

A decorative header featuring a green background with white line-art icons of school supplies: a globe, a pencil, a notebook, a ruler, a pair of scissors, a calculator, a magnifying glass, a pencil sharpener, and a pencil. The icons are scattered across the top of the page.

WHY STUDY IN FURTHER EDUCATION OR HIGHER EDUCATION?

Staying in education is a great way to gain more qualifications, learn new skills and make new friends. Generally, the more qualifications you have, the more chance you have of earning more money when you start work.

You would also have more control over your choice of job and where you want to work in the future.



FE - FURTHER EDUCATION



Further Education is free for 16 – 19 year olds. A variety of qualifications can be studied from A Levels to Vocational courses and Apprenticeships. If you choose to leave school at 16 you can study at a Further Education college in order to develop your skills and qualifications before you move on to get a job or go to university.

You may be entitled to apply for **EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance)** or the **WGLG (Welsh Government Learning Grant)** whilst you are studying.

This is money that is paid to you to help with the costs of studying. For help and information about EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) and the WGLG FE (Welsh Government Learning Grant FE) visit the Student Finance Wales website www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING IN FURTHER EDUCATION

Each Further Education college should have a Looked After Children (LAC) and Leaving Care (LC) designated officer. If you are thinking of applying to college, it would be worth contacting their designated officer to introduce yourself and to talk through how you could be supported during your time studying there.

Getting in touch with the designated LAC contact doesn't mean that other students or your tutors will know that you have been in care. It does mean that all the support you are entitled to is offered to you.



Further Education Support can include:

- ▶ Financial support and advice
- ▶ A personal tutor
- ▶ Additional 1-2-1 support from a Student Support Officer or Welfare Officer for any concerns in college e.g. help with benefits, anxiety, depression, bullying, relationship worries, domestic abuse, making friends, confidence issues, welfare information, etc.
- ▶ Additional Learning Support including: Dyslexia support, In-class support, support for a disability or extra time in exams
- ▶ Study skills support

HE - HIGHER EDUCATION



University is an exciting opportunity on offer to you once you have completed your Level 3 Qualifications like A Levels, Advanced Apprenticeships or BTEC Nationals.

Whilst at university you can choose to study a huge variety of courses. It's important that you choose the right course at the right university for you. It's a very personal decision, but it's worth thinking about things like the location of the university; am I going to enjoy studying these topics; does the university offer social events and societies that I would like to join?

It's a good idea to make a list of the courses and universities you think you are interested in and then visit them on an Open Day, to have a good look around and decide whether or not you can imagine yourself spending three or four years of your life studying there.

To help you decide what course to study and if university is for you, try contacting your local Reaching Wider Partnership to see if they offer any taster sessions or Summer schools (contact details on page one).



Higher Education Support can include:

- ▶ Advice and support with your application to university
- ▶ Financial assistance to attend Open Days & interviews
- ▶ Specific schemes for Care Leavers
- ▶ Assistance with applying for financial support from the Student Loans company via your Local Authority
- ▶ Priority access to additional bursaries and grants
- ▶ Guaranteed 365 day a year accommodation
- ▶ A named contact to support you with all aspects of university life
- ▶ Support with childcare while you study
- ▶ Support to find part-time work and career planning

THE APPLICATION PROCESS (HE)



[WWW.UCAS.COM](http://www.ucas.com)

You will need to apply to study on a Higher Education course through the UCAS (University & Colleges Admissions Service) website. There is an application fee to apply, but many Local Authorities will pay this for you. Talk to your Social Worker to find out how your application fee will be paid.

Declaring that you have been in care on your UCAS form does not mean that other students or your tutors or lecturers will know. It does mean that all the support you are entitled to is offered to you.

Your rights and confidentiality will be respected at all times.

If you find yourself without an offer and you have used all your five choices already, you can use UCAS Extra to have an additional choice through UCAS. You don't have to wait for clearing; UCAS Extra operates from mid-March to end of June

Clearing

The clearing system finds places for people who have not found and accepted a university place.

If you are eligible for Clearing, you will automatically be sent a Clearing Entry Form (CEF) – but you don't have to wait for this before you start telephoning universities.

Lists of courses with vacancies will be published on the UCAS website and in some newspapers such as *The Independent*, *The Independent on Sunday* and *The Mirror*, from the middle of August until late September.

Once you have found a course, contact the university or college to see if they will accept you. If you accept a place through Clearing, you will be sent a confirmation letter automatically from UCAS.



ACCOMMODATION & MONEY



University – Somewhere to live!

