

Care Experienced and Estranged Students' Guide

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Welcome



As you begin your journey with us, I would like to introduce you to University Centre Leeds' support for care experienced and estranged students. Our dedicated team are here to offer you advice and support from the moment you start with us, all the way to your graduation.

We understand that care-experienced and estranged students often face unique challenges as they start their higher education studies. Without proper support, these challenges can make it difficult for students to apply for, enter and remain in higher education. That's why we work directly with students to address these challenges and provide the necessary support to ensure that every student feels like University Centre Leeds is a supportive place to study.

At UC Leeds, we have always been committed to creating an inclusive environment, and this approach continues to this day. We have committed our support to estranged students through the Stand Alone Pledge, and we continue to work with the Care Leaver Covenant to further improve our support provision. We are here to support you every step of the way, and I wish you all the best as you begin your studies at University Centre Leeds.

Definitions

Care Experienced

A care experienced student or care leaver has been in the care of, or been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) for a period of at least 13 weeks before the age of 16, and hasn't reconciled with their parents between leaving care and starting their course.

Estranged Student

An estranged student is aged 25 or under and has been classified as an independent student on the grounds of estrangement by Student Finance. Estranged students are young people studying without the support of a family network, usually due to a long-term breakdown in the relationship with their parents or guardians.



Support at a glance

We have a dedicated contact for care experienced and estranged students, so that you have a point of contact both before you get here and during your studies.

If you have indicated on your UCAS form that you are a care experienced or estranged student, our key contact will automatically be in touch with you. However, you can also contact the team at any time if you have any questions or concerns relating to university life.

We can:

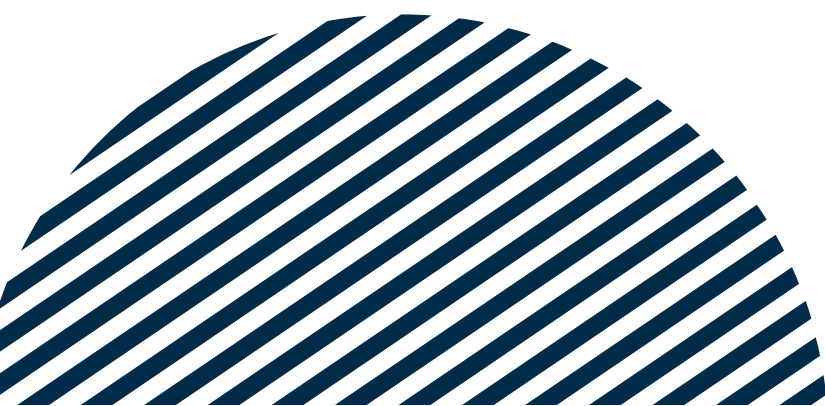
- help with any further questions you may have about our courses and what it's like to study at UC Leeds
- act as a link between you and your local authority
- act as a guarantor for your student accommodation agreements
- facilitate a tailored visit to your campus where we will meet you and discuss what support will be available to you
- meet with you when you start your course
- offer emotional and practical support throughout your studies and direct you to other appropriate services
- offer you tailored budgeting advice that will help you manage your money effectively and meet your essential costs, while still being able to enjoy yourself!

We recognise that you may not want to tell anyone else at the university centre that you are a care experienced or an estranged student. This information will be kept confidential and will only be shared if you give consent to share.

You can contact our team:

Pre-entry named contact: Laura Macgregor laura.macgregor@ucleeds.ac.uk

On-course named contact: Adam Stowe adam.stowe@ucleeds.ac.uk



Funding your studies



Most UK students fund the cost of higher education with a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan from Student Finance. Care experienced and estranged students can get the same support as other students, but your application won't be based on your parent's income. www.gov.uk/student-finance

