

Planning to Leave School Handbook



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About Us

Who We Are And What Do We Do?

Preparing to leave school is a very important step for you. We know that it is a very demanding time, but this is also a fantastic opportunity to gain independence and build resilience. It is normal to feel a mix of emotions and that is why we have created this leavers' booklet, filled with information and advice to help guide and support you onto whatever positive destination you choose.

What Support Will You Get?

We share a number of opportunities with you via our channels which include our Young Talent (YT) Young Person's Hub.

These online resources will signpost you to opportunities, experiences and events which have been designed to help you understand your options in detail.

What Exactly Is The YT Hub?

The YT **Hub** website has lots of useful information to help break down any barriers you may come across when transitioning from school. It provides access to resources including **housing, finances, applying for jobs and more.**

Throughout this booklet, if you see this symbol 🔍 it means there is further information on our YT website: <https://YT.mcrpathways.org/>

I'm Not Sure Where To Start

There are many options for you to choose from if you decide to leave school, so don't panic. You may feel confused at times about what pathway you want to choose, but remember, pathways are for exploring what interests you! Make sure you think carefully about your aims, passions and skills.

Let's help you get started.

Plan And Research

- What can I do, based on my interests?
- Will this pathway bring me closer to my goal?
- Where is the location of the campus, apprenticeship or job?
- Will I need accommodation?
- When should I apply for this? (key dates)
- What are the entry requirements for this course?
- Will I need a student loan for this course?
- What qualifications and experience do I need for this apprenticeship or job?

These are questions to ask yourself when thinking about your pathway. Take a look at each of the pathway routes that are of interest to you. There is an **activity section** further on in the booklet page 17, which gives you a space to write out the answers to the above questions. This allows you the opportunity to do some further research.

Contextualised Admission

Take into consideration when looking at the pathways...

‘Contextualised admission’ is a term used by universities where they take into consideration additional information when students apply for a course. They understand that grades can be influenced by a range of factors such as an individual’s background, the area they grew up in or if they are care-experienced. Not all universities and colleges use contextualised admission but the number that do is increasing. University websites will often let you know if it’s something they offer - they usually have a page dedicated to this where they explain how they make contextual offers and what factors they look at when making their decisions. You can email or call the university if you’re unsure or have any specific questions, further information can be found on this UCAS page:

<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/what-contextual-admissions#:~:text=Not%20all%20unis%20make%20contextual,at%20when%20making%20their%20decisions>

Foundation Degrees

Foundation degrees are a nationally-recognised qualification that will allow you to enter the world of work. They usually take two years to complete at college. Foundation degrees can also lead you onto a final year of an Honours degree programme. If you wanted to choose this option, you would complete your final year at a university to convert your foundation degree to a BA (Hons) or BSc degree. This will depend on what course you choose and which college you do it at.

Below is an example of two routes that you could take, leading to the same end goal:

3 Year Degree example (university route)	College Route into a Degree example (college and onto university)
BSc (Hons) Business Management Year 1 - university	Business Management - Year 1 of Foundation Degree (Level 4)
BSc (Hons) Business Management Year 2 - university	Business Management - Year 2/final year of Foundation Degree (Level 5) or Choose to do an extra year and complete Year 3 at university to convert to a Honours degree
BSc (Hons) Business Management Year 3 - university	
OPTIONAL: 1 year top-up (Year 4) to Masters in Business Management	



