geography to glass; French to football; or computing to criminology. The aim is to help young people find a course that they have chosen and love.

There are more ways to study at higher education than ever before: full-time, part-time, distance learning, foundation degrees or degree apprenticeships. The way students are taught can change daily with large lectures, small seminars, practical sessions, work experience, independent reading and research.

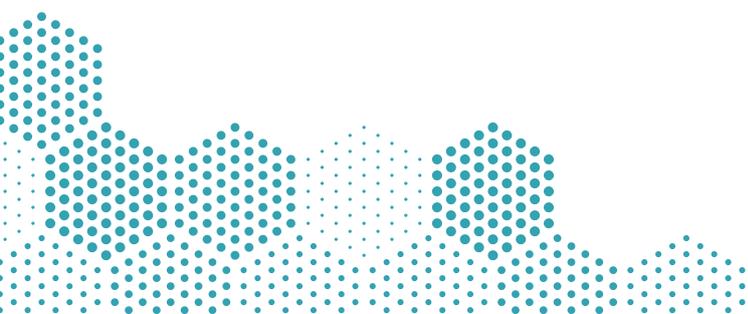
All of that is before we get onto the independence of university. If they haven't experienced it, or been told about it, how will young people know that there isn't a bell between classes, that they choose to go to lessons and that teachers won't necessarily remind them about homework?

### LET'S IGNORE 'POTENTIAL'

Schools will often guide a student to particular careers and education paths depending on their 'potential'. That 'potential' is often based on their most recent educational achievements, which for LAYP might not realistically represent what they are really capable of. We know that life can get in the way of education and as such we would recommend that LAYP and care leavers are encouraged to attend any aspiration-raising college or university activity that becomes available.

Care leavers may not continue directly into further or higher education, and we often see them returning to education later on. Whether they re-start their journeys with a level 3 access course, foundation degree or directly on to a bachelor degree programme, they can often pinpoint a moment or activity that inspired them to consider higher education.

We'll look at how you can support young people throughout their educational journey.



**TABLE 1 - ROUTES TO FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Level 6	Bachelor's degree with honours (e.g. BA/BSc Hons)	Degree Apprenticeships				One Year 'Top Up' Degree (e.g. BA/BSc Hons)	Usually studied in college or university
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)					Foundation degree (e.g. FdA, FdFC)	
Level 4	Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)	Key Skills level 4	NVQ level 4	BTEC Professional award, certificate and diploma level 4	Higher National Certificate (HNC)		
<p>Once level 3 is achieved you can move to level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications.</p> <p>These usually take a year for each level so, for example, a foundation degree will take two years.</p>							
Level 3	A levels	International Baccalaureate	NVQ level 3	BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 3	BTEC National	Access to HE Diploma	Usually studied in college or sixth form
	AS levels						
Level 2	GCSE (grades A*-C)	Key Skills level 2	NVQ level 2	BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 2	Functional Skills level 2	Higher diploma	Usually studied in school
Level 1	GCSE (grades D-G)	Key Skills level 1	NVQ level 1	BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 1	Functional Skills level 1	Foundation diploma	

## RAISE ASPIRATIONS – START EARLY

It's never too early to start talking about further and higher education with children. We know that children who grow up in environments with adults who have gone to university are more likely to aspire to go themselves. For children who don't know any graduates it's even more important that we find ways to introduce them to further and higher education. There are a range of ways of doing this, from thinking about what you say, introducing them to new people or getting them involved with activity at a local college or university.

### WAYS TO HELP

**Talk about it** – there are some light conversations that can be had from a young age that might just make the difference. We all know the child who wants to be a doctor, vet, electrician or police officer when they grow up. These are valuable conversations and simply responding with 'that's brilliant, did you know to be a doctor/vet/lawyer/electrician you'll have to study hard and go to college/university one day' can start an interesting debate about their future. The point is, the more often you talk about it, the more normal and natural it becomes as a real option for them.

**Share your experience** – have you been to college or university? Tell them; talk about why you went to university and what you studied. Show them that real people, who they know, go to college and university.

**Get carers on board** – if you all start talking about it, it will eventually sink in. Carers are often the first people to hear about opportunities through school or to have the important conversations. Help them in setting the tone; keep positive, supportive and show belief in the young person. Remember more care leavers return to further and higher education at an older age so their current grades don't have to define them.

**Go online** – the Who to talk to? section of this guide includes several charities and organisations that have great websites and resources that are targeted at young people. Become has a range of guides for young people and their website [becomecharity.org.uk](http://becomecharity.org.uk) has sections on education for young people.

**Test their interests** – before committing it's useful to test out a subject or career area. Work placements, volunteering, taster days or visits can all help.

### CHOICES TOGETHER IN THE NORTH EAST

*The North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NE RAP) is a collaboration between Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland and Teesside University, working together to deliver effective targeted work for identified groups of young people. The Choices Together programme aims to introduce the concept of higher education to looked after young people in Years 10 and 11. It involves a range of events including campus visits, academic sessions, skills workshops, and training sessions for foster carers to introduce them to the supported entry routes available at the universities involved. The programme has been evaluated by both the project delivery team and external academics; evaluation focused on changes in attitudes of the participants, both self-reported and reported by their carers. The findings were very positive, highlighting a significant increase in both knowledge and aspiration among participants, along with many carers reporting that they had now re-evaluated their role in supporting the education of young people in their care. These findings enabled the NE RAP to open up the programme to young people from a wider range of local authorities, and also to further develop specific events to enhance the knowledge and expectations of foster carers.*

**Take part in activities** – there are lots of activities available at universities across the country that have been designed to raise the aspirations of young people. Some will have events specifically for LAYP; others will have general events that they could get involved in. NNECL.org, as outlined below, is a great way to start to see what is available near you.

### NNECL.ORG

[www.NNECL.org](http://www.NNECL.org) is our dedicated website for those supporting children in care and care leavers. We have gathered a range of activities, resources and information from universities, colleges and charities about progression into further and higher education. You can see in a quick search what is available across the country.



## COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND LOCAL AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH EAST

*The University of Winchester has a long-standing relationship with Hampshire County Council, working together with their participation officer to deliver 'Spotlight on University' activities and residential programmes for young people from care to raise their aspirations towards HE. This has also led to a number of other areas of support for the virtual school including hosting the LAC Awards at the university, not only providing a venue but also offering to support the event with activity workshops, ambassadors and campus tours. The strong links with the local authority has enabled the widening participation team to link with the local fostering network and host their annual conference, each time delivering a workshop on educational attainment and raising aspirations. Developing strong partnerships with the local authority and hosting events outside of the typical WP remit has enabled greater engagement with younger children in care and their carers.*

### TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Activities are available for children as young as 10 years old and can include: taster days, summer schools, master classes, foster family fun days, mentoring and conferences.

**Summer Schools** – often residential, summer schools give students a prolonged on-campus experience, allowing them to immerse themselves in student life, with the support of student recruitment teams.

