Thank you for joining

- Whilst this webinar has been pre-recorded, we are available live to answer your questions
- Please post your questions using the chat box to the side of the webinar screen. We're available to answer your questions throughout the webinar
- Some information presented could be specific to the universities delivering the presentation
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ADVANCING ACCESS | From the RUSSELL GROUP

Finding and making the most of the support before & after entry at university



Coming up

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Introduction

Pre-application

Post-application

At university support

5 key takeaways

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Introduction



HE example definitions

Care experienced - you have been in care of the Local Authority for three months or more* at any point in your life**

*some universities may not specify the duration of care

** some universities may include students that have been under special guardianship or kinship care

Care Leaver - you are currently or have been in care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more, ending after your 16th birthday

Estranged - you have no communication with and do not receive any support from either of your biological or adoptive parents*, and this is likely to remain permanent.

***** Some universities may include wider family members who have been involved in their care

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Pre-application



Pathways to Higher Education

- Once your students have begun to look at the University and courses which might suit them, they might want to contact enquiry teams at their chosen HEI to discuss any questions they have. For example, the young person themselves can contact the UOB enquiry team via: choosebristol-ug@bristol.ac.uk

- Some universities will have a named contact for Care Experienced students. At UOB, we have a dedicated mailbox for enquires via: care-leavers@bristol.ac.uk

- Universities run lots of opportunities for young people to engage with them.
  - Long term partnerships with external organisations
  - Summer Schools
  - Virtual programmes
  - In-person academic sessions

Contextual offers

- Universities and colleges know that every student is different, and that a young person's potential to succeed in higher education is based on more than just grades. They understand that many factors shape the grades you are awarded.
- Different institutions will have different eligibility criteria for contextual offers.
- Universities and colleges use contextual admissions in different ways, and not all of them use it.
- The Sutton Trust has a Contextual Admissions tool for UK universities.

Top tips for teachers and advisors

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- Start conversations early
- Look up courses and entry requirements
- Explore university outreach/widening participation webpages. Most programmes are for Year 12 and some host Year 13.
- Contact the named university contacts with any questions
- Sign up to teacher newsletters
- Tick the care experience question on UCAS if it applies.
- Look into the UCAS application fee waiver for care leavers in the 2027 UCAS cycle.

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Post-application



Information, advice and guidance

Most Russell Group universities have a dedicated contact in their outreach team that is dedicated to supporting care experienced and/or estranged students with applying to their university.

Support provided by the dedicated contacts may include:

- Requesting additional information to assess what support the applicants may be eligible for at university
- Providing advice and guidance on applying to Student Finance as a Care Leaver or estranged student
- Information on bursaries available and eligibility criteria
- Information on accommodation support available
- Introducing applicants to support services at university, for example through pre-entry meetings

Financial support

UCL Care Leaver bursary

- **Bursary amount:** £1,000 per academic year
- **Criteria:** Have been granted independent status by Student Finance due to your Care Leaver status (see full criteria on webpage)
- **Process:** students do not need to apply for the bursary; they just need to meet the eligibility criteria to be automatically assessed for the bursary

Bristol Standalone bursary

- **Bursary amount:** £2,000 per academic year
- **Criteria:** Have been granted independent status by Student Finance due to your Care Leaver status, estrangement, or parent bereavement (see full criteria on webpage)
- **Process:** students do need to apply for the bursary by completing this application form

Accommodation support

Accommodation Bursary at UoN

Bursary amount: For 2026 entry, eligible students received up to a maximum of £12,375 for accommodation at selected university halls of residence during their first year of study at UoN

Criteria: first-year students that have granted independent status by Student Finance due to their Care Leaver status or due to estrangement (see full criteria on webpage)

Process: students do need to apply for the bursary by completing the application form

University of Sheffield enhanced bursary

Bursary amount: Up to £10,000 per year (amount and process of payment depends on where students choose to live)

Criteria: students that have granted independent status by Student Finance due to their Care Leaver status (see full criteria on webpage)

Process: students do need to apply for the bursary by completing the application form

Unite Foundation Scholarships - see webpage for more details

Top tips for teachers and advisors

- Encourage your young people to share their experience with relevant contacts when applying to university
- Remind your young people to check their emails regularly
- Check what financial and accommodation support your young people may be eligible for early in the application process
- Keep updated with deadlines for support available

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At university support



Transition support

- Some universities deliver transition programmes to support students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds with their transition to university

- Some programmes include students that have been in care of the local authority and/or are estranged from their parents within the programme eligibility criteria.

- The **Launch Transition Programme** at the University of Nottingham (UoN): this is a **free** two-day pre-enrolment programme at our University Park Campus in Nottingham which provides targeted support to new UoN students starting in September who have been in receipt of Free School Meals during secondary school, are Care Leavers, or who are estranged



Transition support

Through newly developed transition support The University of Bristol aims to support:

- Black and Asian students
- Mature (21+) students
- Students from lower socioeconomic groups (Free School Meals, students living in IMD quintile 1 or 2 post codes)
- Commuting students
- Students with a disclosed mental health condition

- Mixture of excitement and anxiety for new students
- Support to help settle students into first few weeks & beyond
- Designed for students from specific groups (Widening Participation)
- Co-ordinated support, guidance, community building activities before arrival and in the first few weeks & beyond
- Aimed at building a sense of belonging, networking, and developing confidence in knowing types of support available
- Students encouraged to shape activities through feedback and focus groups



Dedicated support

Many universities offer dedicated support to care experienced and/or estranged students once they enrol at university

- **Key contacts at university:** this may be the same staff member that supported them at application stage, or it may be a new contact within different support teams, e.g. Careers, Support and Wellbeing ect

- **Specific events/activities for these students:** for example, at UoN, our Residential Experience Team organises free events, such as pottery painting, for care experienced and/or estranged students living in university halls. At UoB, the CEES society run regular free events.

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5 key takeaways



5 key takeaways

Encourage your young people to:

- start conversations early to encourage students to sign up for outreach programmes in Year 12
- explore university webpages and external groups dedicated to supporting care experienced and estranged students (Propel, Become, Advancing Access)
- use an email address for their UCAS application that they regularly use
- If they feel able to, share their specific circumstance with/ ask questions to relevant contacts when applying to university
- take advantage of all the support available before and during their time in HE

Thank you for listening

- Please post your questions using the chat box to the side of the webinar screen

- The chat will close in around 5 minutes, you're welcome to continue discussions in the Networking Hall

- Thank you again for attending!