College

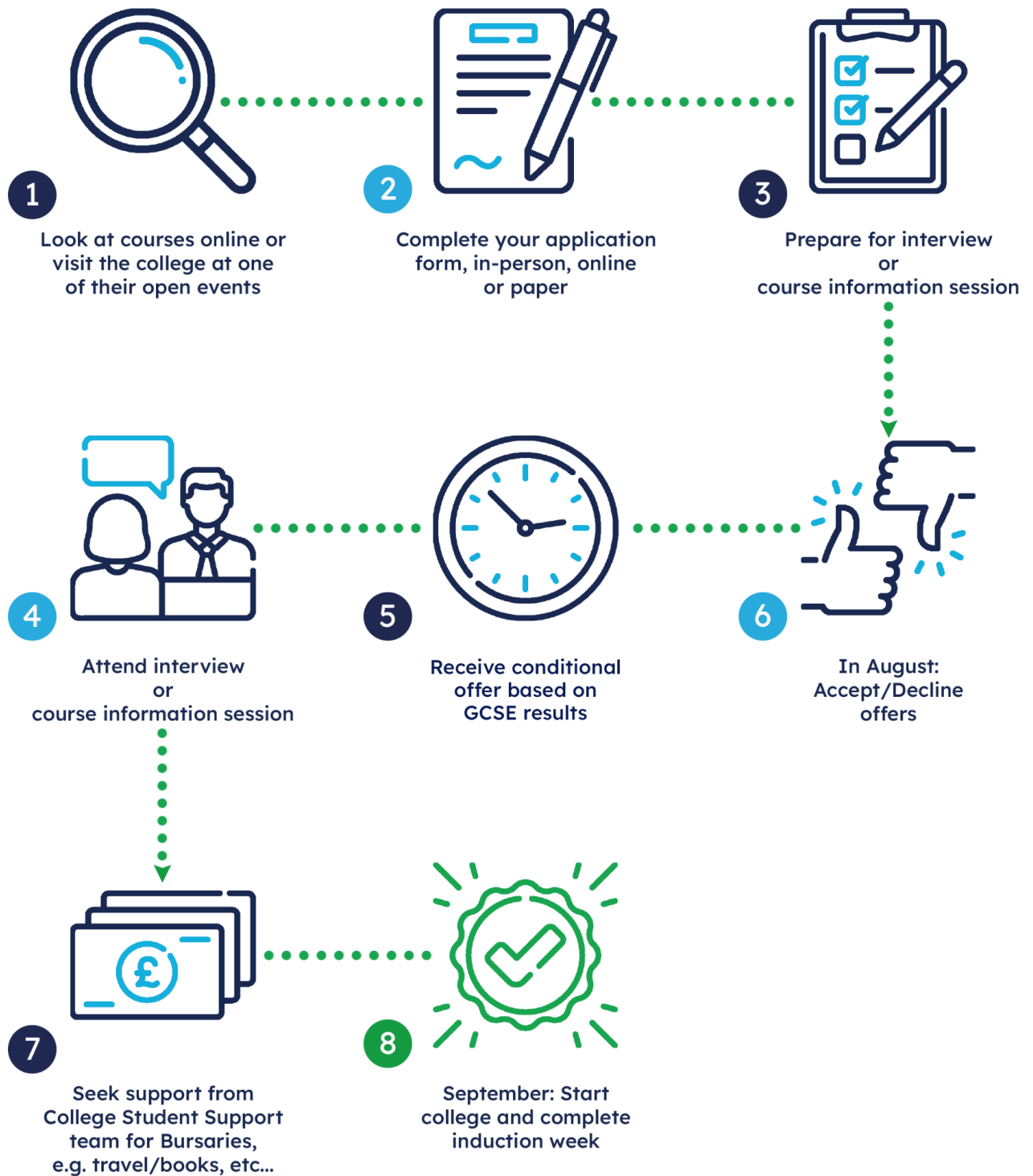
Going to college is a huge life transition and it can play a really significant part in enabling you to fulfil both your academic and personal potential. College is an institution that provides further education courses, with a significantly smaller number of students in your class, compared to university. If you are 19 or over, you may be able to access **higher** education courses at college, too, including higher education-level diplomas and some offer foundation degrees. Typically, each college offers a variety of courses and qualifications to match your interests. Learning takes place in a classroom environment alongside students of all different ages, which is a great opportunity to meet others from all walks of life.

At 16, you have to attend full-time, unless you are enrolled on an apprenticeship course where you'll study part-time at college. If you're applying to college and are over 18 years old, most colleges offer part time, evening and weekend courses, so you can choose an option that works for you. Each college often has advice and guidance teams that can help you with applications or assist with any additional information that you may need.