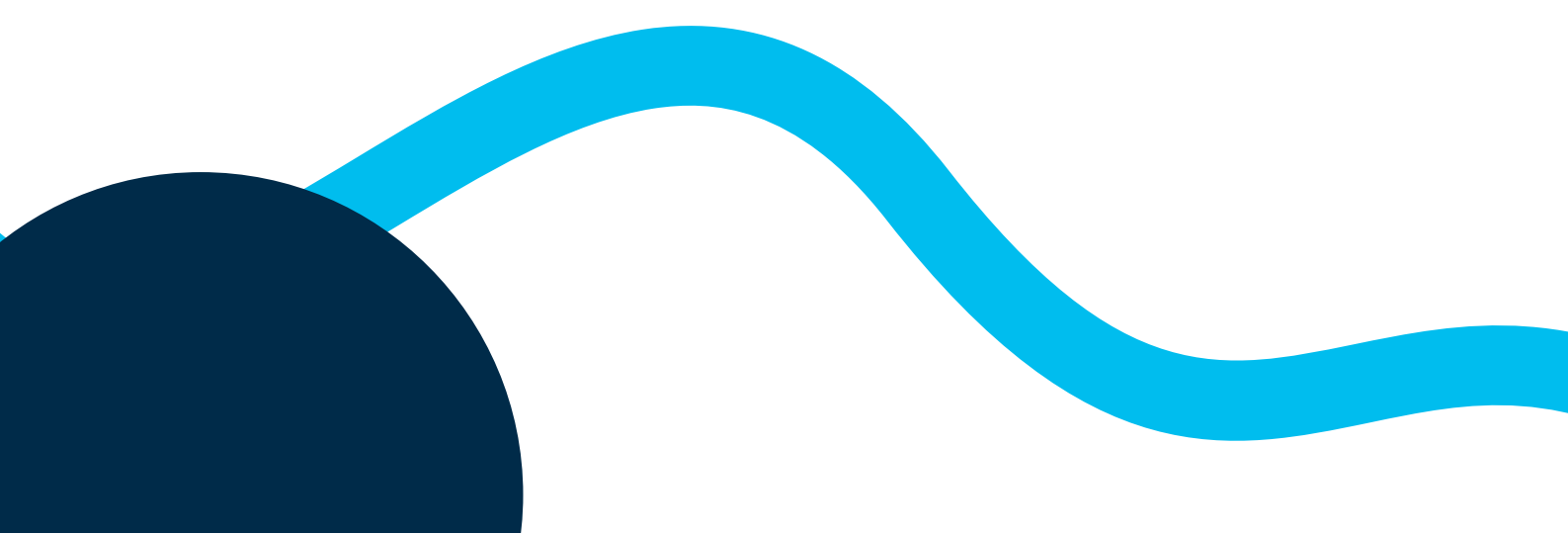
For care experienced students

Student Finance will consider a student care experienced if they have been in the care of, or have been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) for at least 13 weeks before the age of 16. After you have made your application online, Student Finance will ask you to send evidence showing that you were looked after by, or were given accommodation by, your LA.

For estranged students

Student Finance will consider a student estranged if they are permanently estranged from their parents or have not communicated with them for one year before starting their studies. After you have made your application online, Student Finance will request supporting statements from trusted independent parties (such as a teacher, social worker, police officer or GP) as evidence to confirm your estranged status.

The charity StandAlone supports people that are estranged from family. They have a useful Student Support Portal (see URL below) with advice on applying to Student Finance as a care experienced or estranged student. www.standalone.org.uk/students



Financial support

We offer specific financial support for care experienced and estranged students which includes:

- Supporting the cost of interview travel and/or on-course materials (where applicable – up to 50% of costs)
- A yearly bursary (more info below)
- Supporting the cost of graduation gown hire and photographs (up to 50% of costs)

Care Leavers' Bursary / Estranged Students' Bursary

Our bursary offers up to £1,000 per year, on top of any other bursaries or awards you have already secured. To be eligible, we ask for the same evidence you will need to provide to Student Finance England, and applications open in September. You will receive an email with further information.

There is also financial support available to all students (including care experienced and estranged students) including:

University Centre Leeds Bursary

The University Centre Leeds Bursary provides students with a cash bursary of up to £500 per academic year if they have had their income assessed by Student Finance. For more information, please visit ucl Leeds.ac.uk/fees-finance/bursary/

Hardship Fund

The Hardship Fund aims to support students who find themselves in financial difficulties. The fund is intended to act as a safety net for those in need and can help alleviate unexpected financial hardship.

For more information, you can contact our team hestudentsupport@ucl Leeds.ac.uk

Accommodation

We understand how important it is for you to find the right accommodation to study, socialise and mix with other like-minded students.

UC Leeds can act as a guarantor for your accommodation agreements in all years of study. To access this, please contact laura.macgregor@ucleeds.ac.uk

Whilst we do not have access to our own accommodation, please see below for details of providers where many of our students choose to stay within Leeds.

