Care Leavers Contacts

Care Leaver Co-ordinator and Adviser
Anne McGrath, responsible for monitoring the provision and support for care leavers. Anne McGrath also 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.

studentadvice@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

studentaccommodation@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 65817

Counselling and Mentoring Support
Individual counselling or group counselling is available. An assessment appointment will be offered to establish what support is required. Students with long term mental health problems, such as chronic anxiety and depression, ongoing eating problems, schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder and conditions such as Asperger syndrome and ADHD can have mentoring support.

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

Care Leavers

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. The following bursary is the statutory minimum support you can expect from your Local Authority;

- A statutory Care Leavers bursary of £2,000
Some Local Authorities provide additional financial help with course materials such as purchasing a laptop and may contribute towards travel expenses, accommodation, tuition fees or other costs. (These payments are not normally taken into account when calculating your entitlement to Student Finance England funding)

- Help and support with vacation accommodation
Local Authorities also have a responsibility to offer assistance with accommodation and other costs related to entering higher education. The £2,000 bursary cannot be paid by the Local Authority towards these costs.

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. 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 your parent(s). This means your assessment for your maintenance loan will not be based on your parent’s household income so you should receive the maximum amount.
University Support cont’d…

Disability Learning Support
Care leavers with a disability can access support from Disability Learning Support.
DLS@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5000 ext 68800

Careers
The Career Development Centre has a designated member of staff, Stephanie Pemberton, to help care leavers find employment and help you with your career development. Priority is given for Career Mentoring.
S.Pemberton@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 65184

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 a number of areas like essay writing, presentations and critical thinking.
https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/study-skills-and-training

➢ Maintenance Grant
Students starting their course from September 2016 will not be eligible for a Maintenance Grant due to new funding rules.

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 (same contact number as Care Leaver 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 has to 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: 020 350 68800

University funding

➢ University Care Leavers Bursary
The university offers a Care Leavers Bursary of £750 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. Contact:
E: studentfunding@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5000 ext 66989

➢ 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 information, please see: www.westminster.ac.uk/less

➢ Unite Foundation Accommodation Scholarships
The University of Westminster has a partnership with the Unite Foundation. Each year, Unite offers a number of full accommodation scholarships for Care Leavers and Estranged students to live in Unite Hall accommodation. Applications close towards the end of May 2019 for the academic year 19/20. Please get in touch with Anne McGrath, Care Leaver Adviser for an application pack.
E: studentadvice@westminster.ac.uk and see http://www.unitefoundation.co.uk/

➢ University of Westminster Graduation Bursaries - up to £1,000 or more
In collaboration with the Sir John Cass Foundation and the Hollick Family Charitable Trust, The University of Westminster is delighted to now offer a number of Graduation Bursaries for final year Care Leavers that will be awarded July 2019. The bursaries can assist students with graduation costs and general living expenses towards the end of your studies. A successful application for a bursary will be dependent on a student successfully completing their course. Applications for 18/19 opened March 2019. Please get in touch with Anne McGrath, Care Leaver Adviser, for an application form.
E: studentadvice@westminster.ac.uk
Money management

Making ends meet on a limited budget is a challenging task. Spending plans are a useful way of making sure that you budget carefully and don’t overspend. The Advice Service has a Financial Capability Adviser, Laura Wood (same contact number as Care Leaver Adviser), who can help you create a spending plan which can be used to balance your incoming funds with your outgoing costs. Budgeting can help you ensure that you have enough money left over to pay rent, fuel bills and food costs. Completing a budgeting plan is a useful way of managing your finances and can help save money.

Postgraduate Scholarship – full tuition fee award

If you have successfully completed your undergraduate study and achieved a minimum Upper Second Class Honours or above, you may be eligible to apply for the university Postgraduate Care Leavers Scholarship for 19/20

You should hold an offer for a full-time Masters at the University. You must have been aged 25 or under when you entered higher education (i.e. your first degree) and were also under the care of your local authority for a period of at least 13 weeks up until the age of 18. Please see; Care Leaver Scholarship Link

E: scholarships@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5000 ext 66257/66258/66259

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, 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 Stephanie Pemberton, Careers Consultant
E: S.Pemberton@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5184

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 several organisations 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 in order to be referred. If you would like a referral to one of these organisations, please contact:

Anne McGrath
E: studentadvice@westminster.ac.uk
T: 020 7911 5000 ext 66080
External Funding - Grants (these don't need to be repaid)

Some organisations help young people in need by awarding grants. Read websites carefully for full eligibility details before applying. Usually, grants are made 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.
[www.thecareleaversfoundation.org](http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org)

**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.
[www.capstonecareleaverstrust.org](http://www.capstonecareleaverstrust.org)

**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.
[www.buttleUK.org](http://www.buttleUK.org)

**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.
[www.sparkfoundation.org.uk](http://www.sparkfoundation.org.uk)

**Lawrence Atwell’s Charity**
Awards grants of £100-£1,500 to young people aged 16-26 to help with training courses, including buying equipment, living expenses during the course and fees for tuition, enrolment or exams.

**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.
[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

**Turn2Us**
Is a grant search tool. Enter your postcode for info on grants you could apply for.
[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Struggling to pay utility bills?**
Some major providers have debt relief funds. See which ones, and how to apply at [www.charisgrants.com](http://www.charisgrants.com).

*May 2019 AMG*