



# Care-Experienced and Estranged Students Guide





At the University of Southampton and Southampton University Students' Union (SUSU), we are passionate about ensuring that all students can get the most out of their university experience but recognise that many students face barriers in achieving this.

To address this gap, we have created the Care-Experienced and Estranged Student Guide - a resource to help you navigate student life at the University of Southampton with confidence and support. This guide has been co-designed with care-experienced students to provide tailored information, advice and guidance to help you thrive personally and professionally whilst with us at Southampton.

“ Being in care doesn't define you. You are so many things beyond being in care. ”

## Key Contacts

You can find a list of key contacts for care-experienced and estranged students here:

The Student Inclusion Team

[studentinclusion@soton.ac.uk](mailto:studentinclusion@soton.ac.uk)

The Care Leaver Student Contact

[careleavers@soton.ac.uk](mailto:careleavers@soton.ac.uk)

The Estranged Student Contact

[estrangedstudents@soton.ac.uk](mailto:estrangedstudents@soton.ac.uk)

SUSU Advice Centre

[advice@susu.org](mailto:advice@susu.org)



The Student Inclusion Team offer a designated contact for all care experienced and estranged students during their studies. SUSU Advice Centre (who are independent from the University) also have a direct contact for all care experienced and estranged students.

## Definitions

- **Care-experienced students** are individuals who have been, or are currently, in care at any point in their lives - regardless of duration. This includes those who have been in foster care, residential care, kinship care, or adopted after being looked-after.
- **Estranged students** are those under 25 years old studying without the support and approval of their parents due to breakdown in their relationship.

## Financial Support

### Internal Bursaries and funds

#### **The Care Leaver and Estranged Student Bursary**

The Care Leaver and Estranged Student Bursary of £2000 is eligible to all care leavers and estranged students studying at undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) levels. It is paid over two instalments in November and June to all eligible full-time enrolled students per academic year. At PGT and PGR levels, you are eligible for the first year of postgraduate study only.

Click here for more information: [Financial Support for Care Leavers](#) | [The Student Hub](#) | [University of Southampton](#)



#### **Financial Support Package – Undergraduates Only**



The Financial Support Package is available to UG students from a low household income for an additional £1000-£2000 per annum. If you are assessed as an estranged or care-experienced student, you are considered an independent student by Student Finance so your family income will not be considered.

Click here for more information: [Undergraduate bursaries](#) | [University of Southampton](#) or contact the Financial Support Team at [stufunds@soton.ac.uk](mailto:stufunds@soton.ac.uk)

### **The Student Support Fund**

The Student Support fund is a limited pot of money for UK Home students (at all levels of study) who find themselves in financial difficulty.

Click here for more information: [Student Support Fund](#) | [The Student Hub](#) | [University of Southampton](#).

If you require support to complete an application, contact the Financial Support team here: [Contact Us](#) | [The Student Hub](#) | [University of Southampton](#). Alternatively, you can request support from the SUSU Advice Centre here: [advice@susu.org](mailto:advice@susu.org).



### The International Student Support Fund

The International Student Support fund can offer a single payment of up to £540 for international students who come into financial difficulty.

Click here for more information: [International Student Support Fund](#)



### The Health and Wellbeing Fund

Care leavers and estranged students are eligible for this fund which is evidenced by the receipt of the care leaver and estranged student bursary. This is a discretionary grant to assist students with health costs which cannot be reasonably addressed by the NHS or University support and is necessary to engage with their university degrees.

Click here for more information and eligibility criteria: [Funding your Opportunities Health and Wellbeing Fund | The Student Hub | University of Southampton](#)

“ There are so many people here that are so proud of you and are willing to help. You should be proud of yourself too! It's not easy navigating university without family, but there are other people who can help you get by even when it's hard.

### Technology Grant

Care leavers and estranged students may qualify for this grant to help access the technology needed to fully participate in their course.

Click here for more information: [Funding your Opportunities Technology Grant | The Student Hub | University of Southampton](#)

### University of Southampton PhD Scholarships

If you are interested in pursuing doctoral study, you can apply for a Southampton PhD scholarship to cover tuition fees, living expenses and research costs. Click here for more information: [PhD Scholarships | Doctoral College | University of Southampton](#)



## Tip!

Empower yourself with knowledge; about what it means to be estranged, about what support is available at university, about yourself and your needs as an estranged student.

