

**GO**

**FURTHER**

**GO**

**HIGHER**

**A GUIDE TO GETTING INTO  
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE**

# WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

## PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

- Your Personal Education Plan
- Your Pathway Plan
- Why is a Pathway Plan so important?

Page 4

## GETTING THERE

- The different routes into higher education

Page 7

## APPRENTICESHIPS

- What is an apprenticeship?
- Do I need qualifications?
- How do they work?
- The advantages and disadvantages
- John's story

Page 10

## APPLYING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- Research your options
- Support available
- What is UCAS?
- Should you say you have been in care?
- Your personal statement
- Your reference

Page 15

## WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER HIGHER EDUCATION?

- The benefits of higher education
- What is higher education?
- What opportunities are there?

Page 6

## FURTHER EDUCATION

- What is further education?
- What qualifications should I take?
- Financial support

Page 8

## HIGHER EDUCATION

- Where and what will I study?
- Katie's story

Page 13

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- From your university or college
- From your local authority
- Esther's story
- Managing your money

Page 22

## USEFUL WEB LINKS

Page 27

THE INSTITUTIONS ON YOUR DOORSTEP  
Page 25

# HAVE YOU CONSIDERED UNIVERSITY?

Universities and other higher education providers such as colleges welcome care leavers, yet some looked after children don't think about it as something they could achieve. The ones who apply often do very well, and there are many more who have the ability to succeed and would benefit from the opportunities that higher education offers. It can be life changing!

There are important times ahead, when you will be faced with choices about your education and future career. Higher education may not be for everyone, but it is an option for everyone who has the potential. If you are motivated and supported you will achieve academically and be able to progress to study in higher education.

This guide will take you through some of the things you need to consider, the stages you'll go through, the support available to you and how to apply.

To reach your full potential

# go further go higher!



# PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

Your local authority is responsible for helping you to achieve your full potential and supporting you in fulfilling your ambitions and aspirations.

## Your Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Your local authority will help you get the best results you can, support you to attend and do well at school. The PEP is a record of what needs to happen to enable you to do this until you are 16 and is the joint responsibility of your local authority and your school.

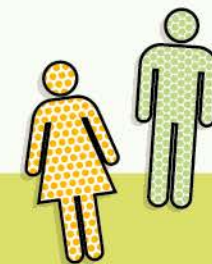
## Your Pathway Plan

Just before you turn 16, your social worker will contact you to talk about what your plans are for the next few years and what support you will need.

This can cover many aspects of your life such as where you will live, money, jobs, health and hobbies. This is known as your 'Pathway Plan'. The purpose of your Pathway Plan is to ensure that you are supported both financially and in reaching your goals. Make sure you tell them about your interests and what you want to achieve in the future.

Your Pathway Plan will include your plans for education, training and work. You need to make sure your Pathway Plan includes costs for your future education and training, such as:

- ➔ tuition fees
- ➔ exam and registration fees
- ➔ accommodation costs (including during holiday periods)
- ➔ living expenses
- ➔ transport to and from your training/course
- ➔ books and equipment
- ➔ childcare costs (if applicable)
- ➔ educational trips or work experience
- ➔ the cost of applying to university (such as UCAS fees, getting to open days or interviews)



## Why is a Pathway Plan so important?

Many young people leave care without the support to which they are entitled and find it difficult to access suitable housing, education and employment. If your Pathway Plan is considered fully, then you will be able to identify the steps you need to take in order to achieve your goals. Make sure that you speak to your personal adviser about your Pathway Plan.

If you are estranged from your parents but not currently in Local Authority care you may still be able to benefit from other forms of help and financial support to progress to and succeed in higher education.

For information and advice, please visit [www.standalone.org.uk/students](http://www.standalone.org.uk/students)



# WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER HIGHER EDUCATION?



Research shows that graduates are more likely to benefit from a good career and a healthy lifestyle

A chance to experience a vast range of activities, including sports, societies and charity fundraising

## The benefits of higher education

There are many potential advantages of studying at higher education level

You can gain the skills you need to help you achieve your dream job – whether an essential requirement to have one (like dentistry and nursing) or just to help you stand out from the competition

Many vocational programmes are directly related to work areas – such as accountancy, sports studies, surveying and teaching

A degree gives you the chance to earn more money in your adult working life as well as to make lasting friendships, adapt more quickly to a changing world and have greater confidence and self-esteem



## What is higher education?

Higher education refers to courses that are higher than a level 3 qualification. By 2020, it is estimated that 40% of the workforce will require higher level skills (the skills associated with higher education).