Abodus - The Foundry

abodusstudents.com/cities/leeds/the-foundry/

YPP - Ribbon Residence

ypp.co.uk/building/29-clarendon-road

Prime Student Living - Sycamore House

primestudentliving.com/leeds/

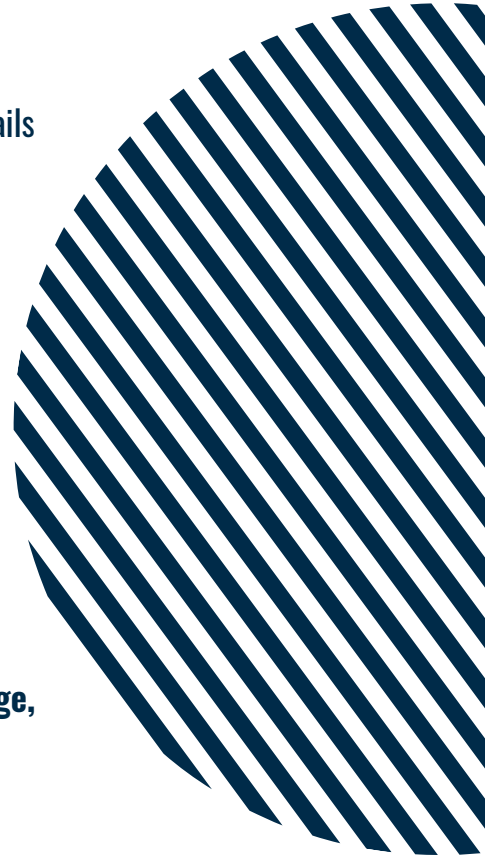
Unite - Concept Place, The Priory, Hepworth Lodge, Clarence Dock Village, White Rose View

unitestudents.com/leeds

Unipol Housing - One Mill Street

unipolhousing.org.uk/developments/one-mill-street-foundry-lane-city-centre-leeds-ls9/

Other providers include Park Lane Properties, Pickard Properties and more that you can contact directly.



Student support

Additional Learning Support

Study Support

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Careers and Progression

Welfare

In addition to your named contact mentioned below, you will have access to coaching tutors for study support, and our learning support team can help with alternative assessment arrangements, applications for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) or help you improve your study skills.

You will have access to mental health support, professional counselling and advice should you want someone to talk to confidentially.

Our progression and careers support can provide you with face-to-face advice, skills development, paid work opportunities and placements, and resources to help you build your CV and professional networks.

The University Centre Hub on Blackboard is the home of your online classroom, news, events and study information. It also features useful services from our Student Support Team. You have access to lots of information on wellbeing, finance, additional learning support available and all the key information you need whilst you study.

Contacts:

Student Support: hestudentsupport@ucleeds.ac.uk

Admissions: admissions@ucleeds.ac.uk

Named contacts for care experienced and estranged students:

Pre-entry: Laura Macgregor laura.macgregor@ucleeds.ac.uk

On course: Adam Stowe adam.stowe@ucleeds.ac.uk

External organisations

StandAlone

StandAlone are an organisation who support people of all ages that have become estranged or disowned from their family or key family member. They run support groups, provide information and advice online and lead on research in this field.

What is the StandAlone pledge?

The pledge helps universities to develop support and enable students estranged from their families to stay resilient. UC Leeds took the pledge in July 2018 and has committed to improving support in four key areas: finance, accommodation, outreach, and mental health and wellbeing. Since taking the pledge, we are proud to offer varied forms of support outlined in this guide, from student support groups to bespoke bursaries. www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk

Propel

Propel is a searchable website for care leavers, providing information on the support available to you at colleges and universities across the UK. Just like UCAS, where you can research universities, Propel allows you to view the support each institution offers in one place. You can quickly check whether your favourite institutions offer bursaries or 365-day accommodation. www.propel.org.uk/UK

Care Leavers' Association

The Care Leavers' Association is a charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers of all ages. They run campaigns and projects, they're an advocate for change at all levels of government and provide training for a range of organisations. We recommend you check out their 'Young People's Project', which has useful guides and videos. www.careleavers.com

This Is Us online community

You can also join This Is Us, an online community of estranged and care-experienced students in the UK. This safe space allows students to connect, give each other support, share info, arrange meet-ups and more. It's free, national and open to all ages and years of study. thisisusatuni.mn.co/