Below is a link where you can find support details and funding information for care leavers for most of the UK colleges including links to care leaver teams who will be available to speak to:

[University and college contacts - IMO](#)

Applying For College Process





University

Going to university is an extremely rewarding opportunity to help expand your skills, build your peer group and gain confidence. We suggest, if applicable, that you **tick the box** in the 'care section' of the UCAS application form. This allows colleges and universities to send you important information informing you of the support you may be entitled to. 'Care-experienced' refers to anyone who has been, or is currently, in care. This care may have been in many different settings.

Some universities differ in their definition of care-experienced students, so it is worthwhile getting in contact with the university you are applying to or doing some research online. Ticking the box doesn't mean that you have to accept the help. However it is good to know that you have the support there, if needed, with things like financial assistance.

Applying to university may seem overwhelming so here are some steps to help you prepare with your transition from school to university.

Get Your Application Started For University

Register With UCAS

- Fill in your details, qualifications and course choices (you can choose up to 5 courses).
- Write your personal statement (length – up to 4,000 characters or 47 lines, that's around 650 words, so be clear, concise and relevant). Your personal statement will often be too long as a first draft - this is fine! It is better to have everything you want to talk about written down, then cut it down to make it really concise and relevant. Typing it into a Word document, saving it and then copying and pasting it into the UCAS form when it's finalised, is a great way to draft.
- The below links can be used to help you write your personal statement.
- [How To Write Your Undergraduate Personal Statement](#)
- The Studential website has lots of really useful examples, rated by stars, for lots of different subjects: [2000+ Free UCAS Personal Statement Examples | Studential.com](#)

- Make sure you don't copy from an example or from someone else's personal statement as UCAS has software that detects any similarities and this could damage your chances of being offered a place. It is a good idea to close any examples you've been reading before you write your own.
- Include your reference and pay your application fee, this fixed fee covers your application to all five universities.

All information for UCAS, including information on fees, can be found by using the search bar on [UCAS](#)

Application Update – Track UCAS To See Updates

If you are accepted with an **unconditional offer**, this means you have been offered the course you picked. Congratulations, make sure you read the offer carefully as you may need to take further action to accept your place.

If you receive a **conditional offer**, this usually means your place is confirmed as long as you meet the conditions/grade requirements and that you accept it before the stated deadline. Therefore, most people have to wait for the publication of exam results to make sure they have achieved the course entry requirements.

Visit our YT [Hub](#) for more information on financial support and settling into university.

Considering Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary?

If you're thinking about applying for one of these subjects, there are some additional requirements that are really important to be aware of. Use the checklist below to keep on track:

1. Tell your subject teachers / Form Tutor / Head of Sixth Form as soon as possible.

Even if you're not 100% sure you want to apply, it's really important that your teachers know you're thinking about it. They'll need to be one step ahead with writing your reference because the deadline is earlier for these courses, usually early/mid October.

2. Check your key dates These applications tend to take a bit of forward-thinking and it's up to you to make sure you're on top of meeting the requirements. You will need:

- Relevant work experience to reflect on before you apply
- To have sat your UCAT and or BMAT test the summer before you apply [UCAT BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#)
- Have your application ready for your teacher to write your reference in plenty of time

Ask your mentor or Pathways Coordinator to help you find information from the UCAT website. This will tell you about important deadlines and how to book your test.



Apprenticeships

Earn While You Learn!

Apprenticeships are extremely rewarding and an excellent way to learn on the job and gain access to a sector you want to work in, all while gaining experience as you earn a salary. What's more, you won't have to pay for your training or tuition as your employer will cover these costs.

Most of your time is spent doing on-the-job training and the rest is spent working towards a qualification. You'll get paid a salary and be part of a team, just like a standard employee, but you'll also get dedicated study time throughout the week. Usually, you'll spend 80% of the working week at your place of employment and 20% at your place of study. Apprenticeships are offered in many industries, from construction to healthcare and IT to catering as well as lots more.