**Taster Sessions** – usually hands on, taster sessions give visitors an example of a learning experience within a specific subject area.

**Masterclasses** – these are talks or workshops on specific subject areas delivered by people deemed as 'masters' in the area.

**Foster family fun days** – these are events targeted at the whole family, including interactive hands-on sessions where everyone can get involved. They are opportunities to explore a university campus and use facilities without it feeling like a lesson.

**Mentoring** – this involves current university students supporting young people, sharing their experiences and acting as role models. Mentoring schemes may vary; they can be delivered online, in schools or on campus, and may or may not be specifically targeted at LAYP.

**Compact schemes** – these are usually aimed at students in Year 12 or 13 and they can lead to a reduced university offer. That means that if a course usually requires ABB at A level, the

offer may be reduced to BBB or BBC if the student completes the compact scheme. Schemes usually include a series of interventions such as talks, visits, taster days, workshops, assignments or a summer school.

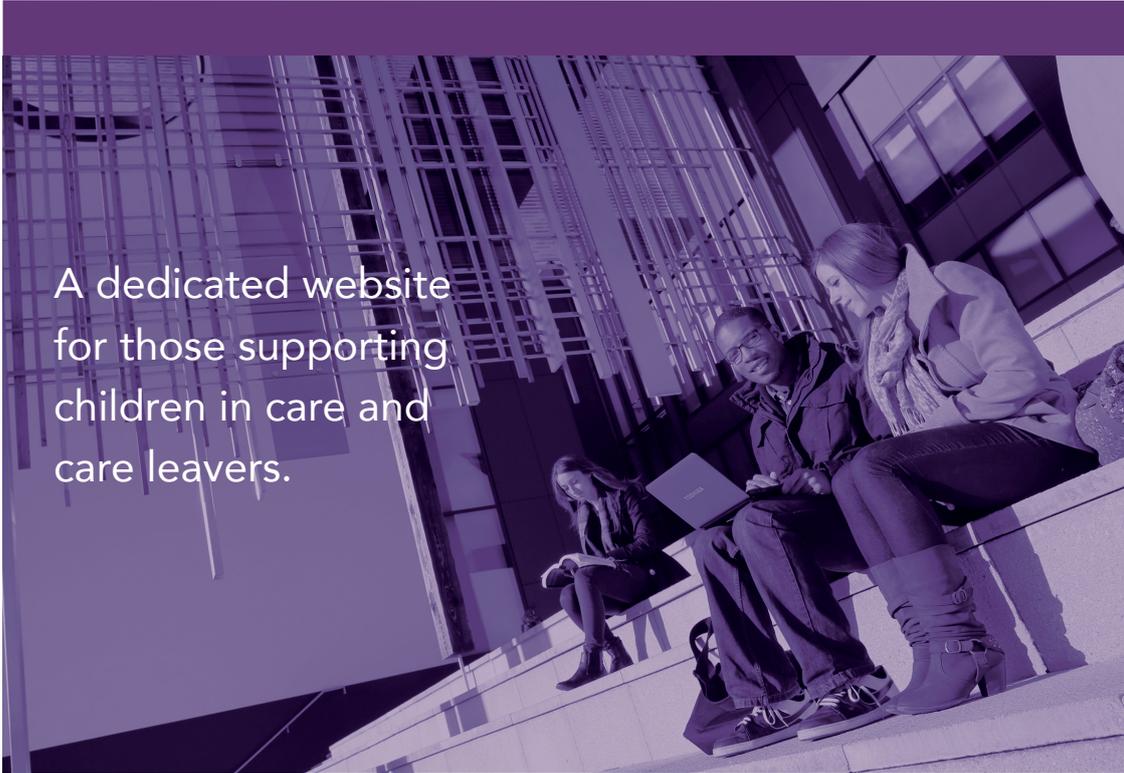
### Hints and tips

Going beyond the well-known basics, occasionally things crop up with LAYP that could surprise you. Throughout this guide we've included hints and tips that colleagues told us they wish they'd known earlier.

Support for life skills, including the ability to cook, travel and look after oneself, is generally beneficial and will also help with confidence in attending university.

- Universities often group together to deliver activity for younger pupils or LAYP. This can have the advantage that young people find out about several universities at once.
- Virtual schools are provided with pupil premium payments for LAYP. This money should be available to pay for costs related to attending events and activities like this.
- Talking about things whilst doing another activity often gets good results; whilst in the car or doing the washing up are often favourites.
- Finding events in subject areas of interest will improve the chances of success. If you can't find an activity in the area that interests your young person, contact your university and they may be able to provide a tour.
- Trying to get a young person back on track? Sometimes showing them that education isn't all like school works well. Contact your local college or university and ask if they can show them what could be available.
- Host your events at a university or college. From foster carer training, team away days or events for your young people, holding them at a university or college can get young people used to being on campus.
- Support your local university or college by helping them to promote the event, perhaps sending out invitations directly to young people on their behalf.
- Into University is a charity that runs innovative programmes for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds of all ages across the country.  
[www.intouniversity.org](http://www.intouniversity.org).

# WWW.NNECL.ORG



A dedicated website for those supporting children in care and care leavers.

Activities, resources and information from universities, colleges and charities about progression into further and higher education:

- o Taster days
- o Summer schools
- o Open days
- o Master classes
- o Mentoring
- o Bespoke events on request
- o Conferences and training for professionals

Links, guides and research about access to HE.

Keep up to date with the latest news.

Start your search now at:

[www.nnecl.org](http://www.nnecl.org)

 [@\\_NNECL](https://twitter.com/_NNECL)

Part of  
**NNCO**  
National Networks  
for Collaborative  
Outreach



## CONSIDERING UNIVERSITY

Schools and colleges will encourage young people to start seriously considering university towards the end of Year 12 or first year at college. They may have only just settled in and are already being asked to move on, which can be uncomfortable. The more help and support they can get, the better and easier the decision becomes. The first step is researching and working out what they might study, where they can study it and of course which route is right for them.

### RESEARCHING OPTIONS

**University and Colleges Application Service (UCAS)** – almost all higher education courses in England are listed on UCAS, which has a great search facility. Their website is set up to guide students through the process and they have a range of videos to help at every stage. UCAS is a great place to start looking, to see which courses are available and which universities offer them, before contacting them directly.

Website: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

**UCAS or HE fairs** – these events are usually set up like a market where students can talk to several universities and colleges under the same roof. It can be really useful to ask questions, collect lots of information and hopefully narrow down choices. UCAS will advertise their events on their website; some schools or colleges may host their own or visit other independent events.

**College and university websites** – once students have found a course on the UCAS website, there are links straight through to the college or university websites. Google or other search engines will also provide links. More and more colleges and universities are putting most of their up-to-date course information on their websites. They will also have information about opportunities to visit like those listed later in this section.

**Prospectuses** – most colleges and universities will offer a prospectus, which is a publication with information about the university and all of the courses available. They can usually be requested through their website, over the telephone or by visiting the university.