It can be hard to push on in university feeling like no one else understands what you've been through, but you are not alone- Student Inclusion and Wellbeing teams are there to support you so please speak up if there's something you need or if you are struggling!

## External Financial Support

### Higher Education Bursary - Care Leavers in England Only

You may be eligible for a Higher Education Bursary from your Local Authority worth £2000. Contact the Local Authority Leaving Care Services or your Personal Adviser to find out more. For further assistance, contact a designated care leaver contact at [careleavers@soton.ac.uk](mailto:careleavers@soton.ac.uk) or [advice@SUSU.org](mailto:advice@SUSU.org)

### Student Finance

Student Finance provide tailored information for care-experienced and estranged students who are seeking tuition fee loans. You can find out more using the links below:

- [Finance and funding for care experienced students | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)
- [Financial support for students not supported by their parents \(estranged\) | Undergraduate, Conservatoires | UCAS](#)



### Leathersellers' Undergraduate Student Grants – UG and Care Experienced Only

The Leathersellers' Undergraduate Student Grants Programme offers care experienced students pursuing an undergraduate degree an additional small grant annually dependent on an application process. Click here for more information: [Leathersellers' Undergraduate Student Grants Programme](#).

**Buttle UK Grants – All estranged students up to  
the age of 20**

Buttle UK is a charity that provides 10,000 grants to young people who find themselves in financial hardship. Click here for more information: [Apply for a Grant - Buttle UK](#).

**Snowdon Master's Scholarships – for Disabled  
Students Only**

The Snowdon Master's Scholarships is available to students with a known disability – excluding mental illness. Click here for more information: [Scholarships – Snowdon Trust](#).

**Additional Scholarship Information**

[Educational grants for students from trusts and charities - The Scholarship Hub](#)

[Scholarships for UK students from Ethnic Minorities - Save the Student](#)

**Ignite Your Success – UG and Care-Experienced Only**

Ignite Your Success is a 3-year, Alumni-funded undergraduate program at the University of Southampton designed to empower students from underrepresented backgrounds (including care-experienced).

**Key features include:**

- Financial support: £3,000 awards & £10,000 bursaries
- Mentoring: Personalised mentoring throughout your studies
- Career opportunities: Internship support and networking with alumni and employers
- Community and wellbeing: Peer connections, social events, and dedicated support staff

All eligible students will be contacted via their university email before they have started their first year of their course.



Click here for more information: [Ignite | The Student Hub | University of Southampton](#).



“ Let people help you. You are not all by yourself, and you don't have to do everything by yourself anymore. There are amazing people within the university who want to support you and see you succeed! ”

## Accommodation

### University Accommodation

As a care leaver and/or estranged student, you can apply to live in University halls of residence 365 days a year. You may be able to secure additional financial assistance on accommodation if you also live with a disability. Students that live in halls of residence are entitled to Wi-Fi and a bus pass. Click here for more information: [Our Halls of Residence | University of Southampton](#)

### The Southampton Accreditation Scheme for Student Housing (SASSH)

SASSH provides a council-backed service to help you find safe, high-quality accommodation with flexible terms. Click here for more information: [Student accommodation in Southampton – houses homes flats housing](#). For independent support, contact: [advice@susu.org](mailto:advice@susu.org).

### Guarantors

Many agents and private landlords will ask for a guarantor for each tenant before agreeing to let a property. A guarantor is where a third party, based in the UK, agrees to guarantee your rent will be paid. Finding a guarantor can be particularly challenging, especially for estranged students. A few suggestions to help navigate this:

- A housemate or friend's parent may be happy to guarantor. There are no guarantees, but this can happen!
- If comfortable, explain your circumstances to the landlord or letting agent. They may be sympathetic to your personal circumstances and, in some cases, waive the need to have a guarantor. For example, if there are multiple residents, there is a reduced financial risk.
- Alternatively, landlords may request a payment (e.g., between 6-12 months of rent) upfront.



