Student Money and Accommodation Advice

**Care Experienced Student Support**

## Who is a ‘Care Leaver’?

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 defines a care leaver as a young person who has been in the care of a local authority for at least 13 weeks including at the time of their 16th birthday.

### What if I don’t meet the full requirements?

In order to receive university support and advice, London Met students do not have to meet the full legal requirements of a care leaver, and/or can simply identify as ‘care-experienced’. We encourage these students to declare as Care Experienced upon registration with the University (even if they didn’t do so via their UCAS application).

London Met understands the specific challenges you may face as a Care Experienced student. We offer a personalised support package covering money, accommodation and pastoral support.

A series of information sheets are available to our students (some of which are referred to within this document). Topics include funding available to full-time and part-time students, students with children, and student halls of residence: [www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice)

## 1) [Student Finance England](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)

### Who is a ‘Care Leaver’ with Student Finance England (SFE)?

A young person who has been in the care of, or been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) for a period of at least 13 weeks before the age of 16, and hasn’t returned to the care of their parent(s) between leaving care and starting their course.

If you qualify as a care leaver with Student Finance England (SFE) you are classified as an ‘independent student’; this is important regarding the financial support you may receive.

Students won’t be classed as care leavers if:

* they’ve been looked after by family members or legal guardians (without the involvement of their LA)
* they have a residency order
* they have been given accommodation or supported housing by a charity

Students in these situations may still be eligible to apply as an ‘independent student’ in other ways, for example, by showing they are estranged from their parents. Please see our Estranged Students information sheet for further details which can be found at [www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice)

Students leaving the care of their LA are able to apply for the same support from SFE as other students whether you are studying full-time or part-time at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

For example, as a full-time undergraduate student you are likely to be awarded the funding listed below provided you are a ‘Home’ student commencing your studies from September/February 2023/24, have no previous university study and have been granted ‘independent status’ (or have a household income of under £25,000).

Tuition Fee Loan – up to £9,250 (to be repaid)

Maintenance Loan – up to £13,022 (to be repaid)

If you are eligible for benefits while registered as a full-time student you may be able to receive up to £14,202.

Students who are under 25, not married/in a civil partnership, and do not have children are usually assessed for student finance based on the income of their biological or adoptive parents (even when living with another relative who supports them financially, such as a grandparent). However, students leaving care are generally classified by SFE as an ‘independent student’ meaning that a student’s biological or adoptive parents’ household income is not taken into account when calculating how much student finance you’re entitled to receive.

### Evidence

Students will be asked to provide evidence that they were looked after, or have been given accommodation by, their LA. Usually this is a letter from the local council or care authority (often directly from a student’s social worker or personal adviser). This letter should confirm a student:

* was under the care of their LA,
* has now left the care of the LA, and
* is a care leaver as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Students only have to provide this evidence once, at the start of their course.

If a student can’t provide the evidence requested, they are advised to first contact the University’s [Student Money and Accommodation Advice team](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice).

## 2) University funding

IMPORTANT: Receipt of the Care Leavers’ Bursary is conditional on you adhering to a minimum attendance rate of 75% throughout the academic year.

Please note that for students starting in September the final rate of attendance is recorded in February, for determining eligibility for the second and final instalments of the Care Leavers’ Bursary. For students starting in February this data is recorded in May.

### Care Leaver Bursary

London Met is pleased to offer a Care Leaver Bursary for full-time students of £1,500 for each progressive year of your undergraduate degree. This is intended to help towards course costs and basic living expenses and is usually paid in three instalments at the beginning of each term.

Applications for the bursary are usually made automatically when you apply for your student funding (it is important you indicate you are a Care Leaver on your SFE application and provide the necessary evidence as explained in section one of this information sheet).

Please see link for further details:

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/applying/funding-your-studies/bursaries-and-grants/care-leaver-bursary/](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/applying/funding-your-studies/bursaries-and-grants/care-leaver-bursary/)

If you are a parent and/or live with a partner you will need to apply to the University directly. Please email [cees@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:cees@londonmet.ac.uk) for further information.