**Open days** – these are events put on by colleges and universities for prospective students to come and visit. There are usually opportunities to speak to academics, tour facilities, visit accommodation and get a feel for the institution. They usually take place in June-July and September-October each year.

**Visits** – there are a number of other ways to visit a college or university, in addition to the open day. A lot of universities, and some colleges, will have a key contact person to support LAYP and care leavers. We'll call them the care leaver contact in this guide. It can be worth contacting the care leaver contact at a university to see if they can arrange a personalised tour.

**Propel** – [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk) allows easy comparison of the support available at universities and colleges across the UK. Where they exist, Propel will also show details of the care leaver contact at each institution.

**Other websites** – there are number of websites that list, rate and review universities and colleges. They are not all necessarily endorsed but they can be helpful.

### BUILDING SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS IN THE WIRRAL

*We offer an annual bespoke employability programme for care leavers called 'Get Real'. It's a four-stage programme that focuses on confidence building, engagement, self-esteem, and employability skills. It culminates in an internship phase of work experience, which leads to an apprenticeship or employment at the end of the programme.*

*Our 14-19 CLA/care leaver employability team works with employers and care leavers to support care leavers into apprenticeships, education and employment opportunities. This includes continual work with employers to ring-fence apprentice opportunities just for care leavers, an example of this being Liverpool Football Club.*

*Wirral Apprentice Programme is an annual programme where we offer employers a grant to recruit an apprentice. We ring-fence around 8%-10% of these opportunities to care leavers.*

*Internally as a council we have ring-fenced three apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers so far in the 14-19 Team, Inclusion Team and most recently in the Lifelong Learning Team. Moving forward, as the duties on public sector apprenticeships come into play with public sector bodies being required to make up 2.3% of their workforce with apprentices from 2017, we are exploring how we can ring-fence positions under our corporate parenting responsibilities.*

*To promote the HE offer, we also work with local universities to include visits and residential experiences for looked after young people, care leavers and foster carers.*

## 'BACKSTAGE PASS' HIGHER EDUCATION TASTER IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

The two-day 'Backstage Pass' higher education taster event was held across three HE providers (Lincoln College, Bishop Grosseteste University and the University of Lincoln). Eleven looked after young people took part in various subject tasters over the two days. The project was organised in collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council's virtual school, with looked after children aged between 13 and 17 being the target cohort. The aims of the event were to raise the young people's aspirations, broaden their horizons, and introduce them to the various post-16 options that are available to them, in an interactive and engaging way.

### Hints and tips

- Encourage young people to play about on UCAS; ask them to find the strangest course or see if they can find a subject that can't be studied at university.
- Talk through what prospective students want to find out before they visit; help prepare a list of questions.
- Register for open days or visit days; it will usually save time and more information will be sent in advance.
- Remind your young person to check their emails. If they've registered then the details of the event will go to them.
- Prepare for information overload as there's a lot to take in at once. Plan time to review everything a couple of days later.
- Arrange to meet the care leaver contact during your visit. You'll find their information on [propel.org.uk](http://propel.org.uk).
- Discuss with the young person if they want to identify themselves as a care leaver before you attend the event.
- Work with your local university or college; there may be a local network that you can join that discusses upcoming activities and tracks LAYP through school, college and into university.

## SUMMER SCHOOL FOR CARE LEAVERS

The aim of the summer school was to inform care leavers of the educational opportunities available both at further and higher education and support students to make a positive destination. The summer school focused on the support entitlement, including pastoral and financial support, and introduced current care leavers from the university to act as role models communicating non-traditional pathways to education.

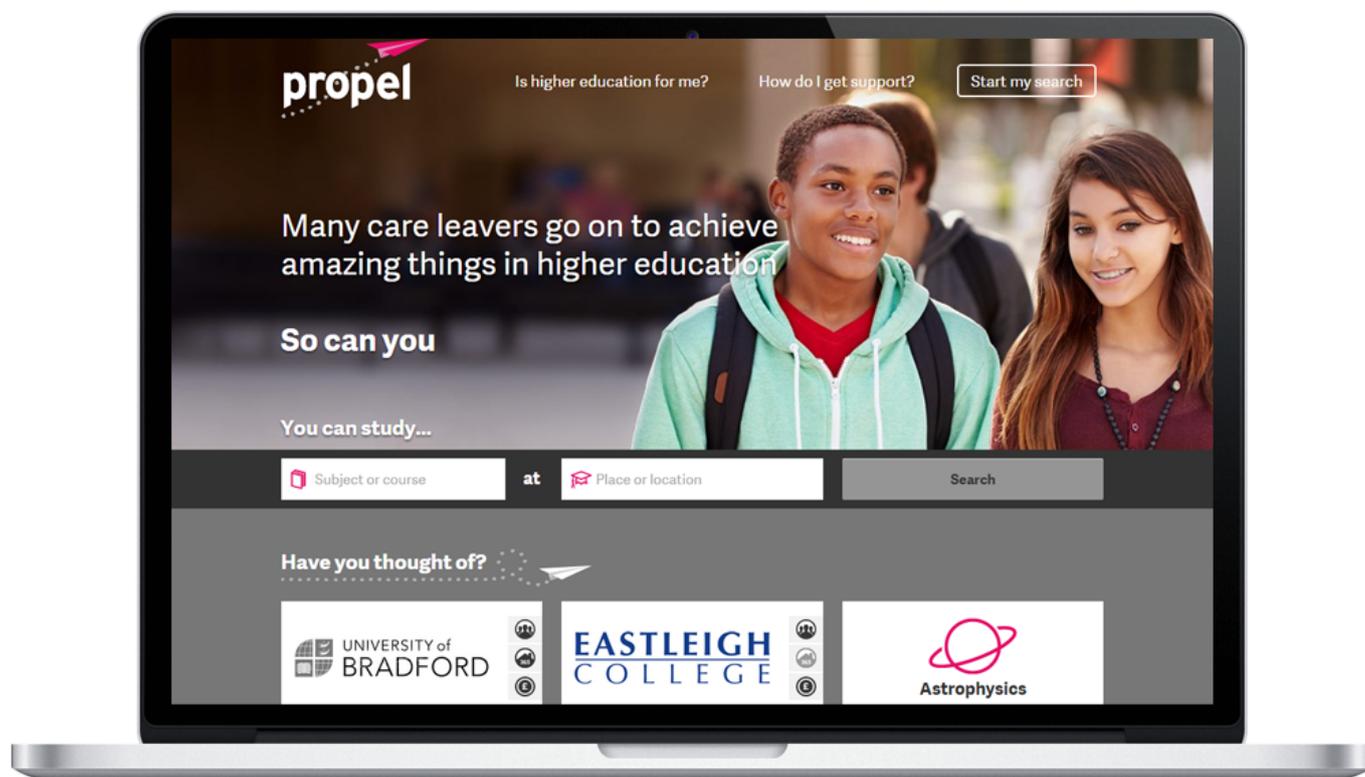
A total of eight young people attended the summer school: four females and four males. The young people were aged between 18 to 23-years-old and were with a range of local authorities: Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford and Buckinghamshire. Five of the young people were in college whilst the other three were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The summer school lasted for two days and one night and included the following elements:

- hopes and fears about university;
- labour market information;
- different pathways into HE;
- campus tour;
- sessions around FE courses and support at Barnfield College as well as a tour of the campus;
- information on student support;
- information about the Students' Union;
- financial support available for care leavers;
- admissions talk;
- advocacy information;
- UCAS and personal statement session;
- future planning session;
- psychology taster session in the driving simulation laboratory; and
- information about follow-up activities.