## What opportunities are there?

As a young person leaving care you have just as much potential as anyone else and it is important to know about the many opportunities available to you. Therefore it is crucial, whatever your circumstances, to do your research and carefully consider all of your options and that should include higher education.



A higher education qualification improves your chances of working in an area that you have a love, interest and passion for.

Higher education isn't for everyone, but if you are interested in further study there are plenty of resources available to help you decide which institution and course is right for you. [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk) can be a useful place to start!



# GETTING THERE

There are several routes into higher education – the diagram below helps to show this.



Level	Qualifications		
7	NVQ 5	Master's Degree / Doctorate	
6	Honours Degree		
5	Higher Apprenticeship or NVQ 4	Foundation Degree HND	Diploma in Higher Education
4		HNC	Certificate in Higher Education
3	Advanced Apprenticeship or NVQ 3	Vocational A level, BTEC Cert. or Diploma	AS or A2 levels
2	Apprenticeship or NVQ 2	BTEC First Diploma	GCSE grades A–C
	Apprentice route	Vocational route	Academic route

Options to consider at 18

Options to consider at 16

Options to consider at 14



# FURTHER EDUCATION

## What is further education?

Further education, is the name given to the next level of study you can take after you finish your GCSEs at school. This level of study can be quite flexible so once you've thought about what you're going to study, it's also worth considering which learning environment would suit you best. You could choose from a

**SCHOOL SIXTH FORM**

**SIXTH FORM COLLEGE**

**FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE**

**SPECIALIST COLLEGE**



Each of these learning environments has its own structure and atmosphere, and will offer a different range of subjects and courses.

## What qualifications should I take?

What you decide to study in further education can have an impact on what you can study at higher education level. You will need to research whether specific level 3 qualifications (and often GCSEs) are required for the subject you want to study and at your preferred universities and colleges.

For lots of courses, you will need a grade C in GCSE maths and English. Some may even ask for higher grades or additional subjects at GCSE. Being informed now will give you more options when the time comes to make up your mind.



## Which subjects should I choose?

It's an individual thing! You need to choose what is right for you and your future. You may:

- ➔ be good at certain subjects at school and would like to continue with them
- ➔ have a particular career in mind
- ➔ have a particular course or institution in mind
- ➔ have personal interests that you wish to pursue
- ➔ or you may wish to do a totally new subject area that will suit your strengths, and is of interest to you.

## Financial support – further education

### 16–19 Bursary

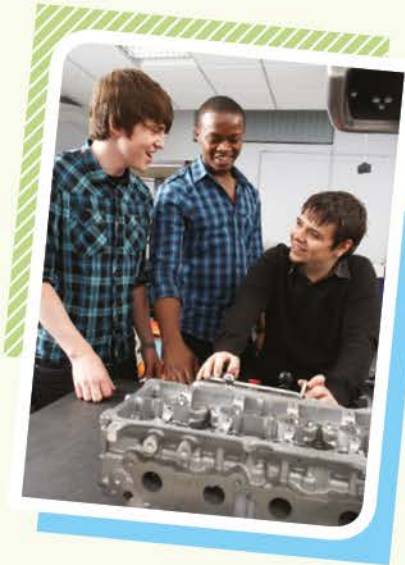
This is a bursary of £1,200 a year – paid directly by your school, college or training provider. It is specific funding for children in care and care leavers who are entering further education. You can use it to pay for costs like equipment for your course, lunch and transport to and from school or college.



# APPRENTICESHIPS

## What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are nationally designed training programmes for 16–24 year-olds who have left full-time education or are already in employment. They offer young people the opportunity to learn on the job with an employer – building up knowledge and skills, gaining qualifications and earning money all at the same time!



There are different levels of apprenticeship – Intermediate, Advanced, Higher and Degree.

## Do I need qualifications?

If you want to become an apprentice you will need to show that you have the ability to complete the programme. Normal entry to the advanced apprenticeship level is via 5 GCSEs with grades A\* to C with, ideally, English and maths being two of those subjects.