## Housing Hand

Housing Hand can act as third-party guarantors for an additional fee – although a cosigner may be necessary to access such services. This can act as an alternative service if living outside University accommodation. Click here for more information: [Guarantor Service | Housing Hand - Rent Guarantor Providers](#)

## Homelessness Support

If you find yourself in a position where you may be at risk of facing homelessness, here are some resources that may be able to assist:



Southampton  
University Student  
Union (SUSU)

[advice@susu.org](mailto:advice@susu.org)

SUSU may be able to advise on a range of matters regarding wellbeing to housing. Click here to find out more: [Home - SUSU](#).

Shelter UK

[Home - Shelter  
England](#)

Shelter UK provides resources on housing and homelessness situations and may be able to assist from eviction to homelessness support.

DePaul –  
Nightstops

[Nightstop -  
emergency  
accommodation for  
young people](#)

Nightstops provide homeless people under 25 with free overnight accommodation in the home of a trained volunteer.

Centrepoint

[Do you need help? |  
Centrepoint](#)

Designated support for 16–25-year-olds at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including if you are at risk of homelessness.

No Limits

[No Limits | Young  
People's Support  
Charity](#)

No Limits support young people up until the age of 26 on a variety of issues, from mental health to sexual health, drug abuse, money issues and homelessness.

Southampton City  
Council

[Homelessness advice  
& housing options](#)

You may be able to get advice from a Housing Advisor at Southampton City Council when facing risk of homelessness.



“ No one is going to judge you for needing help. You are only human. There are people out there who are willing to listen to your experiences and give you some support. You can do it! ”

## Mental Wellbeing and Pastoral Support

### Wellbeing Team

The Wellbeing team provide a range of support services including access to a Wellbeing Practitioner, counselling and mental health services. You can reach the team via the Student Hub, who are available 365 days, 24 hours a day. Click here for contact information: [Contact us](#) | [The Student Hub](#) | [University of Southampton](#)

### University of Southampton Student Disability & Inclusion Team

If you have a disability, specific learning difference, or long term physical or mental health condition, you are encouraged to declare this to the University to assess if you may have any reasonable adjustments necessary for your course. Click here for more information: [Disability support](#) | [Student Disability & Wellbeing](#) | [University of Southampton](#)

You may be able to claim Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) via Student Finance England. For support and guidance, contact the Disability and Inclusion Team via [studenthub@soton.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@soton.ac.uk).

### Student Support Review (SSRev)

The SSRev process is a structured approach to supporting students whose health, wellbeing, or behaviour may be affecting their studies or life at the University. It consists of three stages (informal, formal, and exceptional case reviews) designed to collaboratively identify solutions and provide necessary support.

Click here for more information: [Student Support Review Regulations](#) | [University of Southampton](#)



**Tip!**

You don't have to do it all on your own. Accept the help that the University are offering you, it doesn't make you weak or unable! I wish someone told me that it's not going to be the same as school. People aren't going to be aware that you're struggling unless you tell them. They are not constantly watching over you like they do in college/sixth form, please reach out if you need it.

**Report and Support**

In the event you experience any kind of harassment, discrimination or bullying, you can report either with your details or anonymously the incident(s) to the Universities' Report and Support website. Click here to access: [Report + Support - Report + Support - University of Southampton](#)

**Academic Support****Personal Academic Tutors (PATs)**

All UG and PGT students are allocated a PAT in the first term of starting Southampton. A PAT is a designated academic staff contact who can support your academic transitions and progress whilst at University. You should feel encouraged to meet at least once a semester and disclose difficulties that may affect your progress. You can also reach out to a Senior Tutor for further support.

**Academic Skills Service**

The Academic Skills service can provide advice and guidance to students on a variety of study skills areas including:

- Time management and critical thinking
- Writing and presentation skills
- Exam preparation
- Data analysis
- Notetaking

Click here for more information: [Home - Academic Skills Service - LibGuides@Southampton at University of Southampton Library](#)

**PhD Supervisors**

If you are a PGR student, your supervisor(s) are here to support your academic development but also provide pastoral support.

Click here to find out more information on the responsibilities of yourself and your supervisory team: [Research supervision](#).

To foster a good supervisory relationship, click here for the Supervisor-PGR Partnership Agreement: [Partnership Agreement](#)



“

Do not let anyone tell you that you should not pursue university due to your background. Lived experience is expertise, and you have so much to bring not just to the university but life more broadly. Your insights are valuable, and you are absolutely not alone. I know it is immensely difficult at times, but please do not be discouraged. There are so many people who want to see you succeed.

