

## What is a care leaver?

You can apply for student finance as a care leaver if you meet all of the criteria listed below:

- You've been in the care of, or given accommodation by, your local authority
- You were in care for at least 13 weeks
- Your time in care ended after you turned 16
- In most cases, you have not returned to the care of your parent(s) before the first day of the first academic year of your course

There are some cases where you might be under the care of your local authority, but living with your parents. For example, a living together trial period.

If you live at home but stay in the care of the local authority for three months after you turn 16 and before the first day of the first academic year of your course, you won't be considered under your parents' care.

In this case, you'll be considered as independent when it comes to getting support for living costs. If you're considered a care leaver but live in your parent's home, your support will be based on your own income, but you'll still be eligible for the parental home loan rate for living costs.

## What do I need to send to prove that I'm a care leaver?

You can provide evidence of being a care leaver by sending us:

- a letter from your local authority; or
- a letter from your case worker or social worker.

This letter must confirm:

- that you were looked after by a local authority (this includes being placed in foster care by your local authority)
- the dates that you were in care
- that you have not returned to the care of your parent(s) prior to the first day of the first academic year of your course

You only have to send evidence of your care leaver status when you first apply for student finance for your course. For any years of your course after that, you'll be awarded the maximum amount of Maintenance Loan you're entitled to (if you want it).

## What does this mean for my student finance application?

If you get student finance as a care leaver, you won't be asked to provide any of your parent's financial details. You'll be assessed as an independent student and will be awarded the maximum amount of Maintenance Loan you're entitled to.

Remember to always apply for student finance as soon as possible.

Universities and colleges also provide care leaver support. You can talk to advisers within Student Services / Wellbeing or the Student Union.

## You can also visit the following care leaver advice services:

- The Become Trust - [www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)
- Brightside - [www.brightside.org.uk](http://www.brightside.org.uk)
- National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) - [www.nnecl.org](http://www.nnecl.org)
- The Care Leavers' Association - [www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com)

And remember, your Care Leaver Team at your local authority can help support you with your student finance information and any additional support available.