In addition to this, there were social activities and an evening meal during the first evening. The core aim of offering the above was to provide positive destinations in terms of education opportunities with students progressing to either further or higher education.

# Are YOU on board with Propel...?



Propel.org.uk informs and inspires looked after young people and care leavers considering higher education. It helps them research, compare and access all the support on offer from FE colleges and universities. The site has received over 10,000 visitors in its first 12 months and so far, 300 institutions are represented.

If you're supporting young people in care or care leavers, Propel can show them that care leavers are achieving amazing things in higher education - and that they can too.

## APPLYING FOR THE COURSE, FINANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

Universities and colleges start accepting applications almost a year in advance. In the months leading up to a course there are some important things to consider and to apply for, including the course itself, financial support and living arrangements. We've outlined the basics below, and highlighted how universities and colleges may be able to help.

### UCAS – APPLICATION PROCESS AND IMPORTANT DATES

Applications to higher education courses are made online through UCAS. Students can apply for up to five courses, whether they are at one or five different institutions. There is a lot of information to include on the UCAS application: personal details, education, choices, employment and a personal statement. We would always recommend doing it in bite-sized chunks; log on, complete a section and then go back to it.

The personal statement takes some thinking about. It is an opportunity to convince the university or college to offer them a place. Most schools and colleges will encourage students to start working on this when they return in Year 13 or year 2 in college.

Most importantly we would encourage LAYP and care leavers to tick the box in the care questions on their UCAS application. This information is shared with all of the universities and colleges that they are applying for. Universities and colleges will use it in two ways: 1) to let the applicant know about any additional or specific support that could be available; and 2) to report to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on the number of applicants who tick the box. If a student is uncomfortable ticking the box on their UCAS application then they can always contact the university independently after they receive their offer

Students can apply from 1 September of the year before they want to start. UCAS guarantee that universities will consider applications made by the relevant deadline:

**15 October:** deadline for applications to universities of Oxford and Cambridge and for most courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine.

**15 January:** deadline for most undergraduate courses.

**24 March:** deadline for applications to some art and design courses.

Usefully UCAS keep these dates the same every year, whatever day of the week they fall on.

Many universities will continue to consider applications submitted to UCAS until 20 September of the year they want to study.

### Clearing

Clearing is like an annual sale where universities and colleges offer spaces that are left on their courses. Traditionally this has started from A level results day in August, however many institutions now accept clearing applications from July.

Offers are often made quickly over the phone or face to face and students do not have to be signed up to UCAS before receiving a verbal offer. Available courses will be listed on UCAS and university and college websites, along with phone numbers and usually entry criteria. It is always worth contacting a university or college as occasionally they reduce the entry criteria.

Universities and colleges will usually consider all current applicants under any revised criteria. If an applicant is rejected from a university they are unlikely to get back on to the same course through clearing. They will however be able to apply to other courses and institutions.

### Personal Statements

As part of the application form, students need to provide a statement. This should outline their motivation for choosing a subject area, demonstrate their skills and experience, and show what they would contribute to their chosen university or college.

Personal statements require students to sell themselves. This can be hard if self-esteem is low. Start by listing the reasons they want to do a particular subject then move on to mapping out things that the young person is good at and has achieved. This can help generate appropriate content for their statement.

UCAS have a host of guides and resources as well as a webpage dedicated to care leavers. Their parents' guide also has some really helpful advice and guidance on the process.

Website: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

# Why tick the box in Apply?

## A guide for students

If you have lived in care, either with foster carers or in a children's home (or in Scotland under a home supervision order), and you're applying for higher education, we would encourage you to tick the box in the care questions on your UCAS application.

- ✓ **Tick the box** so that your chosen universities and colleges can let you know what additional support you are entitled to, if you wish to take advantage of this. This could include finance, accommodation and other support services.
- ✓ **Tick the box** so that admissions staff at the universities and colleges you are applying to can consider your achievements and potential in context.
- ✓ **Tick the box** and the universities and colleges will treat this information in confidence.

## And don't worry...

- your chosen university will only share your information with those who need to know, and who you agree should be informed
- your application will not be disadvantaged in any way. Legislation on equality and discrimination is watertight

If initially you don't want to take advantage of the help and support you are entitled to, it is still useful to know exactly what is available and to keep updated, if you decide you need additional help or support at a later date.

There are a number of organisations across the UK that can help you with information, advice and resources.

### The Who Cares? Trust

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk) (England)

### Who Cares? Scotland

[www.whocaresscotland.org](http://www.whocaresscotland.org) (Scotland)

### Voices From Care

[www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk](http://www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk) (Wales)

### Voices of Young People in Care

[www.voypic.org](http://www.voypic.org) (Northern Ireland)



## STUDENT FINANCE

These are the main funding streams available to care leavers who go on to higher education at a college or university:

- Student Finance England;
- Local authority financial support;
- University scholarships and bursaries; and
- Other sources of finance.

This support does not cover college-based level 3 programmes such as an access course. There is usually some financial support available, however it will depend on the age and eligibility of the student and the college they apply to. We would recommend speaking to the college for more information.

On average care leavers are eligible for around £9,866 of core support in each year they progress through their course. The amount of additional support varies dramatically depending on the level of support received from the local authority and university. It is still a bit of a postcode lottery. The table opposite indicates the level of support available for 2016 entry for a student not living with parents, outside London.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Maintenance loan	£8,200	£8,200	£7,756
HE bursary (minimum local authority support)	£666	£666	£667
University scholarship*	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,866</b>	<b>£9,866</b>	<b>£9,423</b>

This is based on the average scholarship offered to care leavers by universities.

### Student Finance England

Government support offered to eligible students going on to higher education. It consists of loans for tuition fees and living costs.

Students can apply online when the application service opens, usually around February. It is recommended to apply before the deadline to guarantee that funding is in place for the start of their course. The Maintenance Loan is paid to students in three payments, usually at the start of each term.

Loans are not paid back until students have graduated (or left the course) and are earning over £21,000 a year.

Repayments are usually deducted directly from pay, like tax. Unlike any other loans, repayments are dependent on how much is earned and not how much is owed.