There are 4 different types of apprenticeships available:

- **Intermediate** (Level 2 - equivalent to GCSE)
- **Advanced** (Level 3 - equivalent to two A-level passes)
- **Higher Level 4** - equivalent to first year of undergraduate degree or Higher National Certificate / **Higher Level 5** - equivalent to foundation degree of Higher National Diploma
- **Degree** (Levels 6 & 7 - equivalent to Bachelor's or Master's degree)

Intermediate Apprenticeship

This apprenticeship is a great way to build up your knowledge and broaden your options, including gaining entry qualifications for university. You have to be 16 or over to do an Intermediate apprenticeship but you can apply whilst you are still at school. You will spend part of the week with a local employer getting hands-on experience and part of the week studying at college or with a recognised, external training provider - it usually works out to be around four days at work and one day in college or with the training provider, although this can vary depending on the apprenticeship. Completion of this apprenticeship can mean you can progress onto an Advanced, Higher or Degree apprenticeship, if you want to follow that route.

There are a wide variety of Intermediate apprenticeship subjects to choose from, ranging from hair and beauty to engineering so there's bound to be an Intermediate apprenticeship you'll enjoy! You can see the options here: [Level 2 apprenticeships \(Intermediate apprenticeships\)](#)

Advanced Apprenticeship

If you are passionate about a particular industry, Advanced apprenticeships offer valuable work experience and allow you to gain industry-recognised qualifications. You have to be 16 or over to do an Advanced apprenticeship but you can apply whilst you are still at school. Advanced Apprentices learn on the job – gaining skills, experience and qualifications that'll kick-start your career. You could then go on to completing higher and degree apprenticeships if you wanted to.

You will apply directly to the employer offering the apprenticeship and there are many Advanced apprenticeships in a wide range of different sectors, including education, creative, science and animal care:

[Level 3 apprenticeships \(Advanced apprenticeships\)](#)

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

Higher apprenticeships can be taken at Level 4 and Level 5 and degree apprenticeships can be taken at Level 6 and Level 7. Both higher and degree apprenticeships are usually aimed at 18 and 19 year old school-leavers who would like to get a degree but are not sure the university route is right for them.

Both higher and degree apprenticeships work in the same way, combining work with study. Some higher and degree apprenticeships will enable you to gain a work-based academic or combined qualification or a professional qualification linked to the industry you are in. They usually take between three and six years to complete, depending on the course level.

To apply for a degree apprenticeship, you'll need to submit an application which often includes a CV and covering letter, in very much the same way you would apply for a normal job. Employers advertise degree apprenticeships throughout the year so there is no specific application cycle like there is for university. It's always best to check for apprenticeship vacancies frequently. There are several websites that advertise degree apprenticeships many of which can be found here: [Find a degree apprenticeship - Office for Students](#)

If you do an apprenticeship, whilst your employer covers the training costs, you may have to plan to cover any living costs and degree apprenticeships aren't eligible for student loans. However, you will be paid at least the apprentice National Minimum Wage (NMW) throughout your apprenticeship.

Most higher and degree apprenticeships have entry requirements that are similar to an undergraduate degree but may also take into consideration alternative paths of learning. The exact entry requirements should be included in the advert for the apprenticeship.

There are fewer industries that offer higher levels of apprenticeship so it's worth checking the UCAS website to see which ones do. The website also gives additional information on what these types of apprenticeships have to offer; have videos you can watch and provide information around the additional support that may be available if you're in care or have experience of being in care:

[Apprenticeships in England](#)

To search for further information and all levels of apprenticeship vacancies, visit:

[UCAS Career Finder](#)

[AllAboutSchoolLeavers](#)



Employment

Many of you will be taking the leap from school into a job. Whether that's part-time work while you study or full-time work, going straight into employment is a great opportunity to develop your interpersonal skills and gain experience. There's a few things you'll need to have in place to make a successful transition from school to work. Don't worry about lack of experience! Most employers value the benefits of a young person coming into their workplace and see this as a fresh perspective.

Start by identifying your career goals

This enables you to move step-by-step, towards your career aspirations.

Get your CV prepared

The goal of a CV is to show an employer that you have the skills and qualities needed for a job. It is important to highlight your achievements and qualifications. Volunteer experiences and clubs can be a great addition to a CV if you do not have a lot or any work experience. Below is a link to guidance on how to create a CV to get you started.