## How do they work?

Apprentices learn through a combination of their work, training provider and attendance at college. Much of the learning will be by doing things rather than having to remember facts, so if you don't enjoy school, this may be a more suitable option. You will still have to work hard though – the best apprenticeships are very competitive.

If you want to go on to gain a higher qualification and you have a supportive employer, you may be able to study on a part-time basis while continuing to receive a wage. In this way you can avoid the debts that full-time undergraduates face.

For details of how you can become an apprentice and to find out more, please see the following web links:

[www.apprentice-forward.org.uk](http://www.apprentice-forward.org.uk)

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

### ✓ ADVANTAGES

You get paid. The level of pay depends on your employer, the level and the skill area in which you are training.

You gain recognised qualifications NVQs, Key Skills and a Technical Certificate.

You will be trained to do a job.

### ✗ DISADVANTAGES

Although apprenticeships can lead to study at higher education level, it is important to realise that not all universities accept apprenticeships on their own. Choosing an apprenticeship route may limit your options for progression.

You may be more suited to classroom study and full time education.

Not all occupations offer apprenticeships and some careers require a degree.

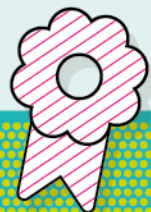


When I started my journey at Doncaster College, my first course was public services. It is a course where you learn about the public sector and it gets you the right information about joining the police force or army. In the 2 years I did my level 2 and I really enjoyed it as it was very hands on. We did a lot of outdoor activities too like kayaking which I love. After that course I did my Joinery level 2, I enjoyed this more than the public services course as I already had some knowledge about it and passed with flying colours.

In 2014 I was chosen to enrol onto a bricklaying apprenticeship with St Leger Homes in Doncaster. I am currently in my second year. I am taking all the opportunities that are available to me and hope to achieve employment from it when I have completed the apprenticeship.

College is a good opportunity to explore what you may be interested in, how do you know if you don't have a go? It allowed me to see what I was good at and decide on a plan for the future. I really enjoyed the fact that college is not like school and they treat you like an adult.

**John, bricklaying apprentice**



## HIGHER EDUCATION



The most traditional way of studying is at a university, however you can also study higher level qualifications in college.

Not everyone enters higher education at 18. Some people work for a few years and return to education when they feel ready to. Young people in care are just as capable of studying at this higher level, and you may decide to start your university education when you are slightly older. You will still be able to access some financial support if you decide to do this.

### Where and what will I study?

With over 500 higher education institutions offering more than 50,000 undergraduate courses in the UK, there is plenty of choice around! It can be confusing to know where to start, so a good first step is to think about the subject or career that you are interested in. There are lots of websites to help you find out which institutions offer the courses you are interested in studying. Some of these are:

- ➔ [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- ➔ [www.bestcourse4me.com](http://www.bestcourse4me.com)
- ➔ [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)







I always knew I wanted to become a Barrister. After searching the Prospects website I found that there were a few different paths, with doing a law degree at university being the quickest and most popular route. I set about searching a few universities on the internet and looking for entry requirements. I realised that I could pick any A-levels as long as I had a grade A in 3, so I chose the ones that I was good at and interested in. I decided to move away from home as I wanted the full university experience of living with other people and living on campus.

I've had so many opportunities at uni including the opportunity to study abroad next year and a scholarship to study for 4 weeks in South Korea in the summer. There are so many societies to get involved in and so much support. I've loved my time at uni so far.

Katie, LLB Law, The University of Sheffield



A higher education qualification can lead to increased earning potential, a wider range of opportunities and a more rewarding career. Many employers target graduates in their recruitment campaigns.



## APPLYING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

### Research your options

There are many ways in which you can research different higher education institutions and the courses that they offer. Lots of information is available online and each institution will also have their own prospectus and regular open days. If you want to order a prospectus or book a place on an open day, it's often possible to do this on the individual university's website. Open days are a great opportunity for you to get a feel for the university, its location, the facilities available, the accommodation and the course you are interested in. For more information on attending open days please see [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)

### What support do higher education providers have for care leavers?

Many universities and colleges will have specific bursaries available (financial support that does not have to be repaid) as well as a named contact who has specific responsibility for supporting care leavers before and during study. Some offer additional support including:

- someone to attend an open day with you
- help with interview preparation
- summer schools
- help with your UCAS application
- mentors / ambassadors
- guidance and support in finding accommodation
- 365 day accommodation
- some consideration of your final grades if your studies have been disrupted



You can visit [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk) and use the location search to find out what specific support each institution offers for care leavers.





