

Challenges experienced by students from a care background

When coming to university, students from a care background are likely to face a number of particular challenges - both financially and emotionally - due to the potential lack of a family support system which most other students have. With [only 6% going onto higher education](#), students from a care background have one of the lowest participation rates across all student groups and those who make it to university are [38% more likely to withdraw](#) than the average student.

Financial difficulties are one of the reasons underlying the relatively low retention of students from a care background. Although local authorities and universities offer [financial support](#), care leaver students have to stretch their annual budget so that it covers the summer months since they normally lack a family home to return to. Therefore, careful [budgeting](#) is essential. This is a skill most students have to learn when coming to university (although often with support from family to do so). However, for students from a care background it can be particularly challenging given they suddenly have to handle large amounts of money transferred to them at the beginning of term.

In addition to the difficulties in affording all-year-round [accommodation](#) comes the struggle of finding accommodation. While most students rely on their family to act as guarantor or provide money for a deposit, care leaver students usually do not have this option. Some of their local authorities (who act as the “corporate parent”) may offer help with this but many do not.

These complications, as well as the unsettling conditions experienced throughout childhood and/or puberty, can deteriorate the [mental health and wellbeing](#) of students from a care background and have a significant impact on their academic performance as well as personal development. [Christmas holidays](#), for instance, can be an emotionally trying period for those who do not have a family to celebrate with and may be feeling alone in their halls of residence.

Finally, even though people from a care background who made it to university are clearly very academically capable, a troubled childhood and/or being hosted by various foster families or children’s homes means that their schooling may have been discontinuous, at various schools or interrupted throughout. Therefore, it may be helpful to engage with the [academic support](#) provided at university as much as possible.