 [CV Guidance](#)

It's also important to practise your interview technique. The more you prepare, the more confident you will be. Here are some tips to help you:

Reflect on your skills relating to the job description and person specification

These two key things will help you understand what the job involves, whether it is right for you, as well as helping you to know what to expect from interview questions. It's a good idea to think about the skills you have and match these with the skills and experiences the employer is looking for. For example, if the job involves working with

customers, think about a time when you used your skills to help someone by talking to them (particularly if you did this as a volunteer, in a job, or even being a school prefect). Interviewers often ask you to give examples of a time you showed a particular skill that you would need to do the job. When you are preparing, think about a STAR answer:

Situation - What was the situation you were in? Give a bit of context here.

Task - What was the problem that needed to be solved?

Action - What did you do about it?

Result - How did things turn out? If it went well, why? If not, what would you do differently next time?

This [video](#) can give you more information about giving STAR answers.

Research and ask people about common interview questions

This is a great way to prepare for more general questions. Some that often come up include: 'Why do you want to do this job/work for this company?'; 'What are your strengths and weaknesses?'; 'Where do you see yourself in five years?'

The more you think about your own skills and experiences beforehand, the better prepared you will be. Further advice on developing your interview technique can be found here:

[Interview advice | National Careers Service](#)

Examples of frequently asked interview questions and examples of answers can be found here, don't forget to adapt these answers to you and the job you are applying for:

[Example questions and answers | Prospects.ac.uk](#)

Plan your wardrobe

Generally a job interview calls for you to wear something smart, however it is good to have a look at the company's website to get more insight. It is important you look presentable as that's what will make a good first impression.

Research the job you are applying for

Demonstrating that you know what's going on in a particular industry is great for the interview. This can involve finding out about the company, as well as learning more about what the job involves. You can use resources such as the company website and industry publications, these may be available online or at your local library.

Planning the journey the day before

Check how long it will take you to get there. This will ensure that you're not late. Arriving a few minutes before the interview starts will look good, show that you are eager and that you manage your time-keeping well.

Always remember to value yourself and stay positive!

Below are some useful websites to search for a job. These websites are really handy for putting in your location to search for nearby jobs and they also offer a search engine to set up alerts for a specific job title or company that you are interested in.

- <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/programmes#get-a-job>
- [CareerBuilder UK](#)
- [GetMyFirstJob](#)
- [Not Going To Uni](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [Find a job - GOV.UK](#)

Setting up a **LinkedIn** account will also help broaden your network. It is a great way to keep in touch with the people you meet professionally. It also allows you to register for job alerts which will be tailored to your areas of interest.

To start up a profile visit www.linkedin.com.

Funding For College And University



All college courses for 16 - 18 year olds from Level One to Level Three are fully funded so you don't have to pay. Funding support for Access and Foundation degree courses, including Higher, National Certificates and Diplomas is available through Student Finance England [Student finance login - GOV.UK](#)

Level	Qualification	Funded by
Higher Education	Masters degree Undergraduate degree Honours degree Foundation degree Diploma	Students usually apply for student loan and maintenance loan to cover/help with costs Some universities and colleges offer bursaries - ask at the university/college you are interested in
Further Education	A-levels BTECs T-levels Higher National Diplomas Higher National Certificates	16-18 years old: free as paid for by Government 19 years old or above: tuition fees may be involved - ask at the college you are interested in

Each campus has a dedicated student finance department which can offer advice and guidance on what is available. Below is a brief explanation of additional support that may be available.

Higher Education Bursary

If you're care-experienced and starting higher education, (before your 25th birthday), you may be entitled to a one-off Higher Education Bursary of at least £2000. These are paid by your local authority, normally in instalments, during your course - contact your local authority to find out more. As it's a bursary, you won't have to pay it back!

The 16 — 19 Bursary Fund

This can help with essential education-related costs like lunch, equipment for your course and transport to and from your school or college. You can get up to £1,200 a year if you're in care, a care-leaver or you receive certain benefits and, again, you won't have to pay it back! Discretionary bursaries may also be available - check if you're eligible and for how much by asking the Student Support team at your school / college / training provider. These bursaries are based on your attendance, so you must attend!