Once you have an idea of what you'd like to study and have looked into the qualifications and grades that you need, you will know what you are aiming to achieve. You should discuss this with your Personal Adviser as well as your school or college tutors. This information can feed into your Pathway Plan.

How much additional support you choose to make use of will be up to you. You may find the additional financial support and knowing there is someone you can contact with any issues or concerns is sufficient, but you may wish to have more regular contact with a member of the student support team should you choose to.

### What is UCAS?

The University and College Admissions Service, known as 'UCAS', is responsible for managing all full-time applications to higher education courses in the UK, so you will apply for university online through UCAS. You will be able to find advice and information on how to apply for full-time courses at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)



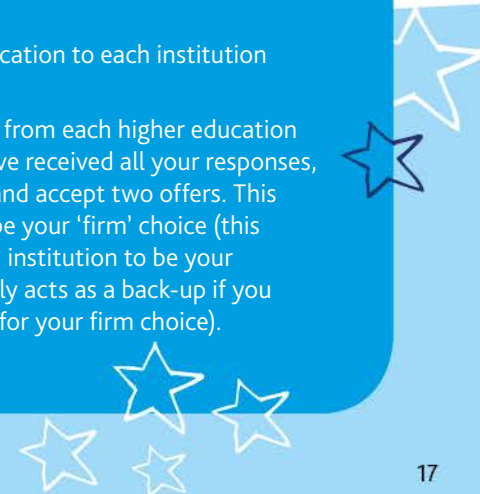
You normally begin applying through UCAS from the September a year before you want to go into higher education. The specific dates and deadlines for applying are on the UCAS website.

The UCAS website explains the whole application process and how it works. Your teachers and tutors at school or college will also know all about the UCAS process and will usually go through this. You can ask Careers staff and your Personal Adviser to help you with your application.



### It's useful to know that:

- Your online application form can be saved at any point so you do not have to complete it all at once.
- You will need to write a personal statement as part of your application.
- You can choose a number of different providers to apply to and also apply for different courses at the same institution, but you can only write one personal statement to accompany your application.
- You should apply as early as you can during the year before you want to start.
- There are strict deadlines, so please make sure you are aware of them.
- Some courses require you to sit pre-entry tests, so it's important that you check all the entry requirements for the courses you wish to study.
- UCAS cannot process your application without a reference.
- Your reference should be completed by an appropriate teacher or social worker who knows you well enough to comment on your abilities.
- UCAS charge a fee for the application but your local authority may be able to pay this for you.
- UCAS will send a copy of your application to each institution that you apply to.
- You will get responses back directly from each higher education provider you apply to. Once you have received all your responses, you need to consider your options and accept two offers. This means choosing one institution to be your 'firm' choice (this should be your first choice) and one institution to be your 'insurance' choice (this option usually acts as a back-up if you don't meet the entry requirements for your firm choice).





## Should you say you have been in care?

When you complete your online UCAS application there is a question that asks if you have spent time in care – you will find this in the additional information section. It is up to you whether you answer this question, but if you do, it **could be of benefit to you**.

Higher education providers are likely to ask for either supporting information from your referee and/or from you as the applicant or your advocates. Reasons for confirming you have been in care are:

- 1 Admissions staff reading your application will understand why there may be a gap or gaps in your education, why your work may have been affected and also the significance of what you have achieved.
- 2 The university or college may be able to offer you any extra support they have available including additional personal and financial support, such as a Care Leavers Bursary/Grant.

This information may not be automatically passed on to the relevant people at your university so make sure you know what you are entitled to and that you receive it.



## Your personal statement

Your academic achievements are extremely important when applying to university; however, they will not alone get you onto your chosen course. As well as your qualifications, admissions tutors will also want to know about your personal qualities and how you stand out from the crowd. This is where your personal statement will come into play.

In your personal statement, you have 4,000 characters to really sell yourself. Show them why you wish to apply for your course and what makes you a suitable candidate.