You don't need to worry about somewhere to live. You can get student accommodation for the whole year and not just term time! Also ask your Social Worker about the 'When I'm ready' scheme as you may be able to keep your room at your foster carer's house for weekends and holidays.

University - Don't be put off by money!

Whilst studying at university, you will have two main types of expenses – your tuition fees and your living expenses. There is help available for both expenses in the form of Grants (money you don't have to pay back) and Loans (money you do have to pay back). Funding is available to cover tuition fees, so you don't have to pay anything up front to access your course. The amount you will be entitled to will depend on how much your course costs, where you live, where you study and your household income.

Student Finance Wales – If you live in Wales you need to apply for funding through Student Finance Wales. You will be able to complete the student finance calculator which will help you work out what you could be entitled to. Don't wait until you hold a firm offer from University before applying for student finance. This helps to stop any delays in obtaining your student package when you start your course.

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

BURSARIES

Bursaries are extra financial support paid to a student by the institution they are studying in. They do **NOT** have to be repaid. Bursaries are paid for a variety of different reasons. Bursaries do vary between institutions so it is definitely worth checking if you are entitled to receive a bursary.

Many universities award bursaries for Care Leavers, Priority subject bursaries, excellence bursaries (for good A-Level/B-Tech results), sporting bursaries and income related bursaries for example.

Local Authority support – Higher Education Bursary

Local Authorities have to pay a Higher Education Bursary to former 'relevant children' who pursue a higher education course in agreement with their Pathway Plan. The Who Cares Trust has useful information to help you work out what support you are entitled to and if you are a 'relevant child'.

www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/what-support-am-i-entitled-to.html

It's worth speaking to your Social Worker or looking online for more information

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Welsh Medium scholarships

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme is offered to students who are studying a range of courses, through the medium of Welsh. Up to £1,000 a year is available. www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/myfyrwyr/en/studentfinance

Help for Parents

Students with children can get additional support on a means tested basis. These include Parent Learning Allowance, Adult Dependents Grant (for those with a financially dependent partner) and help through the Childcare Grant (to pay up to 85% of any registered childcare costs).

Discretionary support - Hardship Funds

Hardship funds are provided by most universities. Student Services in your chosen university will be able to give you more details.

Help for disabled students

Help is available with extra course related costs which are as a result of your disability. Your household income has no effect on the amount you receive.

Welfare benefits

If you have children or a disability, you may still be entitled to certain benefits like Housing Benefit and Income Support. Child Tax Credit is not normally affected by Student Support. Your local Benefits Agency will be able to give you more information.

Department of Health courses

Currently no fee loan is required for NHS bursary courses. Some Health courses are covered by a means tested bursary and some by a non-means tested bursary. The nature of the course and a student's personal circumstances will decide whether or not you are entitled to these bursaries. All bursaries paid by the NHS are paid monthly and are non-repayable.

Other available scholarships and bursaries

Many other organisations and employers look to support students through their studies. To find out more visit:
www.scholarship-search.org.uk



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR CARE LEAVERS' SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY?

You are considered a Care Leaver once you are 16. To qualify for financial and other support at University as a Care Leaver, you normally need to have been in Local Authority Care as a young person for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and were in Local Authority care at 16 or have been since turning 16.

If you are a care leaver from Wales starting higher education study for the first time before your 25th birthday, then you are entitled to a one-off bursary (financial support which you don't have to pay back) from your local authority. Many universities also offer specific financial support for Care Leavers so make sure you use the tick box on your UCAS application to let them know that you are a care leaver.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT COURSE OR SUBJECT TO STUDY?

It's important to choose a course/subject that you'll enjoy and that will help you reach any career goals that you may have.

Go to University Open Days and contact University departments and ask questions about any courses you're interested in. Try contacting your local Reaching Wider Partnership to see if they offer any taster sessions or Summer schools (contact details on page 1).

WHERE WILL I LIVE DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

Financial support via bursaries is available to help cover the cost of accommodation through the holiday periods.

You should apply for accommodation as early as possible to ensure the university has accommodation for you at these times. If not, they can help you find private accommodation.

Speak to the Student Services team and they will be able to advise and support you with all your accommodation concerns and questions. Ask your Social Worker about the 'When I'm ready' scheme as you may be able to keep your room at your foster carer's house for weekends and holidays.

HOW WILL I GET TO OPEN DAYS AND INTERVIEWS?

Speak to your Social Worker to find what support they may be able to offer. You can also contact the Student Services team at the university you are going to be visiting to see if they can help with transport costs, train tickets etc.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS



I DON'T WANT TO ATTEND AN OPEN DAY BY MYSELF.