[16-19 Education grants, bursaries & funding | UCAS](#)

Subsidised Transport for 16-19 year olds

Local councils may offer discounts and concessions for travel to school sixth form, college. You can find out more through the government website:

[Subsidised transport for 16 to 19 year olds in education - GOV.UK](#)

University/college Bursary

Many universities and colleges offer bursaries for care-experienced students that you don't have to repay and some offer grants or loans to help you manage any additional expenses (e.g. specialist equipment). Speak to the university or college to find out more or check the Propel website which provides help, support and advice for care-experienced young people around higher education:

[Propel](#)

Charitable organisations

There are a number of organisations offering grants, bursaries and scholarships and advice, including Unite Foundation, Buttle UK, and the Care Leavers' Foundation. It's worth checking out their websites to see what they may be able to offer you.

[Unite Foundation Scholarship = Unite Foundation](#)

[The Care Leavers Association](#)

[Buttle UK](#)

Your Future Me Plan and Research Activity

The pathway that interests me the most is:

I think this pathway works for me because my interests are:

I have chosen this pathway because I think it will help me achieve my future goal which is to become:

What entry requirements and experience do I need to be accepted to study or get the job I want?

Do I need to volunteer and build up my CV?

Where is the location of the campus or job?

Do I need to relocate?

If the answer is no, will I have enough time to get to my location in the mornings?

My back up plan is:

What Are My Rights?

Minimum Wage And Apprenticeship Rates

To get the minimum wage, workers must be at least the school-leaving age. It is illegal for your employer to pay you less than the National minimum wage. If you are an apprentice you will be entitled to the Apprentice National Minimum Wage rate. This can change, depending on how old you are so check the government website to find out what you should be paid:

[National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK](#)

If you are being underpaid and feel uncomfortable talking to your employer about this, then call the ACAS helpline. This helpline provides confidential advice to employees on their rights.

Visit [Work and employment law advice | Acas](#) to ask questions or call the ACAS helpline on Telephone: 0300 123 1100, available Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Payslips

Payslips are given on or before the day someone gets paid. An employer must give you a payslip by law and you should always keep these.

It will show:

- how much pay you're getting for a certain time period
- what has been taken from your pay ('deductions'), for example tax and National Insurance (NI)

Discrimination

It is against the law for you to be discriminated against. If you are treated differently from others because of your: age, gender, religion or beliefs, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity or because of a disability then this is classed as discrimination. To learn more about the types of discrimination such as indirect discrimination and how to take action please visit: [Discrimination - Citizens Advice](#)

The Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline is also there to give information and guidance on discrimination and human rights issues. You can telephone 0808 800 0082 between 9:00am–5:00pm Monday to Friday.

Leavers' Checklist

Birth Certificate

This is proof of your identity and will help you apply for a photographic ID and open a bank account. You can get a copy of your birth certificate from your local registry office.

Bank Account

No matter what pathway you take, a bank account is something you will need to receive wages, student loans, bursaries and pay bills. To open an account you usually have to fill in an application form.

Please Note: When opening your account you will need two forms of ID including your full name and date of birth and a supplementary proof of your address.

Examples of ID are:

- Passport
- Drivers License or Birth Certificate

National Insurance Number

Employers will look for this before you start working in a job. Your National Insurance Number ensures your contributions and tax are recorded. Young people who are looked after by local authorities do not automatically get a National Insurance number - your social worker can apply for one on your behalf, once you are 15 years and 9 months old.

Personal Statement

A personal statement is a short summary of your education, experiences and achievements. If you are applying to a college or university course or even an apprenticeship you will need to create a personal statement.

CV

A CV (or resume) is a document used when applying for jobs. It shows employers your previous experiences, education, jobs and any other relevant training that you have done.

Remember, you can always ask your Pathways Coordinator, mentor or School for help in writing both your personal statement and your CV - they'll all be happy to support you.

Photographic ID

Many employers will request photographic ID to prove your identity when starting a job. There are many forms of photographic ID that will be suitable including: passport, driving licence, citizen's card and any other form of ID with the Pass hologram on it.