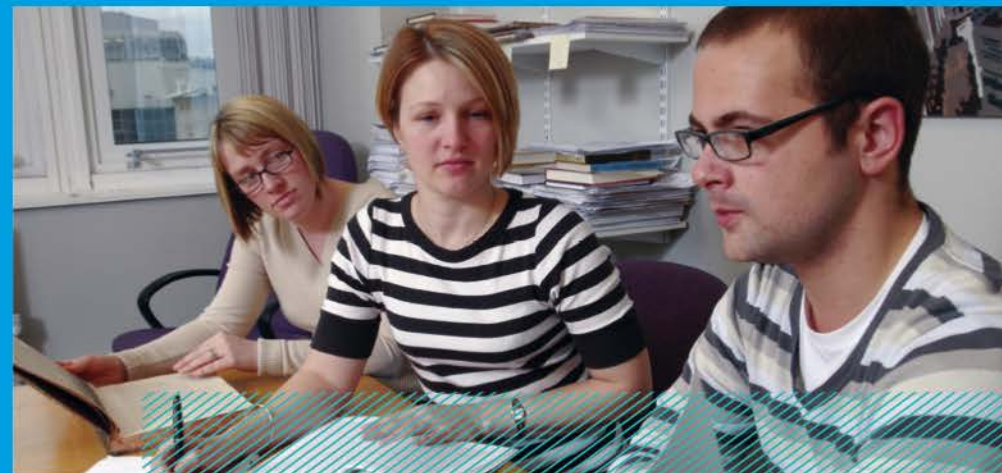
## What should you write about?

### Why you are applying

Admissions tutors will want to know about your ambitions and what interests you about the subject, course provider(s) and higher education in general. Tell them what it is about your chosen course that interests you the most and how it will help you achieve your future goals.

### What makes you suitable

In your personal statement, you should also detail any relevant skills, experience or achievements that you have gained from education, work or other activities. Remember, simply writing about what you have done will not be enough; admissions tutors also want to know what you gained from that experience, for example, what key skills you developed and the outcomes of your actions.



### Should I write about my care background?

It's totally up to you. Don't be afraid to mention it – but don't feel that you have to. You won't be judged either way.

Being in care might have given you lots of relevant experiences and personal qualities that support your application – like being able to adapt to new situations or having been a peer mentor.



### If being in care has...

- ➔ inspired your choice of course
- ➔ led to any volunteering, paid opportunities or activities
- ➔ led to any positions of responsibility
- ➔ given you the opportunity to attend any Summer camps or other activities
- ➔ made you more disciplined or determined

... then these are all things you could write about and use as examples. Of course you can use lots of these without mentioning that you were in care.

### Your reference

Your referee should also be able to add some context on your personal circumstances. Your reference is a very important part of your application and it should be written by someone who knows you well. If you are still studying then a teacher or tutor could write it. If you are not currently studying then your reference can be written by your social worker.

# FINANCIAL SUPPORT – HIGHER EDUCATION

Currently, if you are a full-time student studying towards a higher education qualification, such as a degree or a Higher National Diploma (HND), you can apply for funding from Student Finance England.

This is known as a 'student loan' and is split into parts

- a tuition fee loan that is paid directly to your institution
- a maintenance loan for your living costs that is paid directly to you.

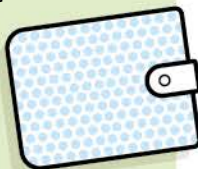
There are lots of myths about student finance, but university is affordable. Here are the facts – remember

- you don't pay upfront to go to university
- you can get loans to cover the cost of course fees and living costs
- you don't pay anything back until you earn over £25,000 (and stop paying if your salary drops below this)
- you may never pay the full amount back – your loans will be written off after 30 years
- you only pay back 9% of anything over £25,000 so if you earn £26,000 this is £1,000 over the threshold and 9% of this is £90 a year or £7 per month which is less than a cinema ticket!



## Extra financial support from your university or college

Many higher education institutions have a range of bursaries, scholarships or tuition fee reductions/waivers available to their students and these often target students from under-represented backgrounds – such as care leavers. This support varies at each institution so it's worth looking at the information available on their individual websites. Grants, bursaries and scholarships do not have to be repaid like loans – they are yours to keep.