### Potential help for sanctuary seekers and those not settled in the UK.

A new eligibility category for higher education student support was introduced for the 2016/17 academic year. This states that students who meet either of the following criteria are eligible to apply for Student Finance England loans:

- applicants under the age of 18 who have lived in the UK for at least seven years (including three years' lawful ordinary residence);
- applicants aged 18 years and above who have either spent at least half their life in the UK or at least 20 years in the UK (including three years' lawful ordinary residence).

For sanctuary seekers who don't fit these criteria, Article 26 (a project of the Helena Kennedy Foundation) can provide help, advice and possible scholarships. For more information visit: [www.article26.hkf.org.uk](http://www.article26.hkf.org.uk).

Care Leavers will be assessed as independent students. This means that their parents' household income is not considered or required during the application. They will have to provide evidence that they have been looked after or been given accommodation by their local authority. Usually they'll be asked to send a letter from their local council or care authority.

Students can access support from their university or college's advice centre or student union.

There are also organisations that provide support for care leavers and students who are estranged from their families, including the Stand Alone website: [www.standalone.org.uk](http://www.standalone.org.uk)

For more information on what's available to all students and how to apply visit: [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)

Additional maintenance may be available to help towards living costs if the student:

- is a single parent;
- qualifies for Disability Living Allowance;
- qualifies for housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit; or
- is deaf and qualifies for Disabled Students' Allowances.



### Local authority financial support

Local authorities have a legal obligation to support all young people who can be classified as former relevant children up to the age of 25 years old. The Children Act 1989 'Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers' states that a higher education bursary of £2,000 should be provided for the duration of a higher education programme and that accommodation must be provided during vacation periods.

Many local authorities provide support over and above this amount. This can help cover accommodation costs, travel support and a weekly or monthly allowance.

It's valuable to get the financial support outlined early on and written in the student's pathway plan or personal education plan. It's also recommended to consider what happens if a student needs to re-sit a year. We often find that care leavers take a little longer to complete a degree and it's useful to outline how and what the local authority will support.

### University scholarships and bursaries

Colleges and universities who charge over £6,000 for their tuition fees must also offer financial support for those students most in need. This usually takes the form of a package of scholarships or bursaries and may include a specific scholarship for care leavers. Each university and college has their own package, each with different criteria and their own application processes. Usefully each university's profile on [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk) includes information on any specific funding and links to their fees and funding web pages.

### Other sources of finance

There are a number of independent charities and organisations who may provide support for specific groups of students in further or higher education.

**Unite Foundation** – the Unite Foundation provides free student accommodation and a generous annual scholarship to young people in the UK who aspire to a degree. In particular, the Foundation wants to help students who have come through the care system and who do not get any help from their parents or are facing other challenging home circumstances. These scholarships are offered through specific partner universities. For more information visit [www.unitefoundation.co.uk](http://www.unitefoundation.co.uk)

**Article 26** – this is a project of the Helen Kennedy Foundation. The main aim of Article 26 is to promote access to higher education for people who have fled persecution and sought asylum in the UK. They have a variety of advice and support available and provide a number of bursary opportunities through participating universities. For more information visit [www.article26.hkf.org.uk](http://www.article26.hkf.org.uk)

### HELP TO LOOK OUT FOR FROM UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

There is often a range of support available from universities and colleges to guide students through the application process. This might include:

#### Interview support

Some institutions offer preparatory interview sessions as this has been a stumbling block for care leavers in the past. It might be something that you can offer closer to home.

#### Support for UCAS or SFE applications

Universities can sign up to be UCAS support centres, meaning that they will provide support to complete the UCAS application form. Many care leaver support teams or student finance advisers may also help with applications for student finance.

#### Applicant days

Universities and colleges may run days specifically for applicants. These can include more detailed subject information, campus tours, information on student finance and scholarships and student accommodation. Parents and families are often included in these events.

#### Priority for care leavers in compact schemes or summer schools

Some universities run summer schools or compact schemes that may lead to reduced entry requirements. This can be really valuable for care leavers and often they will be a priority group for this type of activity.

#### 365 day accommodation

Universities and college have recognised that it's important for some students to know that they can stay with them all year round. Many will now offer to provide accommodation over the summer period.



## ACCOMMODATION

It's important to discuss accommodation options early.

Most universities will provide or recommend specific student accommodation or halls of residence. This is usually in the form of a room in a shared flat, although standards and arrangements will vary from place to place. The benefit is that students will be living in a community with others, often with security and support on site. Rent payments are usually set up to coincide with student loan payments and often all utilities including Wi-Fi and insurance are included, which makes budgeting and money management a little easier.

Many universities will provide care leavers with accommodation 365 days a year, which is useful to know if they want to stay over the holiday periods.

Understandably some care leavers prefer to set up a more permanent home in their own flat nearby. Whilst this is great for independence and consistency it can make it difficult for some people to integrate into university life. For those who haven't lived independently before, acclimatising to both university and independent living can be a step too far. If you are going to support someone to look for their own place it is always worth contacting the university accommodation team for a list of approved landlords.

Be prepared to support with the payment of deposits and administration charges. If the local authority is not going to be able to contribute, let the student know as soon as possible so they have time to save. Some universities may waive deposits and charges for students in financial difficulty.

A potential stumbling block for care leavers can be the requirement of a guarantor for accommodation. Some universities and colleges are willing to be a guarantor or waive the requirement for care experienced students. This is particularly the case where there is a care leaver bursary that could be retained if needed.

## Hints and tips

- Register for the UCAS monthly parent newsletter, which contains updates and information to help you keep young people on track.
- Identifying as a care leaver on the UCAS application form is a good way to find out about the support available at the universities and colleges that are being applied to.
- Care leavers often apply to university later on. This doesn't necessarily mean they have to wait until clearing as many universities will accept applications beyond the official 15 January deadline.
- Prepare students for interviews, auditions, tests or portfolio checks. Universities and colleges will often provide extra support and guidance in preparation.
- It's rare for most students to have ever had thousands of pounds in their bank so provide budget planning advice before they start university, to help ensure it lasts the full term.
- Check if 365 day accommodation needs to be agreed at the start of term. Sorting it early can give reassurance but may also be restricting if a student decides to travel or work away over the summer. Find out the deadline for obtaining summer accommodation so you can be flexible.
- Sanctuary seeking students may now be eligible for Student Finance England loans, following a change in 2016. Check to see if young people you're supporting may be eligible.
- Look out for compact schemes or opportunities to get involved with a university that might lead to a reduced offer. This is particularly useful for students who are worried about getting the required grades.



## PREPARING FOR FRESHERS' WEEK

First year students are fondly referred to as freshers at university. Most institutions will put on an induction or freshers' week for new students. It's a week before teaching commences that includes lots of useful and often vital sessions to get students registered, orientated and set up on campus. In the run up to freshers' week there are some things that you can do to help young people transition to university or college as seamlessly as possible.

### PATHWAY PLAN

Invite university or college staff to pathway planning meetings. Once your young person has decided on an institution involve the care leaver support contact as much as possible. A great way to do this is to include them in the care leavers pathway planning meetings and making it a policy to do so.