Speak to the Student Services team at the university you are going to be visiting. If you tell them that you are a Care Leaver, they can often arrange for someone to meet you and visit the Open Day with you. They can also arrange for you to meet an advisor to discuss support, finances, and accommodation etc during the day.

HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR ME AT DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES?

If you're applying to universities in Wales see www.swansea.ac.uk/media/careleaversguide.pdf or go to www.class.cymru to find out what support is available and who to contact. If you're applying to universities in England see www.propel.org.uk.

I'M WORRIED I WON'T BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO LIVE WHILST AT UNIVERSITY.

Your Student Services team will be able to provide advice about budgeting and managing your money. They can also provide you with a variety of different tools to make day to day budgeting easier for you.

THE WHOLE PROCESS OF APPLYING FOR UNIVERSITY AND SORTING OUT MY FUNDING IS OVERWHELMING. CAN ANYONE HELP ME?

The Student Services team can work with you to help complete your UCAS form and support you through the whole process of securing a place on a course and starting at university. They can also work with you to identify funding you are entitled to and help you apply for loans or bursaries. Your advisor can also be there to support you when you begin university and throughout your studies.

I DON'T WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW I AM A CARE LEAVER

Declaring that you have been in care on your UCAS form does not mean that other students or your tutors or lecturers will know. It will mean that all the support you are entitled to is offered to you. Your rights and confidentiality will be respected at all times.

I'M WORRIED I WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE WORK AT UNIVERSITY

Many universities offer advice and support around Study Skills for Higher Education. This means there are people available to help you with skills such as essay writing, delivering presentations and referencing. You will also be allocated a Personal Tutor within your department who will work with you throughout your studies to make sure you are well supported through your time studying with them. Student Services may also offer sessions such as dealing with stress, time management and raising confidence.

I'M A PARENT. HOW CAN I LOOK AFTER MY CHILD AS WELL AS STUDY?

You may be entitled to help with childcare costs. It is worth speaking to the Student Services team at your chosen university to discuss childcare options.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

You are definitely not alone through the process of making your application to university, arriving at university and whilst studying at university. Universities want you to enjoy a happy and successful time whilst studying with them and can provide support to make this process as smooth as possible.

All universities have a Student Services team who can offer information, advice and support. They are there to help you in any way they can. It is always recommended that you speak to one of the Student Services team at your chosen university in order for them to work with you to sort out any concerns or worries you may have.

Your university Student Services team can also provide advice on how to budget successfully. This will help you manage your money and find ways to make your money go further.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.ucas.com

For applying to British universities including guidance on everything to do with the process.

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Funding for students in Wales.

www.class.cymru

Information about care leavers activities and student support in Wales including care leaver contact details for all Welsh universities.

www.careerswales.com

Careers and education information and advice.

www.Propel.org.uk

Use the search function to find out what your chosen uni offers care leavers.

www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk

Study opportunities for Welsh medium students in partnership with universities.

www.scholarship-search.org.uk

Scholarship information and finder.

www.prospects.ac.uk

Information about gap years, careers and employment.

www.university.which.co.uk

Information about what you can study, earn and the jobs you can get.

www.bestcourse4me.com

An independent website which shows the link between what you study, what you earn and the jobs you can get.

www.studential.com

Information and advice on education.

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

The largest student community in the world.

www.applytouni.com

Advice on applying to university.

www.buttleuk.org

Offers small grants for young people leaving care to help with living costs such as rent, food, bills, transport or course materials.

www.gov.uk/leaving-foster-or-local-authority-care

Information on the Local Authority bursary for Care Leavers.

www.childcomwales.org.uk

Children's Commissioner for Wales.

www.careleavers.com/accesingeducation

Care Leavers Association.

www.thewhocaretrust.org.uk

A voice for children in care.

www.princes-trust.org.uk

A youth charity providing practical and financial help.

www.turn2us.org.uk

For Benefits advice.

www.standalone.org.uk

For students who are estranged from their families.

SOUTH WEST WALES REACHING WIDER PARTNERSHIP

This guide is produced by the South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership which is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Members of the Partnership are:

Careers Wales

Carmarthenshire County Council

City and County of Swansea

Coleg Sir Gâr

Gower College Swansea

NPTC Group

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

The Open University in Wales

Pembrokeshire College

Pembrokeshire County Council

Swansea University

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

All information was correct at the time of going to print. All universities and colleges have different entrance requirements which are likely to change from year to year. Funding and fees arrangements tend to change every year as well.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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