### Hardship Support Fund

The hardship fund is intended to help students who are facing particular financial difficulty to remain on their course. Care Leavers are treated as priority applicants and whilst there is no guarantee of a successful application, we strongly recommend you apply. Please see link for further details:

<http://student.londonmet.ac.uk/fees-and-funding/hardship-fund/>

Please note, year on year funding is dependent on future budget availability and is not guaranteed.

## 3) Additional funding

As a Care Leaver studying in Higher Education often your registered Local Authority will provide a Higher Education Bursary of £2,000 towards your first year of study. Please speak to your Local Authority or social worker / personal adviser for more information about available support or contact the [Student Money and Accommodation Advice team](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/advice) to assist you.

Please note that due to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), company/individual consent to share may be required to exchange information.

Please see below for contact details of your registered Local Authority within and outside London:

* within London <http://directory.londoncouncils.gov.uk/>
* outside London <http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1>

## 4) Accommodation

London Met is proud to be one of the chosen universities whose students can apply for the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme: [www.londonmet.ac.uk/applying/funding-your-studies/scholarships/unite-foundation-scholarship-scheme/](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/applying/funding-your-studies/scholarships/unite-foundation-scholarship-scheme/)

Scholarship applicants need to be:

* aged 25 or under
* a statutory care leaver or estranged from their family
* starting or studying their first undergraduate degree
* UK ‘Home’ fee status

Care Leavers needing a guarantor for accommodation should reach out to their local authority initially for support. You might be able to look into this with your personal adviser or social worker. You can also contact [Help at Hand](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/) to find out what Children’s Services should be doing to help you and whether they can act as a guarantor for you.

If your local authority is unable to be your guarantor, there are companies that offer a guarantor service such as Housing Hand – [www.housinghand.co.uk/guarantor-service/](http://www.housinghand.co.uk/guarantor-service/) and UK Guarantor – <https://ukguarantor.com/>. Please note there are fees for these services.

## 5) Pastoral support

We provide two named contacts – Eloise Peters and Isabel Patrick – who can assist you with specialist support from when you apply to study at London Met until the end of your studies here. In addition to assisting you with funding from SFE and checking you are receiving all the financial support available to you, Eloise and Isabel may also use your pathway plan and work in partnership with your Social Worker/personal adviser to coordinate the best arrangements, and support, to suit your needs. They can also advise on any other concerns you may have and will be able to effectively refer you internally or externally. If you have Care-Leaver-related enquiries for Eloise and Isabel, please email [cees@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:cees@londonmet.ac.uk)

Students are also notified of Care Leaver workshops throughout the year and provided with opportunities to attend external events such as motivational speaking, presentations, careers, improving study skills, work experience placements and away days. More information about London Met’s support for Care Leavers can also be found here:

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/school-programmes-and-outreach/care-leavers](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/school-programmes-and-outreach/care-leavers)

## Additional support and resources

Become — a voice and a champion for young people in the UK living in care. They believe, as we do, that every care experienced young person should receive the support, encouragement and opportunities to enjoy life and achieve. [www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

Buttle UK — offers grant programmes which have been helping children and young people in need across the UK since 1953. [www.buttleuk.org](http://www.buttleuk.org)

Coram Voice — enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

Drive Forward Foundation — has been changing the lives of care leavers since 1993 and offers CV and interview skills as well as access to a professional network of entrepreneurs and professionals from almost every industry to open your eyes to different career paths and ways to succeed. [www.driveforwardfoundation.org](http://www.driveforwardfoundation.org)

Help at Hand - is a free advice, assistance and representation service open to all children and young people in care, leaving care, and those living away from home. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/>

Samaritans — 24 hours a day the Samaritans provide emotional support for people who are struggling to cope. Telephone: 116 123. [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Turn2us — helps people in financial need access welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help. Their website has a free and easy to use benefits calculator and grants search: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

The Social Security Fraud Act 2001

The Student Money and Accommodation Advice Service reminds all clients who may be in receipt of benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and/or Local Authority of the need to disclose to the DWP/Local Authority any relevant changes of circumstances and of the need for clients to make full and accurate disclosure of all the relevant facts to the DWP and/or Local Authority.

The content of this information sheet has been compiled using information from external sources, as well as University data. The content has been carefully checked and is given in good faith. However, the University cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of any inaccuracy. August 2023