Consider any existing support that has been in place, including counselling, mental health provision or learning support. Can this be duplicated at college or university? Be clear on the support provision available, who will provide what, and ensure that the relevant support is in place for the start of term.

Use this time to plan ahead, agree a number of meetings throughout the year as well as back up plans in case things start to go off course. It's important to talk about data sharing: work out what information the university can reasonably provide about a student's progression and how they will alert you if they have any concerns.

### DATA SHARING

Set up an agreement between the student and university to clearly identify who can be informed of their circumstances while ensuring confidentiality. Universities are using these agreements more widely, so they might come to you with one.

We understand that local authorities might require evidence of return on investment and may be keen to know that a student is attending and/or progressing in their course. This can be difficult and will depend on how each institution monitors attendance, their policy on sharing progression data, and resources for collating the information. Some institutions agree to confirm if they have seen or met with a student, or might provide a copy of transcript at the end of the year – all with the student's consent of course.

### FINANCE PACKAGE

Be clear what the local authority is going to offer, and how and when it will be paid. Put it in writing and if at all possible get sign off to confirm that the level of funding will be maintained for the duration of the course. Include a back-up plan in case the student requires a re-sit year or a false start. Student Finance England will support an additional year and we've found that care leavers often need it.

Outline the support that will be available during the vacation period, remembering that local authorities are required to provide accommodation. Initially students often plan to head back to their home town but, as their first year progresses, plans might change. Ensure the support in place is flexible to the students' needs, especially if they take on work or internships or unpaid placements over the summer.

No one wants to move into a new place with no money, especially during freshers' week, when most of the social activities take place. Plan payments and support care leavers with budgeting to ensure they have money for the first food shop or to join in freshers' activities to help them settle in.

If the local authority is going to pay for accommodation directly, contact the accommodation team to arrange payment via invoice.

### CHECK THE PAPERWORK

Students are often required to complete a number of steps before they arrive on campus. They will be sent emails or packages through the post that tell them what to do. The more they do in advance the easier the first weeks of term will be. The steps could include:

- uploading a photograph for their student card;
- enrolling or registering online;
- getting access to a university or college email account or system;
- downloading their induction timetable;
- arranging a meeting with the care leaver support team; and
- ordering a ticket for travel or car parking.



## GET READY

Spend some time over the summer planning what's needed when the young person goes to university or college. Here are some things that we think are useful:

**ID** – a passport, driving licence or birth certificate might be required during registration. Proof of age might also be needed to access Students' Union activities.

**Proof of qualifications** – original certificates might be required for GCSEs and A levels or equivalents as part of registration.

**Student bank account** – a bank account is required to receive student finance. Many banks offer specific student accounts which have preferential rates.

**Homeware** – they may need kitchenware, bedding and other essentials if they are moving into accommodation. Check the accommodation paperwork to see what's included.

**Study aids** – these can include laptops, notepads, pens and other items to help them study most effectively.

**Course-specific equipment** – there might be specific items that are required for the course such as text books, lab coats, tracksuits or uniforms. Double check any induction paperwork so you know in advance.

**Doctors** – if they are moving out of area it's recommended to change GP. Students often get ill in the first few weeks of term as people come together from across the country. Having a GP in place can make things easier, especially if a young person has an ongoing medical condition.

## HELP TO LOOK OUT FOR FROM UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

In addition to the support available during their course, universities may offer specific support to help transition.

**Welcome week meetings** – care leaver support teams will often invite care leavers to meet with them in the first week or so of term. This is useful to ensure they get to know a friendly face. It can also be linked to the care leaver scholarship so students have an extra incentive to attend.

**Help with moving in** – some universities will assist with moving in, from moving the boxes to taking students for their first shop. If there's a chance the young people might have to do it alone, contact the university to see if someone can help.

**Freshers' week wristband** – as part of the care leaver support package, universities or colleges may provide a free pass to freshers' activities. This is useful whilst waiting for the arrival of a student loan and it's great for helping integration into university life.

**Welcome packs** – universities or colleges might provide a welcome card, pack or voucher as care leavers move into student accommodation.

**Buddy systems** – returning students will volunteer to mentor, support or buddy new students during the first weeks of term. This can be great for any students who lack confidence or need some help orientating themselves in the first few weeks.

## Hints and tips

- Include the university or college in your pathway planning meetings early on. This will help ensure a full team approach and enable full use of the support available.
- Look at setting up a data sharing agreement with the university or college (they might already have one that can be easily adapted). This will help ensure that you can support the student as quickly as possible when needed.
- Clearly set out what financial support the local authority will provide for the full duration of the course. Put this in writing so the student and senior management know what has been agreed.
- Discuss and agree a support plan should your young person have any issues, such as re-sitting or extending their course in any way.
- Help them to arrange personal ID and all the relevant paperwork well in advance. ID can sometimes be an issue for care leavers so aim to get it sorted early.
- Help them think about how they will travel to university each day.
- Talk to them about spare time and how they will fill it. Unlike at school, students at university often have a lot of free time (to study).
- Direct them to touch base with the university care leaver support team. If possible arrange to meet up before they start the course.



## SUPPORT DURING STUDY

### UNIVERSITY SUPPORT THAT'S SPECIFICALLY FOR CARE LEAVERS

A variety of research projects have identified a number of key areas of support that can be invaluable for care leavers. Most universities or colleges that specifically support care leavers will offer the following key elements – and if they are not in place then it's worth looking at how you could fill the gaps.

The basics include:

#### Named key contact

There should be a single named person within a higher education institution to support care leavers. This key contact will be your first port of call for any queries regarding young people in your care. They should take the time to listen and be a student's advocate as and when needed. You can find their details on [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk).

#### Accommodation 365 days per year

Care leavers may be concerned that they will not have accommodation in the college or university town over the lengthy vacations. Universities and colleges should guarantee accommodation over the summer (not necessarily in halls of residence) to take the worry away.

#### Money

As previously mentioned, some universities and colleges provide additional funds or a scholarship to care experienced students. At the least there should be advice on how students can access extra funding as a care leaver.

#### Support

Whether this is the key contact, a buddy scheme or centralised student support, most universities and colleges will ensure that relevant support is available for care experienced students as and when they need it.

Additional support can include:

#### Signposting

The key contact should know the range of student services available and who to refer students to when needed. This can be really handy, and means that care leavers can always start by going to one point of contact.

#### Touching base

After the first couple of weeks it's worth touching base to check that they are fully registered on the right course, they have received a full timetable with all their current modules, they have completed all necessary administrative details, and they have been entered into relevant examinations or assessments.

#### Summer storage

Students sometimes need somewhere secure to leave their belongings over the summer, especially if they are visiting, holidaying or working away. Some universities provide space or pay for self storage.

#### Student ambassadors

Care experienced students may be invited to become student reps or ambassadors. This can help immerse them in student life and develop life skills that could help their employability at the end of their studies.