Proof Of Address

Another way to prove your identity is by having a letter. This letter could be a bank statement, a utility bill, mobile phone statement, social work or hospital letter.

What Services Are There To Support Me?

If things get too much for you, we have put together a list of key services that provide specialised support you may need. Remember, it's okay not to feel okay and you can get through this difficult time - you are not alone. 🔍

PLEASE NOTE: If your life is in immediate risk, call the emergency services on 999

Name	Mental Health Support they Provide	Contact Details
Samaritans	Provides a vital lifeline for people in crisis and distress - there to listen and help you work through what's on your mind.	Helpline: Call 116 123 Website: Samaritans
Carers UK	Support for unpaid carers for family or friends.	Helpline: 0808 808 7777 Website: Carers UK
Anxiety UK	Advice and support for people living with anxiety	Helpline: 03444 775 774 Text: 07537 416 905 Website: Anxiety UK
Young Minds	Providing young people with tools to help with mental health as well as advice, support and information	24/7 support from Shout - text: YM to 85258 Website: Young Minds
Shelter	Provide support and advice for people who are homeless	Helpline: 0808 800 4444 Website: Shelter England
Switchboard LGBT Helpline	National charity for LGBT+ young people	Helpline: 0800 0119 100 Website: Switchboard LGBT Email: hello@switchboard.lgbt

Care Experienced Support At Universities And Colleges

Contact Details

If you are care experienced and want to know how UK universities offer support, details can be found on the UCAS website:

[UCAS Undergraduate: Care experienced students](#)

There is lots of support available to help you overcome any challenges you may face and to help you settle well into university life, so that you can do well in your studies. Although the support is there, you don't have to use it - it's just there if you need it.

Financial

Many students worry about managing their money. To help with the costs of your tuition fees and maintenance, you can apply for a **student loan**. It's important, as a care-experienced person, you apply as an '**independent student**' - this will mean your household income isn't taken into account when calculations are made around what you can receive. The following link takes you to a guide to help you apply:

[Key information on students who qualify as care leavers](#)

Student loans **do** need to be paid back. However, you won't have to make any payments until you graduate and you are earning over a certain amount, to make sure it's affordable. If you have to stop working or start earning below the repayment threshold, your repayments will stop until you earn over the threshold again.

Accommodation

Many universities and colleges will help care-experienced students find appropriate accommodation. This will be different for each university or college so check early on in your research to find out what's available. Help may include:

- Free or discounted accommodation
- Year-round accommodation (including over the holiday period)
- A guaranteed room in university accommodation for the whole time you're doing your course
- The university acting as your 'guarantor'
- No deposit needed or at a reduced rate
- Grants to help you cover living costs over the holiday periods
- Starter packs or vouchers to help you get the equipment you need, e.g. bedding

Some students choose to stay during holiday periods, for many different reasons, so you won't be alone if you choose to stay. There will always be plenty of other people

around, too - students who live locally and staff members who work all year round - and many facilities remain open.

Settling in

Universities and colleges welcome students from a wide range of backgrounds and, as such, there are many clubs and societies for like-minded students - there may even be groups for students from care backgrounds. You'll be able to find out more from the student support team or the students' union.

'This Is Us' online community

'This Is Us' is 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.

[Unite Foundation](#)

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

It's important to take care of your mental health and wellbeing whilst at university and there is always help available if you need it. If you have a mental health condition, (and it doesn't have to be diagnosed), you can let the university or college know you might like support on your UCAS application. This information is NOT used to assess your application - it's just to make sure you have the right support you need to make a successful transition and do well throughout your studies.

Other Support

There are many other ways that universities and colleges offer support for care-experienced students. It does vary but the support could include:

- A named contact in the student support team who may be able to support you through your studies
- A dedicated webpage on the university/college website
- Travel bursaries to help you attend open days and interviews
- Workshops; orientation events or taster sessions over the summer holidays
- Mentoring/buddying schemes; social events and peer networks

It's best to contact the college or university you are interested in if you have any queries about the support and funding information they offer to care-experienced students, so that they can provide you with up-to-date information. Below is a link to the best point of contact for care leavers for most of the UK colleges and universities:

[University and college contacts - IMO](#)