

STUDENT ADVICE

Care Leavers 2025-2026

The University of Westminster welcomes students from diverse backgrounds and is committed to supporting local authority care leavers in their successful transition into higher education and independent living. During your time at university, we have a comprehensive and accessible range of support on offer. The University is proud to have been awarded the *Buttle UK Quality Mark* in the past for its commitment to care leavers.

Financial support

Local Authority help with the cost of going to university

Going to university provides an exciting and challenging opportunity to improve your future career prospects. As a looked after young person or care leaver in full-time education you will be entitled to financial support up to the age of 25.

Your Leaving Care team, Personal Adviser/Social Worker/Case Worker, can help and advise you about your local authority financial entitlement during your studies which varies from one Local Authority to another. If you are a relevant (or former relevant) care leaver and you start a university degree course, the Leaving Care team will provide you with support.

Your local authority should have a financial policy that sets out the financial and practical support that they will give to care leavers who are participating in higher education. Ask to see it, so that it's clear what support that they will give and ask for it to be clearly written into your pathway plan.

A statutory Care Leaver's bursary of £2,000

Local Authorities also have a responsibility to help with vacation period accommodation costs (for those staying in Halls) and other costs related to entering higher education. They have a statutory responsibility to provide Care Leavers with a minimum £2,000 bursary for the duration of their course.

Some Local Authorities provide additional financial help with course materials such as purchasing a laptop and may contribute towards travel expenses, tuition fees or other costs. (These payments are not normally considered when calculating your entitlement to Student Finance England funding.)

Student Finance England funding - Tuition fee loan and maintenance loan

Eligible students who are studying for their first undergraduate degree will not have to pay these fees up front. A loan is available from the Government to cover the cost of tuition, so you don't have to find the money to pay your tuition costs before or while you are studying.

You won't have to start repaying the loan until you are earning over £25,000 a year (Plan 5 loans) Eligible students can also apply for a maintenance loan for living costs to help with expenses such as accommodation, travel, books, course materials and food.

Students leaving the care of their Local Authority are classed as independent by Student Finance England, providing you don't return to the care of



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your parent(s). This means your assessment for your maintenance loan will not be based on your parents' household income, so you should receive the maximum amount.

Additional Grants

If you are a parent with a dependent child, you may be able to apply for additional grants and help towards childcare costs from Student Finance England. You may also be eligible to claim welfare benefits. The rules around this are complicated. Please contact a Student Adviser to discuss your individual circumstances and for further, more detailed advice.

Disabled students can claim additional allowances from Student Finance England. These are to cover such things as special equipment or a helper. This is known as Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) and an assessment must be undertaken before any money is awarded. The university Disability Learning Support team can help you apply for this.

E: DLS@westminster.ac.uk

T: 020 7911 5000 ext. 68800

University Funding

University Care Leavers Bursary

The university offers a Care Leavers Bursary of £1,000 for each year of academic study. To apply for this, you need to complete an application form, which is available after you have enrolled on your course. You must also get this signed by your Leaving Care team. Click [here](#) to download the application form

Westminster Living Expenses Support Scheme (LESS)

The university offers additional support to students who are experiencing financial hardship through the Westminster Living Expenses Support Scheme. This is a non-repayable grant and applications are means tested. Care leavers are given priority when applying to this fund. For further LESS information, please [click here](#) and also for information about the Costs of Living assistance Scheme

Unite Foundation Accommodation Scholarships

The University of Westminster is delighted to have a partnership with the Unite Foundation. Each year, Unite offers several full accommodation scholarships for Care Leavers and Estranged students to live in Unite Hall accommodation for the duration of their course. Applications close 13 June 2025 for the academic year 2025/26. An opportunity not to be missed! For detailed Information & Guidance and the online application form, please [click here](#)

Or Contact Student Funding:

E: studentcentre@westminster.ac.uk

Careers and Employability Service

The University Careers team is here to help you find the right job, choose a fruitful career or enhance your employability while at the University of Westminster. They provide help with searching for vacancies, drafting job applications, preparing for interviews, and finding volunteering opportunities. They also offer advice and guidance in relation to choosing a career path, finding job opportunities,



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writing CVs, completing application forms, preparing for interviews, and preparing for psychometric testing.

The Careers and Employability Service also offers a valuable Mentoring programme. A mentor facilitates personal and professional growth in an individual by sharing the knowledge and insights that have been learned through the years. Simply put, mentors are people who help others to succeed. Our schemes are designed to widen the aspirations and enhance the personal effectiveness of students. With the help of mentors as role models, students can build a solid foundation of skills from which to launch a variety of successful careers. Priority is given to Care Leavers and you find out more about this by contacting Janet Willoughby, Careers Consultant; **E:** careers@westminster.ac.uk

Free Interview Clothes

If you are attending job interviews, you may be aware that appropriate interview clothes are essential but can be costly. The university has collaborated with organisations such as Smart Works and Suited and Booted who provide free interview clothes and aim to empower clients to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and the development tools to help clients thrive in work and in life.