#### Advice and guidance about life after university

Agrowing number of institutions are running 'life after university' events, and assisting with goal-setting and planning, to help support care leavers transition post-university.

#### Graduation

Some care leavers are so preoccupied in preparing for life at the end of their course that they miss the celebration. Make a fuss, attend their graduation and celebrate with them. Some universities also contribute to the costs of gown hire, photographs and even travel.

### CARE LEAVER SUPPORT IN SUNDERLAND

*The 'big sister' approach that we are able to offer our care leavers, together with the support from management, has the biggest impact. Building rapport through welcome meetings and consistent communications, we let our care experienced students know where we are, for when and if they need us.*

*When a student comes for help we take a full cross-institutional approach. Working out a package of support for the individual might include their personal tutor, financial advisers, counselling team, wellbeing team and the local authority contact. Between us we set out a plan to guide the student back on track, set out clear interventions, actions and milestones to aim for. This support set up has helped get several students through the dreaded self-sabotage.*

*Sometimes support is more immediate and unexpected: I remember once turning up to help a student move, only to find they hadn't packed and still had dishes in the sink. I rang my manager and they agreed; I had to buy rubber gloves, boxes and black sacks and help get them sorted. Since then we've provided boxes for any students who needed to move over the summer. Most of them have managed to pack themselves. Cheering them on as they cross the stage at graduation makes it all worth it.*

## UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Most universities and colleges have a wealth of support that is available to all students throughout their studies:

**Counselling and wellbeing** – more and more institutions have on-campus counselling teams qualified to support with family issues, mental health, grief, anxiety, stress and more.

**Nurses** – again often on campus, nurses can advise on sexual health, smoking cessation and general health. They rarely replace a doctor and can't usually be used for medical advice for illness.

**Disability and learning support** – this targets students with disabilities including dyslexia and dyspraxia. Evidence shows that a high proportion of care leavers will be diagnosed with additional learning needs.

**Careers and employability** – universities and colleges usually offer careers advice and guidance, part-time and vacation work, pay and voluntary placements, application coaching and skills sessions, all to help with career decisions.

**Childcare** – universities and colleges may provide childcare on campus or have recommended providers nearby.

**LGBT** – universities and colleges should have dedicated support for LGBT students which can include networks, societies, student services and the Students' Union.

## SELF-SABOTAGE

Self-sabotage is behaviour that interferes with, and eventually disrupts, a person's long-term goals. We've found that care leavers, in particular, often fall into this trap at some point during their student life.

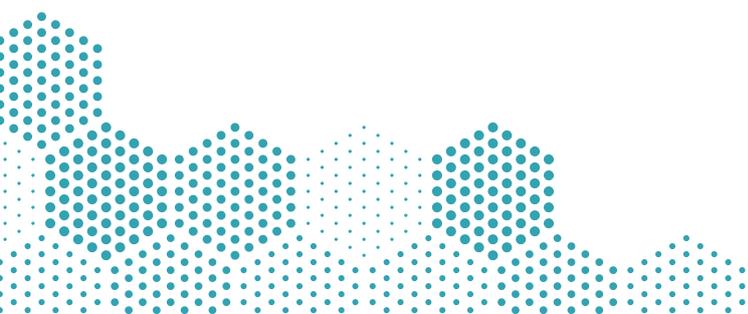
It can be caused by self-doubt, fear of change, a sense that they can't/don't fit in, distrust that good things could ever last or, worse of all, a belief that they don't deserve success. Self-sabotage and mental health issues can be a very potent combination that completely undermines the ability to make the most of opportunities.

The signs to watch for include:

- failure to attend meetings;
- missing assignment deadlines;
- not attending classes;
- emotional breakdown;
- inappropriate behaviour in class;
- exacerbation of mental ill health; and
- simple procrastination.

It takes a certain amount of self-motivation to get through these spates of self-sabotage but there are things that can be done to help.

- Know the signs and be in contact with students often enough to recognise when they might need help.
- Take a full team approach to supporting the student and get everyone involved including the university, local authority and family if appropriate. The student's personal tutor or programme leader can help if catching up is needed.
- Also include university or college counsellors or retention teams. They regularly see students in similar situations and will have advice and expertise.
- Talk about the reason they entered the course, their end goal (whatever it is) and set out the small steps needed to get there. From then on work on the small steps, one lecture, assignment or semester at a time.
- Set up frequent meetings and stick to them. Use the whole team, with the college or university staff doing one week and you the other, and update each other after each meeting.
- Make sure the care leaver feels supported and secure. By making sure they know you believe in them they will increase their belief in themselves and be motivated to help themselves.



## WHO TO TALK TO?

### WHO TO ASK FOR INSIDE A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

Universities and colleges can be vast with an array of job titles and team names. We've put together some information to help you find who you need to speak to as quickly as possible.

**Care leaver contact (also known as vulnerable student support)** – this is the key contact for students who are or have been in care. Helpfully the named contact and their contact details will be listed at [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk).

**Student recruitment, widening participation or outreach teams** – these teams provide activities on and off campus for prospective students.

**Student support and financial advice** – ask for these teams to get support, advice and guidance on student finance, fees and scholarships.

**Accommodation/residential services** – these teams will help find student accommodation or approved landlords.

**Students' Union** – the SU will provide independent welfare advice and guidance as well as a series of activities and interventions to acclimatise to university life.

**Registry/admissions/student records** – these teams can provide information on applications, entry criteria, enrolment and fees.

### WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

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

NNECL is the national network for people supporting looked after young people and care leavers to progress into and through further or higher education.

Following a large-scale national consultation NNECL has adopted four strategic themes: we will CONNECT, INFORM, SUPPORT and CHAMPION the work of practitioners across the sector.

Local and regional groups enable practitioners to share effective practice, challenges and changing priorities, and to feed practitioners' voices into a national conversation. These diverse voices drive NNECL's priorities while a regular newsletter, our annual conference and the online 'hub' reflect the needs and priorities of professionals across the sector.

NNECL is currently going through its biggest evolution so far: to gain charitable status. This is part of a strategy to secure long-term sustainability for the network. An interim board of trustees is overseeing the transition to a new formal membership structure by 2020.

The trustees lead the strategic development of NNECL, oversee its charitable status and activities, and set the priorities for the NNECL team. A new national forum will facilitate the practitioner and organisational collaboration that is at the centre of NNECL's work.

We aim for consistency and indeed growth during this time and have some big ambitions for the next two years. Please visit [NNECL.org](http://NNECL.org) or sign up to our newsletter for updates on our progress.

Website: [www.NNECL.org](http://www.NNECL.org)

### BECOME

Become, formerly the Who Cares? Trust, provides help, support and advice to young people in care and young care leavers so they can recognize and nurture their potential and take control of their lives. The organisation helps, improve the care system by ensuring that young people's voices and perspectives shape policy and service provision. They empower and support young people in care by:

- using their expertise and influence with policy makers;
- running projects which directly benefit young people, including one-to-one and group work;
- providing information and magazines for young people in care;
- offering advice and support to callers to the Care Advice Line, on issues such as rights and entitlements, housing, education and wellbeing; and
- delivering young person-led training to professionals.