## Financial support from your local authority

In addition to the financial support you will receive from Student Finance England and your university or college, you may also receive a funding package from your local authority to help cover costs such as tuition fees and other course related and living costs.

To find out what financial help you can expect to receive please speak to your Personal Adviser.



**Before going into care, my grades had suffered due to the stress I was experiencing at home. When I went into care, I decided that I didn't want to be a stereotypical foster kid. I bounced back and studied hard to improve my grades.**

**I attended the Clearing open day at Sheffield Hallam and was delighted to get a place on the course. At that time I wasn't aware of any support available to care leavers. During my second year, I looked into any bursaries that might be available and found out that there was a care leaver bursary offered by Sheffield Hallam. I found the process of proving my eligibility easy and straightforward. This put me in touch with the named contact for care leavers who sent emails with useful information. If I had a problem, I'd know who to contact. Care leavers shouldn't be treated differently but if they can be treated specially to help them access the support all students can have, then that's good.**

**I am aiming for a 2:1 classification in my degree and have received advice from the named contact about how to access study support to help me achieve this.**

**Esther, Events Management,  
Sheffield Hallam University**





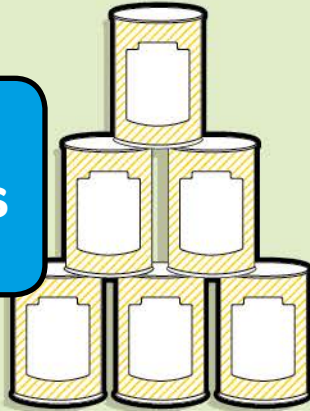


## Managing your money

As you have read, there are lots of grants and bursaries available to supplement your funding but you may still be wondering how you will afford to go to university or college.

Creating a budget is the best way to get the most out of your time in higher education using the funds available to you. Before you start your course it's important to consider how much money you will have and how much being a student will cost.

**IT'S A MYTH THAT...  
STUDENTS ONLY  
EAT BAKED BEANS  
AND PASTA!**



## How current students manage a budget

"I cooked meals with friends to make my money spread further. It was great to eat together and feel like more of a family."

"Buy your food in bulk and plan your meals ahead!"

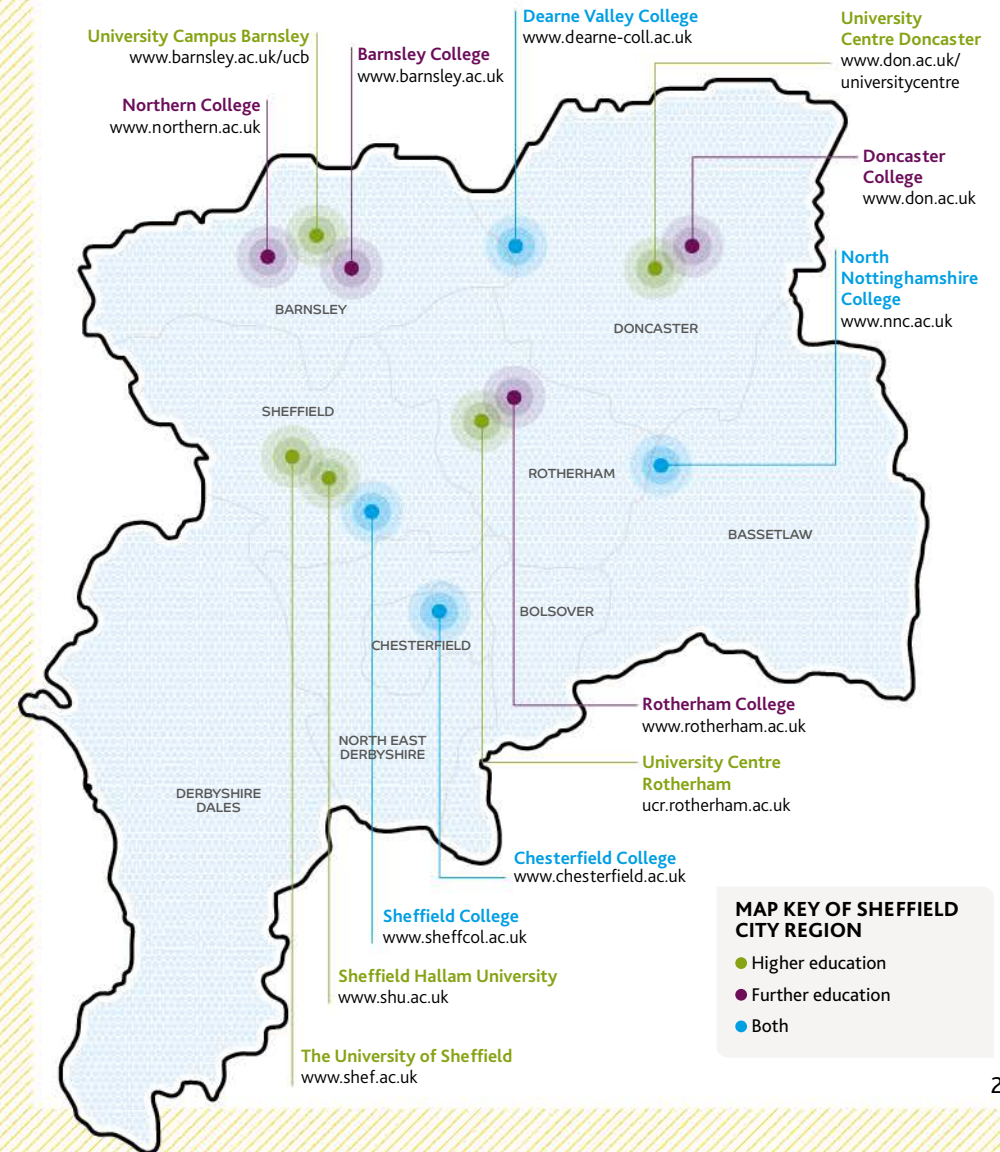
"I shopped around and bought some of my food from the market, the quality was just as good but a much lower price."