You must have evidence of your interview to be referred. If you would like a referral to one of these organisations, please contact Janet Willoughby **E:** careers@westminster.ac.uk

TFL 18-25 Care Leaver Bus & Tram Oyster Card 50% travel discount

Only beneficial if you don't use the tube as student discount Oyster Card, including the tube is 30%. [Click here](#) for more information.

Academic issues

Module and Seminar slot changes due to Work commitments

The university does not normally accept requests to change module registration or seminar slots from fully funded, full-time students based on their work commitments because you are expected to be studying full-time and available for timetabled classes. However, if you need to request a change to accommodate work commitments to help support yourself financially, let your Registry know that you are registered as a Care leaver or Estranged student, so that they can be more flexible in their decision-making.

Module and Seminar slot change requests

External Funding - Grants (these don't need to be repaid)

Some organisations help young people in need by awarding grants. Read website information carefully for full eligibility details before applying. Usually, grants are only awarded if you have tried all other options.

Care Leavers' Foundation:

Awards grants of up to £400 to care leavers aged 18-29 for things like household items, emergency living expenses, education costs, medical needs, training and employment. [Click here](#)



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Capstone Care Leavers Trust. Awards grants of £300-£2,000 to care leavers aged 17-25, for education courses and equipment (including travel), driving lessons/tests and household items. [Click here](#)

Buttle UK:

Awards grants of up to £2,000 to estranged young people aged 16-20 for support with education, employment and training, setting up home, and improving emotional and physical wellbeing. Applications should be made by statutory or voluntary organisations on your behalf. [Click here](#)

The Spark Foundation:

Awards grants of up to £600 to care leavers up to age 25 for setting up home, education/employment, skills and interests. [Click here](#)

The Prince's Trust:

Awards grants for young people aged 17-25, working fewer than 16 hours, or in education for fewer than 14 hours per week, to help with getting into work, education or training; loans are also on offer to help you start a business. [Click here](#)

Turn2Us:

This is a grant search tool. Enter your postcode for info on grants you could apply for. [Click here](#)

Struggling to pay utility bills?

Some major providers have debt relief funds. See which ones, and how to apply – [click here](#)

Care Leavers Contacts

Care Leaver Adviser

Anne McGrath offers pre-arrival advice, guidance, and information for care leavers. Once you start University, she can support and advise you on a range of issues including funding entitlement and liaising with Local Authorities regarding statutory support. She can also provide information about other support including Student Finance England funding, the university Care Leavers' Bursaries, Unite Scholarships and the university LESS Scheme.

E: studentcentre@westminster.ac.uk,
T: 020 7911 5000 ext. 66080

University Support

Student Accommodation

The university student accommodation office offers priority accommodation for care leavers all year round and for the duration of your course.

E: studentaccommodation@westminster.ac.uk,
T: 020 7911 5000 Ext 65817 and 66127

Counselling

Individual counselling or group counselling is available. An assessment appointment will be offered to establish what support is required.

E: counselling@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5000 ext. 66899

Disability Learning Support and Mentoring Support

Care leavers with a disability can access support from Disability Learning Support.



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Students with long term mental health problems, such as chronic anxiety and depression, schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder and conditions such as Asperger syndrome and ADHD can have mentoring support.

E: DLS@westminster.ac.uk, T: 020 3 506 8800

[This Is Us Community](#) [click here](#)



AMG/ March 2025

Academic Support

The Academic Learning Development Centre aims to support you in your learning and academic development. Their role is to help you reach your academic potential, whatever programme you are on. The Centre offers one-to-one academic skills tutorials and workshops in several areas like essay writing, presentations and critical thinking. [Click here](#)

Care leavers organisations

Charity Become – [click here](#)

Freephone: 0800 023 2033

advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Rees Foundation – [click here](#)

Drive Forward Foundation – [click here](#)

T: 020 7936 3685

The free interview clothes organisations we collaborate with are;

Dress for Success (for women) [click here](#)

Smart Works (for women) – [click here](#)

Suited & Booted (for men) [click here](#)



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Example Letter From Leaving Care Tea

My ref:
Your ref:
Date:
Contact:
Direct dial:
Email:



Chief Executive:

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

Re:

Address:

I can confirm that the above-named young person, was subject to a Full Care Order under section 31 Children Act 1989 that was granted to Slough Children Services Trust on the is now a Care Leaver as has turned 18. I enclose herewith the copy of the Court order for your information.

has been in the care of

Please do contact me on the above number if you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Social Worker

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