Website: [www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

**Propel** – Become have developed [propel.org.uk](http://propel.org.uk), a website to inform and inspire looked after young people and care leavers considering Further and Higher Education. Alongside advice and case studies, [propel.org.uk](http://propel.org.uk) allows care experienced students to easily compare the support on offer at universities and colleges across the UK.

Website: [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk)



### **National Care Leaver Association (CLA)**

The CLA is a user-led charity run by care leavers for care leavers. It aims to bring together the voices of care leavers of all ages to improve the current care system, improve the quality of life of care leavers throughout their lives and improve society's perception of people who have been in care as children. The CLA have developed a network of care leavers around the UK and use their strength as a national care leaver organisation to shape care and leaving care policy in England and Wales.

Website: [www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com)

### **The National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH)**

NAVSH is a network of headteachers of virtual schools from across the country. It has been introduced to improve the educational outcomes for looked after children. NAVSH work with partners and commission research to ensure that educational needs of looked after children are better understood.

Website: [www.navsh.org.uk](http://www.navsh.org.uk)

### **Catch22**

Catch22 is a not-for-profit business with a social mission, aiming to build resilience and aspirations in people and communities nationally. Catch22 has a whole life cycle approach and operates in four areas: education, employability, supporting young people and families, and justice services. The following are some key Catch22 projects that impact care leavers and looked after young people:

**Care leavers research** – Catch22 funds and gets involved with a variety of research projects across different aspects of leaving care, working in partnership with young people, universities, local authorities, public bodies and international organisations. These projects have included 'LIFT Children's Homes Project', 'Corporate Parenting', 'Head, Heart and Hands', and 'Siblings Together'.

Website: [www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/young-people-and-families/care-leavers-research/](http://www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/young-people-and-families/care-leavers-research/)

**National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF)** – this national forum brings together over 80 local authority leaving care services for professional and practice development and aims to achieve the best outcomes for young people making the transition to adulthood.

Website: [www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/young-people-and-families/national-leaving-care-benchmarking-forum/](http://www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/young-people-and-families/national-leaving-care-benchmarking-forum/)

Email: [nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk)

**Young People's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF)** – this involves young people aged 16 and above from local authorities that are members of the NLCBF. The YPBMF works alongside the NLCBF to complete annual work plans with the aims of improving understanding of children in care, improving services, and producing advice, information resources and participation opportunities for young people.

### **Article 26 and the Helen Kennedy Foundation**

The main aim of Article 26, which is a project of the Helen Kennedy Foundation, is to promote access to higher education for people who have fled persecution and sought asylum in the UK. There is a range of advice and support available as well as a number of bursary opportunities at participating universities.

Website: [www.article26.hkf.org.uk](http://www.article26.hkf.org.uk)

### **Stand Alone**

Stand Alone is a charity that supports and raises awareness about adults that are estranged from their family or children. Stand Alone offers support services to prevent estranged adults becoming vulnerable. Their student support portal has advice and information about support, finance and accommodation for estranged students.

Website: [www.standalone.org.uk](http://www.standalone.org.uk)

### **Student Loan Company – Vulnerable Students Stakeholder Group (VSSG)**

The Vulnerable Students Stakeholder Group (VSSG) advises and supports the operational delivery of specialist support to vulnerable students. The purpose of the group is to:

- highlight issues and analyse data regarding the application processing of Grants for Dependents (GFD) and support to other vulnerable groups requiring specialist support at key points in the annual application cycle;
- provide specialist input into information, advice and guidance (IAG); and
- provide input into any proposed changes and improvements to the services to vulnerable students.

The VSSG meets three or four times a year and the key outputs from the most recent meeting are updated on their website: [www.sl.co.uk/stakeholders-partners/stakeholder-working-groups.aspx](http://www.sl.co.uk/stakeholders-partners/stakeholder-working-groups.aspx)



## GLOSSARY

### BACHELOR DEGREE

The academic title that students are awarded on successful completion of an undergraduate degree course. Graduates are allowed to add letters after the end of their name depending on their area of study:

**BA (Hons)** – a bachelor of arts with honours

**BSc (Hons)** – a bachelor of science with honours

**BEng (Hons)** – a bachelor of engineering with honours

### BURSARY

A type of scholarship which contributes towards tuition fees and/or living costs for students at university.

### CAMPUS

The area of land on which university or college buildings are located. On-campus activities take place at the university/college while off-campus activities take place elsewhere.

### CLEARING

An annual 'sale' where universities and colleges offer spaces that are left on their courses. Traditionally this has started from A level results day in August but many institutions now accept clearing applications from July.

### DEGREE

A higher education qualification. An undergraduate degree (also known as a first degree) may be called a bachelor's degree. A postgraduate degree is studied after a first degree and may be called a master's degree.

### DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

A degree apprenticeship involves a real job where the employer invests in training and the employee gains a first degree during the course of the apprenticeship. Apprentices work for 30 hours a week.

### DISSERTATION

A written project of several thousand words on a specific subject, usually completed in the final year of a degree course.

### FACULTY

A division of a university or college, usually organised according to a related group of subjects. Faculties may be made up of several schools, departments, teams or institutes.

### FOUNDATION DEGREE

A vocational qualification in higher education that is equivalent to two thirds of a bachelor's degree. Foundation degrees are usually allow students to study full- or part-time.

### FRESHERS

First year students at university.

### FRESHERS' WEEK

Most institutions will put on an induction or freshers' week for new students. It's a week before teaching commences that includes lots of sessions to get students registered, orientated and set up on campus.

### GRADUATE

A person who has successfully completed a degree course and been awarded their degree.

### HESA

The Higher Education Statistics Agency. It collects, processes and publishes data about higher education in the UK.

### HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE (HNC)

A work-related higher education course that takes one year to complete and is equivalent to one third of a bachelor's degree. Unlike

some degrees an HNC course is vocationally focused and can lead straight to a particular job. An HNC can be topped up to an HND with a further year of study.

### HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND)

A work-related higher education course that takes two years to complete and is equivalent to two thirds of a bachelor's degree. HND courses can be followed with a one-year 'top up' course to convert the qualification to an honours degree.

### MATURE STUDENT

A person who is 21-years-old or over on entry to higher education.

### OPEN DAYS

Events put on by colleges and universities for prospective students to come and visit. There are usually opportunities to speak to academics, tour facilities, visit accommodation and get a feel for the institution. They usually take place in June-July and September-October each year.

### PROSPECTUS

A publication with information about a college or university and their courses. It's available via their website, over the telephone or during visits.

### TOP-UP COURSE

A one-year course that is equivalent to the final year of a degree programme. Students can progress to a top-up course from a foundation degree or HND to gain a bachelor's degree.





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