"I like to travel and visit my friends, so I got a student railcard which has saved me lots of money."



# HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Here are the details of all your local education providers within the region so you can find out more about any funding and support that you might be entitled to.





## CONCLUSION

Uni is great experience that can change your life.  
To make sure you benefit...



- 1 Do your research
- 2 Make sure your Pathway Plan includes your career and study aspirations (and the costs)
- 3 Work hard to get the best results you can
- 4 Get the funding, degree and career that you deserve!



## USEFUL WEB LINKS

### Local authorities

#### Barnsley Local Authority

[www.barnsley.gov.uk](http://www.barnsley.gov.uk)

#### Doncaster Local Authority

[www.doncaster.gov.uk](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk)

#### Rotherham Local Authority

[www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk)

#### Sheffield Local Authority

[www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk)

#### Chesterfield Local Authority

[www.chesterfield.gov.uk](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk)

#### Derbyshire Local Authority

[www.derbyshire.gov.uk](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk)

### Careers information and advice

#### National Careers Service

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

#### Choices at 14,16 and 18 plus local job sector information

#### Total Professions

[www.totalprofessions.com](http://www.totalprofessions.com)

#### icould

<http://icould.com/>

### Choosing the right course

#### UCAS

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

#### Complete University Guide

[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

#### Unistats.com

<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>

#### Open days

[www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)  
[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

### Other useful higher education sites

#### Conservatoires Admissions Service (UK) (for music courses)

[www.cukas.ac.uk](http://www.cukas.ac.uk)

### Finance

#### Student Finance England

[www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)

#### Brightside UNIAID

[www.studentcalculator.org.uk/](http://www.studentcalculator.org.uk/)

### Care leaver organisations

#### National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)

[www.nnecl.org](http://www.nnecl.org)

#### Propel

[www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk)

#### NCAS

[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)

### Local universities care leavers pages

#### Sheffield Hallam University – Information for Care Leavers

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/care-leavers/support-for-care-leavers>

#### The University of Sheffield – Information for Care Leavers

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/careleavers](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/careleavers)

### Estranged students

#### Stand Alone

[www.standalone.org.uk/students](http://www.standalone.org.uk/students)

### Other

#### Not going to Uni

[www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)

#### The Student Room

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)





# GO FURTHER GO HIGHER



A partnership of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
and The University of Sheffield

Produced by the Sheffield City Region Higher Education Progression Partnership (HEPP) – funded jointly by Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield. Enquiries to [HEPP@shu.ac.uk](mailto:HEPP@shu.ac.uk)