”

## Community

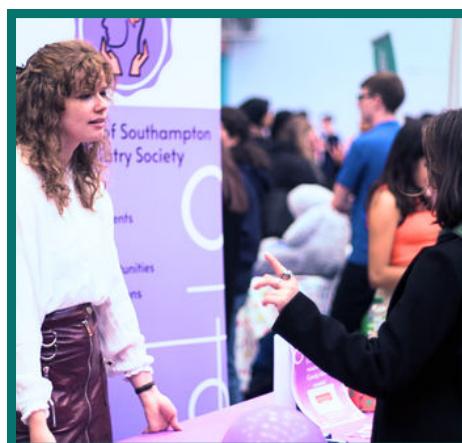
### Social Mobility Network

The Social Mobility Network provides a space for students and staff from low socioeconomic backgrounds to connect, collaborate, and drive change. Its goals are to break down barriers faced by these groups before, during, and after their time at the university, focusing on practical changes through member-led initiatives. Click here for more information: [Social Mobility Student and Staff Network - Home](#)

### SUSU Clubs and Societies

SUSU offers over 200 clubs and societies that cater to a wide range of interests. Whether you're into sports, arts, culture, or academics, there's something for everyone. Joining a society is a great way to meet new people, discover new hobbies, and make the most of your university experience. Find out more using this link: [SUSU - Clubs & Societies](#).

Recognising that financial concerns can limit participation, SUSU have bursaries available to help subsidise costs. To check your eligibility, contact: [suactivities@soton.ac.uk](mailto:suactivities@soton.ac.uk).



### Christmas Meals

The Gold from the Stone Foundation provides Christmas meals for care leavers on Christmas day. Click here for more information: [General 1 – The Gold from The Stone Foundation](#)



## External Community Support

### All of Us Student-Led Community

The All of Us Community is a national platform for estranged and care-experienced students at any stage/level of their university journey. Click here to find out more: [All of Us](#)

### Estranged and Care Estranged Students (EaCES)

EaCES is a peer support website for students who are estranged, care-experienced, care leavers, orphaned or at risk of/wishing to become estranged. Click here to find out more: [EaCES - Meet other people like us](#) and [EaCES - The EaCES Handbook](#)

### Stand Alone Charity

Archived content from Stand Alone can be found here: [Guides Archive - Stand Alone](#)

### Rees Foundation

The Rees Foundation provides resources for care-experienced people on issues such as careers support, financial assistance and virtual sessions to connect with other members of the care-experienced community. Click here to find out more: [Rees Foundation - The Rees Foundation | Life-long support for care leavers](#)

### Become

Become supports children in care and young care leavers when transitioning from care. Click here to find out more: [Home Page - Become](#)

### EaCES Pen Pal Exchange

EaCES offers a pen pal exchange for those in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. All levels of study ranging from UG to PhD are encouraged to sign up and get matched with a pen pal based on shared hobbies and interests. Click here to find out more: [EaCES Pen Pal Exchange](#)

### Care Leavers Association

This is a user-led charity that seeks to improve the lives of care leavers through a series of projects, campaigns and lobbying. Click here to find out more: [The Care Leavers Association](#)

### The Black Care Experience

An Instagram page dedicated to Black children and young people within and leaving the care system maintain their culture, identity and heritage. Click here to find out more: [The Black Care Experience™ \(@theblackcareexperience\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

“Don't give up even when it's hard. So many people will listen to you if you let them.”



## Crisis Support

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and do not need immediate medical attention or do not believe yourself or someone else is in danger, these are a series of crisis lines available for contact:

Samaritans

Call: 116123

Papyrus Hopeline

Call: 0800064141 Text: 07786209697

Shout

Text: 85258

Sane

Call: 03003047000

Switchboard (for LGBTQ+ community)

Call: 08000119100

Lighthouse (a local service in  
Southampton)

[The Lighthouse Southampton Crisis Lounges | Out  
of hours drop-in services by Solent Mind and  
Southern Health Foundation Trust.](#)

**Connect with us**



@union\_soton  
@uni\_southampton



[www.susu.org](http://www.susu.org)  
[www.southampton.ac.uk](http://www.southampton.ac.uk)